

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

Introduction

In the final quarter of 2014, UN-Women engaged in a great deal of meetings, launched new partnerships, and announced new initiatives to move towards a goal of a more equal world for men and women. A few of the inventive programs kicked off in late 2014 include “IGNITE: Women Fueling Science and Technology,” using science and technology to protect and ensure women’s rights, and a new protocol for health care providers in Afghanistan caring for victims of gender-based violence (GBV).¹ Work such as this showcases UN-Women’s constant efforts to address the varied symptoms of gender inequality around the world. This section gives an overview of the work undertaken by UN-Women in the past four months.

Recent Activities

In preparation for the Beijing+20 review in 2015, the final quarter of 2014 included many high-level, intergovernmental events organized by regional UN entities, including the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.² UN-Women has helped organize some events with cooperation of Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the UN system, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to address four objectives for the review process: “renewed political will and commitment; social mobilization, awareness-raising and revitalized public debate; strengthened evidence base and knowledge generation; enhanced and sufficient resources to achieve gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment.”³ The outcomes of these reviews will be presented at the 59th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2015.⁴ In line with UN-Women’s responsibility to keep the UN system accountable in terms of gender-sensitive efforts and to mark the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the organization introduced a course for UN staff and agencies called “I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN Staff.”⁵ The course is designed to help bring gender into the fold of everyday decision and policymaking at the UN, and to confront the issue with a three-pronged approach: introducing gender concepts, exploring the international framework for achieving gender equality, and promoting gender equality in the UN system.⁶

Additionally, 25 November marked the annual “International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women,” and the beginning of the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence,” global campaigns with heavy UN involvement.⁷ UN-Women and the Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women invited participants to “orange your neighborhood” by using the color to raise awareness of the pandemic of violence against women; landmarks including the Empire State Building and the United Nations Headquarters were lit up in orange during this time to show support for the campaign.⁸ The campaign served to raise awareness of global violence against women and especially work done by the UN and UN-Women to combat inequality year-round.

Addressing gender disparities in the response to the Ebola outbreak, UN-Women notes that the disease has endangered women and girls more than men.⁹ Women comprise 55% of reported cases in the affected locations, and in Liberia, 75% of those killed.¹⁰ UN-Women took action in 2014 by including gender-responsive UN efforts taken against the crisis and encouraging data collection in these regions that is sex-disaggregated (can be broken down by

¹ UN-Women, *New global initiative to close gender gap in science and technology*, 2014; World Health Organization, *First-ever gender-based violence treatment protocol for the health sector launched in Afghanistan*, 2014.

² UN-Women, *Schedule of Events: 2014-2015*, 2014.

³ Ibid.

⁴ UN-Women, *Beijing +20: Review of progress underway*, 2014.

⁵ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 9; UN-Women, *UN-Women launched gender equality course for UN staff*, 2014.

⁶ UN-Women, *UN-Women launches gender equality course for UN staff*, 2014.

⁷ UN-Women, *The fire behind the orange: 25 November*, 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lazuta, *West African Women Disproportionately Affected by Ebola*, 2014; UN-Women, *UN-Women action to confront the Ebola crisis*, 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

sex upon analysis).¹¹ Women often have the duty of working as health workers in Ebola regions, including having the duties of washing corpses and cleaning up after sick patients.¹² UN-Women and its partners are taking important steps to make sure women are equally protected from the illness.¹³ In Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example, there are media initiatives to help with prevention and economic relief for women whose everyday livelihoods relied on cross-border trading while border closings are in effect.¹⁴

UN-Women published a report in fall 2014 on the global economic crisis' effect on women and the quest for gender equality.¹⁵ This report recommends three primary ways that states can be more responsive to the needs of women and families: greater support for social "safety net" policies, closer attention to financial sector regulation, and investment in "reproduction of people."¹⁶ Such investments include basic needs like health care, education, sanitation, water, and housing required for healthy, thriving populations.¹⁷ With this report, UN-Women offers a feminist perspective on state governments' focus on financial systems and neglect of lower-income workers by dint of austerity measures.¹⁸ With this, UN-Women solidifies its stance as the leading voice in matters of global concern where women (especially those who provide the bulk of informal, domestic work) are concerned.¹⁹

As the face of the UN's implementation and study of gender considerations and implications, UN-Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka presented the UN Secretary-General's report on "Women, Peace and Security" to the Security Council in late October 2014.²⁰ The report drew attention to the harsh truth that in conflicts, certain extremist factions target women and girls, and their displacement serves to worsen and increase conflict situations around the world.²¹ Building on the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on "Women, Peace, and Security," the Secretary-General's report notes the opportunity in post-conflict situations to implement policies that benefit and empower women, the importance of sex-, age-, and otherwise disaggregated data to improve gender-responsive activities on the ground, and the usefulness of a "stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment" in the post-2015 development agenda.²² Reading the report, Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka noted support and cooperation from the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the inclusion of a criterion on gender-based violence in the *Arms Trade Treaty*.²³

