

# WIDE

*Globalising gender equality and social justice*

## **WIDE STATEMENT TO THE 49<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN,**

**New York, 28 February to 11 March 2005**

The 10 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) at the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a critical opportunity to reaffirm the global women's agenda for women's human rights, gender equality and empowerment for women. The member states of the UN must use this opportunity to reaffirm their unequivocal commitment to the accelerated implementation of the entire Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes Document of the 23<sup>rd</sup> UN General Assembly Special Session (Beijing+5), and to ensure that the appropriate resources are made available for the continued implementation of BPfA and the realisation of gender equality and women's human rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

### **GLOBALISATION AND THE BPfA**

The BPfA was drafted and adopted by governments, but thousands of women activists worldwide have contributed to all the phases of developing, drafting, monitoring and implementing the Platform for Action. WIDE, working in collaboration with other women's movements around the world, has helped to shape the BPfA and its implementation. We have a particular concern about the many ways in which neo-liberalism, including the promotion of a 'free' trade regime, economic globalisation and market liberalisation has led to deep inequalities. It has led to the feminisation of employment, intensified exploitation of women's unpaid work in the caring economy and has undermined the livelihood strategies of poor rural and urban women, including migrant women, disabled and displaced women in all areas of the world.

The increasing impact of such policies on the lives and livelihoods of women is compounded in countries of the South by the structural inequalities between North and South. If policies are assumed to be gender neutral, they can reproduce or even worsen inequality. WIDE, in alliance with other women's groups working on trade, macro economic, gender and globalisation, calls on Governments to recognise that gender aware macro economic policy, including the application of a gender analysis of trade and its impact on women globally are essential if economic development partnerships are to be made real and effective. WIDE asks for far greater economic coherence among states, non-state actors and multilateral institutions in relation to development cooperation and financial, monetary and trade policies, so that the systemic inequities and power imbalances within the global economic system are addressed.

Structural, economic and institutional inequalities are exacerbated by the increase in conservative forces in Europe and all areas of the world, with the rise of religious fundamentalisms as well as a diversion of resources away from the fight against poverty to the 'war on terror'. This has led to increased poverty combined with a backlash against women's rights and a weakening of many of the gains won in the 1990s UN conferences.

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## **BEIJING+10 AND THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT**

The 49<sup>th</sup> CSW is a strategic moment to push for the BPfA to be more visibly linked to the current UN Agenda based on the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are due for review in September 2005.

WIDE expresses serious concern that the MDG process now dominating the UN System is undermining the BPfA. Unlike the BPfA which takes into account deep inequalities within and across countries, the MDGs ignore the structural nature of poverty as well as the structural nature of gender inequality. There is a central contradiction within the MDG process that asks governments to invest in 'pro-poor policies' while at the same time employing neo-liberal economic policies that only serve to increase the impoverishment of marginalized women and men.

WIDE therefore calls for a far more democratic and gender aware MDG process, one that is accountable to the global women's movement, and which makes gender equality, women's human rights and women's empowerment central to the achievement of the MDGs. It is critical that Governments ensure that the MDGs draw on the Beijing PfA as integral to all MDG goals.

## **GROWING INEQUALITIES WITHIN EUROPE**

As an organisation of women living in Europe, WIDE is particularly concerned with the growing inequalities associated with neo-liberal globalisation and exploitation connected with a rise in both legal and illegal forms of migration, with the latter, in particular, associated with highly insecure and exploitative forms of work. WIDE expresses concern about the human rights of all migrants, and particularly the specific abuses of human rights to which women migrants are vulnerable in the context of the growth of the non-formal economy in Europe, the increase in illegal migration, trafficking of women and children and the growing fragmentation of 'old' and 'new' Europe. The European Union enlargement in 2004 caused new and largely artificial political dividing lines across the continent, between those within the EU and those outside. WIDE believes that it is critical to build a common agenda for gender equality among women in the whole European region in order to prevent a new East-West divide.

## **BEIJING+10 AND CAIRO+10**

From a holistic human rights approach to development built by the UN conferences of the 1990s, WIDE considers women's economic rights intrinsically linked to their sexual and reproductive rights. WIDE therefore joins other women's movements and health activists in expressing strong concern that sexual and reproductive health and rights for all women (as agreed to in the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994) is reinstated in the MDG agenda, including building women's capacity to act in response to the increasing numbers of poor women living with HIV/AIDS. WIDE welcomes the recommendations of the Millennium Project Task Force Three and Four and calls on European Governments in particular to take a strong stand on this issue.

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It is an increasingly challenging climate for women, particularly those from socially excluded groups, transition countries and conflict-affected areas. WIDE calls on women's rights groups across the world to protect the gains made by Beijing and calls on Governments, particularly European governments, to reaffirm those gains, not only in the 10 year review process, but also in the future, through appropriate resources to put the BPfA into action.

WIDE will be working throughout the CSW to mobilize political will and resources more effectively for the global women's agenda in official delegations, at side events, interactive panels, caucuses and through the Global Week of Action for Women's Rights from March 1-8 which WIDE promotes and endorses.

### **WIDE CALLS FOR:**

- The unequivocal reaffirmation of the entire Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes Document of the 23<sup>rd</sup> UNGASS (Beijing+5), with the allocation of new resources and the commitment to the full implementation and relevance of BPfA in itself and as a precondition for achieving the MDGs
- The continued analysis of the critical linkages between trade, development, poverty and gender as essential to address the systemic inequities and power imbalances within the global economic system
- The integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into the MDG agenda

**CSW participants and press are invited to contact representatives of the WIDE Delegation:**

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**Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005 WIDE is a European women's network whose main activities are lobbying, advocacy and awareness raising; networking and capacity building on global trade agenda, macro-economic policy, gender and development policy and women's human rights.**