

Regional Round-up on progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in light of the upcoming 25th anniversary of the platform *Spotlight: Asia-Pacific*



Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration Of International Women's Day 2020. Photo: UN Women/Pathumporn Thongking

Highlights of the celebration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) include review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the 73rd United Nations (UN) General Assembly; the Sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64, March 9, 2020) and events curated under the umbrella *Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future* led by UN Women; and the intergovernmental process under the leadership of Mexico and France. In the run up to CSW64, which produced a political declaration on the BPfA, a number of national and regional meetings and conferences on women in the context of Beijing+25 took place in 2019. Some regional meetings occurred at ministerial level where ministers and government officials agreed to specific outputs including political declarations and regional reports. This Update presents a snapshot of the important elements from the Asian region. A previous Update focused on Africa. Future Updates will focus sequentially on Latin America & the Caribbean, the Arab and European regions.

Spotlight: Asia-Pacific and the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

On November 27-29, 2019, Ministers, representatives and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific participated in the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 where they reviewed the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and made commitments to “accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, ensuring women’s human rights for an equal future in Asia and the Pacific”. The final output, the *Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review* (hereinafter ‘the Declaration’), acknowledged the advances made towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in Asia and the Pacific by Governments, particularly in the development, adoption and implementation of laws, regulations and policy frameworks and called upon governments and stakeholders in the region to “intensify actions to realize women’s equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for an equal future by 2030.”

The Declaration which affirmed the synergies between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focused on eight important areas for actions: equitable and inclusive development and decent work; poverty eradication, social protection and social and public services; freedom from violence, stigma, harmful stereotypes and negative social norms; participation, social dialogue, accountability and gender responsive institutions; peaceful and inclusive societies; environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building; data and statistics; and partnerships and regional cooperation and coordination.

A selected number of exemplary elements discussed in the Declaration are presented below.

1. Equitable and inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Ensuring women's economic empowerment and the full integration of women into the formal economy, and extending social and legal protection to women workers in the in-

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the landmark visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls, the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. 2020 is also the five-year milestone in the adoption of the Sustainable Development Agenda. In recognition of this, the South Centre’s Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Gender (SDCCG) Programme is issuing this bi-weekly update on the state of play of discussions on gender and development issues in the context of the BPfA.

formal and non-formal economy by (item14):

Taking appropriate measures and removing obstacles to ensure that all women throughout their life cycle have equal opportunities for education, decent work and favourable conditions of work, including wages that provide for an adequate standard of living and equal pay for work of equal value, an enabling work environment, including for rural women, as well as equal opportunities to diversify their educational and occupational choices and career progression into emerging fields and growing economic sectors, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and information and communications technology, as well as clean energy (item 14.b);

Scaling up efforts to accelerate the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work, education and training, improved wages, social protection and quality childcare (item14.k);

Recognizing the need to accelerate efforts to reduce and redistribute the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work shouldered by women of all ages and ensure the representation of caregivers in decision-making on policies that reflect their needs and interests, and further recognizing that failure to do so will inevitably place women engaged in informal domestic work, including migrant workers, in precarious environments (item 14.l);

Promoting the transition to formal employment for women employed in informal paid work, including home-based and own-account work, seasonal contracts and part-time work, work in micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and work in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, among others (item 14.m).

2. Poverty eradication, social protection and social and public services

Recognizing women as key contributors and vital agents in combating poverty and inequalities, and ensuring gender-responsive and inclusive social protection systems, public services and infrastructure by (item 16):

Establishing and strengthening inclusive, gender-responsive and age-appropriate social protection systems and institutions and social protection floors as well as access to public services that are well coordinated and adequately resourced to ensure full access to social protection and income security for all women and girls of all ages, without discrimination or any kind of social stigma, and taking measures to progressively achieve higher levels of

protection towards universal coverage (item 16.a);

Promoting the design and implementation of gender-responsive and participatory social protection, public service and infrastructure programmes through transparent assessments of gendered risks and analyses of women's and girls' exclusion from existing social protection schemes, as well as through gender-responsive planning and budgeting and by strengthening monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms (item 16.d);

Prioritizing investments that contribute to the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including through accessible and affordable childcare and other support services (item 16.f);

Integrating a gender perspective into the planning and use of public spaces, the design and development of smart cities, communities and rural areas and intelligent mobility planning processes, promoting the mobility and empowerment of women and girls, and ensuring that urban, rural and peripheral public transport, including land and water transport systems and infrastructure, are sustainable, accessible, safe, affordable and gender responsive (item16.g).

Accelerating progress towards the goal of universal health coverage that comprises universal and equitable access to gender-responsive quality health-care services and quality, essential, affordable and effective medicines for all (item 17):

Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences (item 17.c).