Recent Policy Outcomes

The decisions adopted by the UN-Women Executive Board in September 2014 involved methods of financing, beginning with a reiteration of its full-bodied support for the 2014-2017 strategic plan, followed by emphasizing the importance of Member States committing regular resources and multi-year pledges to sustain the operational work of the organization.²⁴ The decisions also included a directive for UN-Women to actively seek ways to broaden its donor base, consider strategic partnerships, and re-examine its resource allocation and transparency and accountability measures.²⁵ UN-Women will also have an annual dialogue on financing with Member States to evaluate the level of funding and resources related to carrying out the strategic plan for 2014-2017.²⁶

During the 69th session of the General Assembly in September 2014, the body adopted five resolutions directly pertaining to women, contained in the report on advancement of women by the Third Committee (A/69/481), and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² UN-Women, *UN-Women action to confront the Ebola crisis*, 2014.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality*, 2014.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2014.

²⁰ UN-Women, *Press release: As nature of conflicts change, UN-Women urges swifter action to protect targets of violence*, 2014.

²¹ Ibid.

²² UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security*, 2014, p. 31-34.

²³ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁴ UN-Women, *Decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at its 2014 sessions*, 2014, p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

another six resolutions contained in the report on social development by the Third Committee (A/69/480).²⁷ In General Assembly resolution 69/146, “Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing,” the General Assembly (GA) requests UN-Women incorporate the needs and concerns pertaining to older women in the mainstreamed work of the UN system.²⁸ The five resolutions adopted as part of the advancement of women report by the Third Committee (A/69/481) make many references to the work of UN-Women and intensifying efforts against domestic violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation, obstetric fistula, and preparing for the Beijing +20 follow-up, including calls for better funding for the entity from the UN system.²⁹

Conclusion

The first regular session meeting of the UN-Women Executive Board is 9 February 2015, and delegates will find guidance on the organization’s priorities and organizational philosophy in the session’s outcome documents.³⁰ During the 69th session of the General Assembly in the fall of 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, Aurelia Frick, remarked, “There is no sustainable development without the full empowerment of women,” accentuating UN-Women’s constant work to improve the status of women as a means to attain positive, progressive, and sustainable change for the world.³¹

²⁷ UN DPI, *Adopting 68 Texts Recommended by Third Committee, General Assembly Sends Strong Message towards Ending Impunity, Renewing Efforts to Protect Human Rights*, 2014.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/RES/69/146)* [Resolution], 2014.

²⁹ UN General Assembly, *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*, 2014.

³⁰ UN-Women, *Annotated provisional agenda and workplan*, 2014.

³¹ UN-Women, *Infographic: Overheard at the UN General Assembly, 69th Session*, 2014.

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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Annotated provisional agenda and workplan*. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=UNW/2015/L.1

Delegates may want to keep abreast of the plans for the first regular session of the UN-Women Executive Board in February 2015 with this document. The agenda provides an idea of the discussion regarding funding its initiatives and the administration of its programs. The workplan gives an idea of the priorities for 2015, including the HeForShe campaign, regional operations, and financial matters.

Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at its 2014 sessions*. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=UNW/2014/6

This document provides a further in-depth look at the activities of UN-Women in the past year, and its intentions for 2015. It is helpful for delegates to get an idea of the funding structure detailed within it as well as the work done on evaluating and auditing UN-Women. The decisions include a section on electing the Executive Board Bureau for 2015 and beyond.

United Nations General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*. Retrieved 3 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/481

With the adoption of the five resolutions contained within this report, the General Assembly displayed a commitment to the improvement of the situation of women around the world. The resolutions were: "Intensifications of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;" "Intensification of efforts to end obstetric fistula;" "Trafficking in women and girls;" "Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations;" and "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly." The report details the events of the Third Committee and provides a good starting point for delegates' understandings of the resolutions that were adopted.

United Nations Security Council. (2014). *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2014/693)*. Retrieved 3 January 2015 from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/693

Submitted to the Security Council and presented by UN-Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, this report is the most recent iteration of the one required annually to evaluate implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security from 2000. The Secretary-General notes the ambition of resolution 1325 and the multitude of conflicts from the past year that throw into jeopardy progress made on that front, such as instances of sexual and gender-based violence and the impunity of crimes against women. This report is useful in order to gain a better understanding of the role UN-Women plays in identifying challenges as well as opportunities for women's equality in varied situations.

UN-Women. (2014). *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality* [Report]. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/theglobaleconomiccrisisandgenderequality-en%20pdf.ashx>

The global economic crisis certainly left few untouched, but this report puts an emphasis on how it impacted progress for gender equality, and why. According to subject matter experts, men are recovering from the crisis faster than women because women make up a larger portion of public sector employees who have been affected by global governmental budget cuts. The report also notes how women in developing countries are affected differently because of the nature of work available to them (small-scale manufacturing and self-employment positions) as well as the trickle-down effects causing volatility in food markets. This report gives delegates an idea of the importance of UN-Women's research and role in the international system and the usefulness of data collection that considers how factors impact women differently from men.

