

## Regional Round-up on progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in light of the upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the platform *Spotlight: Arab region*



UN Women, UNICEF, and PACES Charity organized a one-day sports event in Ramallah, Palestine, to raise awareness on the importance of promoting gender equality in every aspect of life, including sports within the framework of “Generation Equality: Realizing women’s rights for an equal future” campaign and the global celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Photo credit: UN Women/Seung Deok Seo

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 73<sup>rd</sup> 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 Arab region. Previous Updates focused on Africa and Asia-Pacific. Future Updates will focus on the Latin America & the Caribbean and European regions.

## Spotlight: Arab region and the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

The League of Arab States, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Arab Women Organization participated in a “High-level Meeting on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years (1995)” in Amman, Jordan on 28 November 2019. As a lead-up to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, the high-level participants of the meeting reviewed the implementation of the declaration in the region and identified the progress made and challenges encountered.

The conference adopted the document “*Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years*” (hereinafter ‘the Declaration’). The Declaration listed the achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women empowerment, while also recalling the precarious security context of the region.

The Declaration acknowledged a number of areas of progress in the implementation of the BPfA in the Arab region in the past five years. These include the increased social awareness on the importance of the role of women and the adoption of various initiatives that support increased representation and participation in political, social, economic and public life and in decision-making positions and processes. As a result, the following achievements were highlighted:

- Policies, legislation and action plans that target violence against women and the improvement of the status and protection of women in general
- Repealing and/or amending articles and legal texts that discriminate against women
- Improving social service provision for women and introducing activities and programmes to widen access to education and health services
- Integrating a gender equality and equal opportunity perspective into the work of Governments and public administrations
- Adopting national action plans to implement Security Council resolution 1325<sup>1</sup>
- Supporting and promoting civil society organizations in their work in gender equality and women empowerment

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.

The advancement in the implementation of the BPfA are challenged by a variety of socio-economic and security related factors. The Declaration pointed out that some states are constrained in mobilizing necessary resources due to high poverty and unemployment rates and rising inequalities, which in turn impede the implementation of plans such as the BPfA. These issues are further intensified by war, terrorism and armed conflict that are found in some Arab countries.

The Declaration recalled the situation in the State of Palestine and the negative impact of the occupation by Israel on the people and, in particular, women that suffer from “home demolitions, forced displacement and arbitrary arrest” on top of being impacted by “an absence of basic services that affect all aspects of life, including health, education and security”.

The participants of the meeting defined a set of priorities to guide future actions. The following is an exemplary list of selected elements that were stressed in the Declaration.

- “Continue reviewing national legislation for further development and amendment, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, take measures to address discriminatory violations and practices, expedite the development of public policies and programmes to combat violence against women”
- “Call upon the Security Council to adopt a new resolution succeeding resolution 1325 and others based on it, so as to address gaps in the women, peace and security agenda, which does not address the situation of women in the State of Palestine suffering under Israeli occupation”
- “Continue to address and raise awareness about negative and discriminatory social stereotypes that aggravate gender inequalities, and promote the sharing of responsibilities within the family between women and men in unpaid care work”
- “Continue reviewing social protection policies and programmes to ensure integration and to provide a comprehensive protection system that includes social security and health insurance for all groups, including women working in the informal sector”
- “Continue working to ensure women’s access to decision-making positions by providing tools and measures, including information and communications technology, to ensure equal participation of women and men”
- “Continue developing gender-disaggregated statistical information and data systems, and make them available to decision makers to develop, endorse, adopt and implement national strategies, policies and plans aimed at addressing the imbalance in the status of women and ensure their advancement”

**Endnote:**

<sup>1</sup> Security Council Resolution ([S/RES1325](#)) is on women and peace and security and emphasises the role of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Source: Adapted from the Regional report on the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab Region: “Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years”, Amman, 28 November 2019. Available from [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/declaration\\_28\\_november\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/declaration_28_november_en_final.pdf).

**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

No. 3, 21 April 2020 – 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

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