3. Freedom from violence, stigma, harmful stereotypes and negative social norms

Strongly condemning all forms of violence against all women and girls, which is rooted in historical and structural inequality and unequal power relations between men and women, re-emphasizing that sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, in public and private spheres, is a major impediment to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and that it violates and impairs or nullifies their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and intensifying efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against all women and girls by (item 19):

Reviewing, amending, enacting and enforcing legislation in reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant regional and international human rights obligations and treaties, also taking into consideration laws outside the criminal justice sector, including family-oriented policies to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination, violence against women and girls and other harmful practices, including women's unequal status in marriage, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, female infanticide, sexual harassment and victim-blaming in both the public and private spaces, including in the digital context, by strengthening the capacity of legal systems and institutions to translate legislation into implementation that ensures women's and girls' access to justice and effective remedy (19.a).

4. Participation, social dialogue, accountability and national women's machinery for gender equality and women's empowerment

Ensuring national gender-responsive institutions as well as participation, accountability and social dialogue by (item 21):

Ensuring the increased inclusive and effective participation of national gender machinery for gender equality and women's empowerment in the formulation and monitoring of inclusive national development strategies that recognize the specific needs of diverse groups of women, including by strengthening the leadership, mandates, status, and human and financial capacities of coordination mechanisms (item 21.a);

Incorporating a gender perspective into the design, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of programmes, especially national programmes and projects through all national laws, policies and regulations (item 21.b);

Encouraging a gender-responsive approach to public financial management, including planning, budgeting, and auditing and monitoring across all sectors of public expenditure, for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (item 21.c);

Taking measures to remove barriers and provide all women with economic empowerment opportunities to achieve full, equal, substantive and effective participation and access to leadership and senior-level positions at all levels and in all spheres (item 21.d).

5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

Accelerating the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda by (item 22):

Ensuring systematic attention to, recognition of and

support for the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, their empowerment, access to and control over resources, and decision-making related to the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in rebuilding, peacebuilding, peacekeeping in armed conflict, post-conflict planning, economic recovery and sustaining peace (item 22.d);

Building the capacity and leadership of women as peacebuilders, including as mediators, negotiators and responders, at the regional, national and local levels, as appropriate (item 22.e).

6. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building

Integrating and mainstreaming a gender perspective into environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation, and promoting gender-responsive climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience-building, taking into account that climate change, particularly the crisis facing Pacific small island developing States and other low-lying countries, has differentiated, considerable impacts on all women and girls, including in countries with nomadic cultures, and that they can be more vulnerable to climate impacts by (item 23):

Adopting and implementing gender-responsive strategies on climate change mitigation and adaptation to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to and recover from the adverse impacts of climate change, including through the promotion of equal access to essential infrastructure and climate-smart agricultural technology, clean energy-appropriate financing and technology, humanitarian assistance, food and nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, waste management, health-care services, education and training, adequate housing and decent work, social security, and gender-sensitive forecast and early warning systems, with a special focus on women in remote and rural areas (item 23.c).

7. Data and statistics

Strengthening gender-responsive national statistical systems and data collection, analysis and use by (item 24):

Integrating a gender-responsive approach into national follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including by strengthening national statistical capacities to design, collect, access and publicly disseminate high-quality, reliable and timely data disaggregated by sex, age, income and other characteristics relevant to national contexts, as well as by promoting blended

research methodologies using qualitative and quantitative approaches for an enhanced understanding of gender gaps and leveraging the opportunities offered by innovation and technology to measure progress, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders (item 24.a);

Continuing to develop and enhance standards, methodologies and indicators at the national and international levels to improve data collection, analysis and report writing with regard to gender statistics, and the use and dissemination thereof, as well as information management and coordination, including through data repositories as well as technical and financial collaboration between countries, and leveraging the opportunities offered by innovation and technology to measure progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (item 24.b).

8. Partnerships and regional cooperation

Engaging all relevant stakeholders to promote international and regional cooperation and collaboration by (item 25):

Calling on the international community and all relevant stakeholders to provide financial resources to assist Governments, upon their request, in their efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5 on gender equality, as well as other development goals, targets and benchmarks related to gender equality and women's empowerment agreed upon at relevant intergovernmental and United Nations special sessions, meetings, conferences and summits (item 25.c).

Source: Adapted from United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review (ESCAP/MCBR/2019/2/Add.1, 4 December 2019)*, Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review, Bangkok, 27-29 November 2019 and *Report of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review (ESCAP/MCBR/2019/2/Rev.1, 8 January 2020)*.

Previous Beijing+25 Updates:

No. 1, 13 March 2020 – Political Declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women

No. 2, 30 March 2020 – Regional Round-up on progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in light of the upcoming 25th anniversary of the platform. Spotlight: Africa

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