



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Declaration

1. RECOGNIZING the historical importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by 189 States at the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 ;
2. CONSIDERING that, during the review conducted at the 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations held in 2010, the Member States recognized that the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals ;
3. REGRETTING that the organization of a 5th World Conference on Women related to Beijing + 20 is not on the agenda, particularly because of political obstacles linked to the decline of women's rights in a certain number of countries ;
4. CONCERNED by the many setbacks and inadequate realization of women's rights and freedoms in some States, despite being a party to the fundamental international instruments for the protection of human rights ;
5. TAKING NOTE of the progress identified in the five-year reviews conducted by the United Nations CSW ;
6. WELCOMING the creation, in July 2010, of UN Women ;
7. RECALLING the 12 strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action studied during the seminar in relation with the 3 transversal themes which are eliminating violence against women, promoting women's economic empowerment and ensuring women's access to political and economic decision-making ;
8. WELCOMING that the CSW's will undertake, at its 59th session to be held in March 2015, a review and appraisal for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and contribute to the integration of gender perspectives in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with a view that the new framework should address the structural causes of gender based inequalities and include gender equality as an objective as such and transversally ;
9. CLAIMING the importance of networks of women parliamentarians as a vehicle of mobilization and dialogue for the 59th session of the CSW ;

10. We, members of the networks of women parliamentarians of the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the Americas or members of the National Conference of State Legislature, gathered in Québec City on January 21 and 22, 2014, at the invitation of Mr. Jacques Chagnon, President of the National Assembly of Québec, on the occasion of the Seminar chaired by the First Vice-President of the National Assembly, Mrs. Carole Poirier :

On the Theme of Violence Against Women:

11. DENOUNCE that 40% of women on average still experience physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime and that, in some regions of the world, that number can reach as high as 70% ;
12. CONDEMN violence against women, defined in the Platform for Action as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” ;
13. STRONGLY CONDEMN the practice of rape and other forms of inhuman and degrading treatment of women as a deliberate instrument of war ;
14. INSIST on promoting women’s reproductive health without discrimination, coercion or violence ;
15. EXHORT the Parliaments and the governments of the world to :
 - combat sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts and disasters ;
 - combat violence against women resulting from harmful traditional or customary practices ;
 - adopt laws against women trafficking and violence against women ;
 - take urgent action to enhance prevention, protection and response to violence against women ;
 - end impunity for the perpetrators ;
 - ensure access to justice for the victims ;
 - raise awareness of their population on the subject.

On the Theme of Women’s Economic Empowerment:

16. RECALL that women’s economic empowerment depends on three core dimensions: access to economic decision-making positions, enhanced economic opportunities and recognition of equal legal status and rights ;
17. EMPHASIZE that women’s economic empowerment contributes to their social development ;
18. RECOGNIZE that discriminatory measures still exist that impede women’s economic and financial independence, which perpetuate poverty and undermine economic growth of States ;
19. DEPLORE that, in all regions of the world, women still earn less on average than men and are far more likely to be in unstable employment, often unprotected by labour legislation ;

20. EXHORT the world's Parliaments to enact legislation promoting equal access to education, formation and decent work, as well as pay equity, equal access to and control over productive assets and resources; equal social security and distribution of care work ;
21. ASK our governments to address disparities between men and women in all development policies and economic reforms and to develop programs to abolish the economic gap between men and women ;
22. ASK our governments to foster women's access to the judiciary system and to ensure the implementation of the court decisions ;
23. EXHORT all public and private stakeholders to keep a gender perspective in mind when drafting policies, administrative practices and budgets ;
24. INVITE all social actors to promote women's access to credit and microcredit, private property and inheritance.

On the Theme of Women's Access to Political and Economic Decision-Making:

25. RECOGNIZE that women's participation in political and economic decision-making contribute to promote women's gender-specific interests, values and experiences when developing new political and economic programs ;
26. RECOGNIZE that women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding processes is essential in order for women's interests to be taken into account ;
27. RECOGNIZE that women are underrepresented in leadership and management positions within public and private enterprises, as well as within elected assemblies, political parties, labour unions and the public administration ;
28. DEPLORE that, globally, only 20.9% of national parliamentarians were female as of July 1, 2013, and that, in the same period of time, only 8 women were serving as Head of State and 13 as Head of Government ;
29. DEPLORE that, globally, only 18.3% of private companies have a top-level female manager ;
30. ASK governments to implement mechanisms to promote the representation of women in various political and economic decision-making bodies in order to achieve gender parity in the near future ;
31. ENCOURAGE a review of electoral systems and the structure of political parties and legislative and government bodies in order to make the necessary corrections to strengthen the presence of women in politics at all levels in politics ;

In these respects, we

32. COMMIT to continuing efforts, within our respective parliaments, to further the accelerated, full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” ;
33. INVITE the networks of women parliamentarians of the Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the Americas as well as the National Conference of State Legislature to mobilize their members to actively participate in the review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which will be concluded at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015 ;
34. INVITE the General Assembly of the United Nations to strengthen measures aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Post-2015 Development Agenda by incorporating gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment as a stand-alone goal in the new Development Agenda and to integrate gender perspectives across the new framework ;
35. ENCOURAGE governments to promote the culture of equality and to fight against stereotypes and ideologies opposed to full gender equality all in partnership with media and civil society organizations.