



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

Council Meeting

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SIW's Vision for Beijing+20 – Gender Equality, Democracy and Political Participation in a Global World

RESOLUTION

The Beijing+20 anniversary offers an opportunity to celebrate the many successes and immense progress made towards gender equality in the 20 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA-1995) was presented at the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. It is also an opportunity to review the challenges faced and the work still to be done while setting goals for the coming years to help make global gender equality a reality.

The BPA-1995 was a globally significant milestone in the journey of women towards the achievement of gender equality, social democracy and a more gender-balanced political landscape at local, national and international levels. Agreed in discussion and debate between 17,000 women participants and supported by over 30,000 activists from all over the world the BPA-1995 provided a powerful collectively agreed statement of a global vision of gender equality and a definitive blue-print for action to promote sustainable social, political and economic change for women. The BPA-1995 continues to be a benchmark for progress and an inspiration for the global women's movement as well as a pragmatic framework of principles and actions to realise the goal of global equality, respect and freedom for all citizens.

Socialist International Women (SIW) notes with pleasure the commendable progress which has been made in a number of key areas. These include the outlawing of domestic violence in two-thirds of countries and the criminalising of rape within marriage in 52 countries. These changes are improving the lives of millions of women on a daily basis and helping to protect their physical safety and basic human rights. The number of girl children who now receive at least primary level education has also increased over the last 20 years giving them the potential for better work opportunities and improved earning potential in the future.

SIW supports the United Nation's initiatives to continue into the future the work of the Millennium Development Goals targets, which conclude at the end of 2015. In July 2014 the UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was launched with its proposal for a set of 17 Goals with 169 targets. These cover a comprehensive range of sustainable development challenges affecting both our planet and humanity as a whole. SIW draws particular attention to Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls as this is at the very core of its beliefs. SIW confirms its commitment to proactively supporting the achievement of all SDGs, with a specific focus on the achievement of global gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, SIW notes with deep concern that globally gender equality progress is uneven. Within individual countries, between countries and between continents significant disparities exist with levels of gender equality and the respect of the human rights of women

varying widely. Recognising that violence against women is one of the major obstacles to achieving the MDGs, SIW is very concerned by the lack of this specific aspect in the 17 SDGs under discussion.

SIW calls for urgent action to remedy this deeply disturbing position. SIW asserts that the promotion of social democracy and particularly the right of full political participation for women at both local and national levels are essential for the achievement of the BPA-1995 vision of gender equality and the protection of the human rights of women and girl children. At present, globally, national parliaments have on average one woman member for every four men. This ratio represents a worldwide political gender imbalance which results in the influence and perspective of women and the discussion and prominence of issues particularly applicable to women being greatly diminished. In countries where women are significantly represented at the highest decision making levels of government – such as in Finland, which has 63% women ministers - more progress in achieving gender equality is evident in critical areas where women are often vulnerable and exploited. Political participation of women helps enable the discussion of gender issues, such as changes in cultural norms towards gender equality, to happen more easily and to be more widely promoted. This makes it more likely that legislation will be passed which supports both gender equality and socially democratic processes.

SIW firmly believes that the contribution of women to the political, economic and social wellbeing of communities and countries is invaluable. SIW recommits to its support of actions which promote, implement and enable the active political participation of women at both local community and national level.

SIW urges the Socialist International (SI) member parties to adopt the two SIW publications on its vision for the MDGs and the Beijing+20 and to implement the demands of the joint SIW and SI campaign on ending violence against women within their respective parties and countries.

SIW also calls upon all governments, member parties of SI, the UN, state structures and NGOs to recommit to continuing the progress made so far by proactively implementing the principles and actions outlined in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and supporting the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals*, with particular emphasis on taking urgent action on critical areas for change by:

Enabling the increased political participation of women at local and national level;

Promoting the principles and actions of BPA-1995 within political party policies and statements;

Establishing review processes for progress on critical local and national gender equality issues;

Encouraging all citizens to embrace the BPA-1995 agenda of social democracy and gender equality;

Supporting co-operative dialogue with local and national governmental and non-governmental bodies to implement the principles and goals of BPA-1995 and

Incorporating the UN's Sustainable Development Goals into local and national initiatives, with particular focus on Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SIW also recommends focussing on the four priorities for women's emancipation mentioned in its '*Vision for Beijing+20*' publication:

- 1. Equality: this is not a utopia but the precondition of a fair and equal society.*
 - 2. Women's participation in political decision-making: this is the precondition for a democratic society.*
 - 3. The promotion of a culture of democracy, respect for rights, including those of women, and of tolerance: the foundations for living together in harmony.*
 - 4. The equitable distribution of income and resources between nations and between men and women, in order to overcome global, regional and local imbalances and to prevent conflict, which is generally economic in essence.*
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