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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, the Center for Health and Gender Equity, Incorporated, the Federation for Women and Family Planning, Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, the International Women’s Health Coalition and the World Young Women’s Christian Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

1. In March 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake a 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. With only five years remaining to achieve this paramount agenda, the sexual and reproductive rights and health of women and young people must be prioritized. In this regard, the International AIDS Women Caucus encourages Member States to recommit to achieving the Platform for Action and to focus on ensuring that women and young people, who are disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic, are placed at the centre of these commitments.

2. According to a recent report of the World Health Organization (WHO),¹ obstacles to achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health remain:

(a) HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death and disease for women in their reproductive years (15-44). Unsafe sex is the main risk factor in developing countries. Biological factors, lack of access to information and health services and gender inequality put young women at risk;

(b) Nearly all of the half million maternal deaths each year occur in developing countries. Despite increase in contraceptive use over the past 30 years, significant unmet needs remain in all regions;

(c) Violence against women is widespread throughout the world. WHO estimates that 1 in 3 women will experience violence in her lifetime. Women who have been physically abused have higher rates of mental ill-health, unintended pregnancies, abortions and miscarriages than non-abused women.

3. Despite commitments made to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health by national Governments, including donor Governments, women and girls continue to suffer and die from pregnancy-related causes, preventable diseases, violence and discrimination.

4. We therefore call on Governments to revisit strategic objective C.3, of the Beijing Platform for Action: "Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues".

5. As expressed in paragraph 108 of the Beijing Platform for Action, women and girls, including women living with HIV, should be involved in all decision-making relating to the development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. It also states the need for support to expedite action-oriented research on affordable methods, controlled by women, to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases; to review laws that discriminate against women and place them at greater risk of contracting HIV and protection of the rights of those living with HIV and calls on the international community to develop multisectoral programmes and strategies to empower women and ensure their social and economic equality.

6. These actions are still needed. Furthermore, we call on Governments to:

¹ World Health Organization, "Women's Health", Fact Sheet No. 334, November 2009.

(a) Provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services that include contraception; access to safe abortion; maternity care; diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; and services for women who have experienced violence;

(b) Significantly invest in and politically support the procurement, distribution and programming of female condoms and other female-initiated prevention methods to ensure access to modern prevention methods;

(c) Invest in and provide for comprehensive sexuality education for young people in and out of schools, which incorporates sexual and reproductive rights and health and gender equality.
