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“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation, a non-governmental organization 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental for economic and social development. Prioritising gender equality and investing in women and girls is an essential building block for sustained prosperity. When women have control over their bodies, access to education and good health, decision-making roles and meaningful employment, and can live free of violence, they are able to participate in the sustainable development of their communities and accelerate progress towards gender equality.

Only by fulfilling these rights will women, men and young people have the possibility of making informed decisions about critical aspects of their lives, which may determine both their individual and their communities' future. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has clearly defined the scope of women's human rights and these principles must be clearly reflected in the post-2015 framework. Member States have recognised the importance of this revolutionary global agreement; now is the time to ensure it lives on and achieves sustainable development for all women and men in the post-2015 framework.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Post-2015 Framework

On the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we are in a unique position to reflect on the progress made for women and girls since 1995 and look forward to see what unfinished business we must address, and how best to move forward.

The Platform for Action is a revolutionary document: the first time the global community came together to define the human rights of women and men and identify actions Member States must take to ensure that women can live freely and equally around the world. It expressed the obstacles to women's full equality and asserted that the "principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities" (para. 1). It recognised that gender equality is central to sustainable development: "A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development" (para. 1).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action explored the long-term impact of discrimination, and recognised the impact that discrimination against girls can have on a girl's life chances (para. 93). It highlighted the central role that reproductive rights plays in women's and girls' lives, stating that "the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence" (para. 96). It places the denial of these rights in a wider social context: "in most countries, the neglect of women's reproductive rights severely limits their opportunities in public and private life, including opportunities for education and economic and political empowerment" (para. 97).

It also highlights the links between structural inequalities, women's lack of access to economic and social power, and their health outcomes: "The prevalence among women of poverty and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitudes towards women and girls, discrimination due to race and other

forms of discrimination, the limited power many women have over their sexual and reproductive lives and lack of influence in decision-making are social realities which have an adverse impact on their health. Good health is essential to leading a productive and fulfilling life, and the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment” (para. 92).

In making the link between access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and women’s rights, and sustainable development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provides a starting point for the integration of these issues into the post-2015 agenda.

For the post-2015 framework to deliver the structural change required to eliminate poverty, it must build on this understanding of the interrelationship between gender inequality, access to sexual and reproductive rights and health, and poverty eradication. Addressing root causes of inequality and achieving gender parity in all areas is a critical means to eradicate poverty. For women’s rights to be realised, women must be given the opportunity to move successfully through education and into productive employment. The realisation of those fundamental rights, set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is an essential stepping stone to achieving sustainable development. Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is beneficial for individuals and states, but also brings massive national benefits. When countries invest in health, education, and in achieving gender equality in addition to family planning, the decline in mortality and fertility rates can alter the age structure of a population and place many of the world’s least developed countries in a prime position to reap the economic benefits of subsequent accelerated economic growth.

Prioritizing gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and investing in women and girls are important ends in themselves and also essential building blocks for sustained prosperity.

Member State support for integrating the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Many Member States have recognised this connection and the strong foundation that the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action provide, and have called for it to be included in the post-2015 development framework.

This support for the Beijing Platform for Action within the post-2015 framework is a logical extension to its 20 year legacy, and indeed integrating the key issues that the Platform for Action championed would ensure that the essential work to advance women’s and girls’ equality would continue into the next generation.

Through the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 review process, many Member States argued that that the Declaration and Platform for Action should be seen as a starting point for reflecting gender equality and women’s human rights into the post-2015 framework. The Secretary-General’s Index Report on the International Conference on Population and Development reflected this:

Para. 26: Gender discrimination was widely identified as one of the most critical unfulfilled challenges inhibiting development. Several countries called for a

stand-alone goal on gender equality within the post-2015 development agenda, with some explicitly stressing the reaffirmation of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Further, the Index report reflected states' emphasis on the importance of the human rights approach that the Programme of Action was based on and encouraged the international community to give priority to the issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and access to universal sexual and reproductive health and rights in the post-2015 framework.

Para. 83: Governments emphasized the importance of the foundation of the Programme of Action on human rights and a continued people-centred approach for the post-2015 agenda, urging the international community to give priority to the core goals of gender equality, empowerment of women, investment in young people, inclusive economic growth and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

This support for the Beijing commitments was also seen in the outcome document of the Open Working Group which "also reaffirmed the commitment to fully implement the [...] Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" and the outcome documents of its review conferences (para. 6).

This overwhelming support for post-2015 to build on the lessons of Beijing was also echoed during the 58th Commission on the Status of Women, with the Agreed Conclusions urging "States to tackle critical remaining challenges through a transformative and comprehensive approach and calls for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of any new development framework."

Conclusion

Building on the support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we specifically call on Member States to reaffirm their commitment to it, and to call for it to be reflected in the post-2015 development framework. We further call on Member States to recognise the crucial contribution of sexual and reproductive health and rights in realizing gender equality and the central role that they play in achieving sustainable development. We would welcome the inclusion of gender equality and women's human rights, and sexual and reproductive rights and health in the post-2015 framework in the following ways:

A specific target on sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, an integrated approach should be adopted, with other sexual and reproductive health and rights targets and indicators included throughout the new development framework. Suggested indicators for these targets could include:

- Maternal mortality ratio (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Maternal morbidity rate
- Maternal mortality due to unsafe abortion

- Proportion of population with HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Condom use, high risk sex (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Maternal mortality rate for women living with HIV/AIDS
- Adolescent birth rate (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Antenatal care coverage (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Unmet need for family planning (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Percentage of women who have made an informed choice about their contraception method
- Available obstetric facilities per 100,000
- An indicator to measure universal access and/or restrictions and stigma
- Percentage of schools with sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities
- Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS (Millennium Development Goals indicator)
- Percentage of adolescent girls and boys (10-19 years in and outside of school) who have completed at least one year of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, designed in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization/United Nations Population Fund guidance in school curricula.

For a stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, the full realization of women and girls' human rights and their empowerment, ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as gender equality mainstreamed across goals, targets should include:

- Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against girls and women
- Ending early and forced marriage
- Ensuring women's equal rights, access and control of economic resources including the right to own and inherit land, property, sign a contract, register a business and open a bank account
- Eliminating discrimination against women in political, economic, and public life and ensuring their equal participation in these spheres.

Suggested indicators for these targets could include:

- Percentage of women who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months
- Percentage of sexually and gender based violence survivors' who have access to comprehensive affordable, available and quality services
- Existence of laws, policies and multi-sectoral plans of action to prevent and respond to violence against women

- Percentage of people who think a woman can refuse to have sex with her husband under any circumstance
- Percentage of people who think it is never justifiable for a man to beat his wife
- Per cent of women aged 20-24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18
- Prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting.

A clear commitment to promoting governance, accountability and resourcing, including ensuring youth participation in the development and implementation of the post-2015 framework.

All data to be disaggregated by age, gender, economic quintile, geographic location, ethnicity and other relevant attributes.