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I. Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Beijing +20 Review

Introduction

The Beijing+20 review presents a great chance for empowering women and empowering humanity as it reminds the world community to intensify efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on promoting gender equality, and to include persisting challenges in the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is approaching rapidly, taking place from 9 to 20 March 2015.³² The two-week session will discuss the progress made and the prevailing shortcomings in the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)*.³³ The global review and appraisal (Beijing+20) will be the result of national and regional reviews published in the last few months, numerous statements and reports issued by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and several different local, national, regional, and international governmental and civil society events and meetings.³⁴ The main goal of the process is to identify current challenges to gender equality and the advancement of women and present recommendations, possible policies, programs, and other measures on all levels in the post-2015 context in order to empower women.³⁵

In the month prior to the 59th session of the CSW, women's empowerment and the review process had seen intense consideration in key documents and events. The General Assembly adopted five resolutions on the advancement of women in its 69th session, including resolution 69/151 "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly."³⁶ This resolution reinvigorated the discussion on the BPfA, calling for intensified and accelerated action, and stressed various points for improvement, such as monitoring progress in women's empowerment and mechanisms that enhance accountability for its implementation.³⁷ The review is further underpinned by two reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly on improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system (A/69/346) and on measures taken and progress achieved in regards to the BPfA (A/69/182).³⁸ In December 2014, the Secretary-General's report on the post-2015 development agenda and its goals for 2030 (A/69/700) was published, providing a good synthesis of key information on the SDGs, including the empowerment of women and girls.³⁹

In 2014 and 2015, there are more than 150 events taking place promoting the Beijing+20 review, accelerating the implementation of the BPfA and strengthening women's rights.⁴⁰ The review process and active engagement of UN-Women has four objectives: "Renewed political will and commitment; social mobilization, awareness-raising and revitalized public debate; strengthened evidence base and knowledge generation; and enhanced and sufficient resources to achieve gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment."⁴¹ The events are organized at local to international levels by UN entities, national governments, and civil society organizations (CSOs) and actors.⁴² Some of the events are high-level meetings reviewing all aspects of the BPfA, some only address single critical areas of the document, and others discuss gender equality and the advancement of women in general

³² UN Commission on the Status of Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid; UN-Women, *Preparations*; UN-Women, *Official Documents*; World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, 2014; UN-Women, *Beijing +20 Events 2014-2015*, 2014.

³⁵ UN Commission on the Status of Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*; UN-Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women's Rights in the post-2015 Context*, 2014, p. 13ff.

³⁶ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/RES/69/151)*, 2014.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Advancement of Women – Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*, 2014, p. 55ff.

³⁸ UN General Assembly, *Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary General (A/69/346)*, 2014; UN General Assembly, *Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the general Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/182)*, 2014.

³⁹ UN General Assembly, *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700)*, 2014.

⁴⁰ UN-Women, *Beijing +20 Events 2014-2015*, 2014.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

considering the post-2015 development agenda.⁴³ The importance of the Beijing+20 review process and the topic of gender equality for the post-2015 development agenda was underlined by different high-level events such as the “World Assembly for Women: Tokyo 2014 – Towards a Society Where Women Shine” in September that promoted women’s rights to better education, access to reproductive health, and protection from gender-based violence as well as women’s participation in peace and security.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the third “International Conference on Small Island Developing States” (SIDS) hosted in Apia, Samoa, organized a side-event on the Beijing+20 review that was used as a platform to discuss the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all sectors of society as part of the sustainable development agenda for SIDS.⁴⁵ In the end, the outcome document of the International Conference on SIDS, resolution 69/15, not only included a whole section on gender equality and women’s empowerment, but also mainstreamed gender in other sections, ensuring gender-sensitive goals and measures for sustainable development.⁴⁶ To further prepare the Beijing+20 review at the 59th session of CSW, UN-Women held an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Envisioning women’s rights in the post-2015 context” from 3-5 November 2014 in New York.⁴⁷ The outcome report provides a detailed analysis of the progress made since 1995, along with the challenges and obstacles that still persist in the struggle for gender equality, and offers recommendations for the future path of women empowerment.⁴⁸

Recent Developments

UN-Women Expert Group Meeting

At the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Envisioning women’s rights in the post-2015 context”, scholars presented background papers and expert papers in order to a) “identify the constraints and challenges that have held back progress towards gender equality; b) identify the priorities and critical issues for advancing women’s and girls’ human rights; and c) develop action-oriented recommendations to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights in the post-2015 context.”⁴⁹ The outcome of the meeting was a comprehensive report on the progress made on women’s advancement in the last 20 years and offers recommendations to overcome new challenges through multidimensional governmental and non-governmental programs, institutional reforms, socially acceptable macroeconomic policies, and better support of civil society, especially in financial terms.⁵⁰ The report concludes that there has been significant progress in the advancement of women in several areas such as education, women’s participation in the political and economic sphere (especially through women’s movements), women’s inclusion in peace and security matters, protection of women from sexual violence, and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the BPfA nationally, regionally and globally.⁵¹ However, many problems remain, leading to stalled progress or even regression.

The EGM has identified five prominent challenges to gender equality.⁵² Some Member States are denying the universality of women’s and girl’s rights and are unwilling to improve gender equality, justifying their approach with culture, religion, traditions, and the principle of national sovereignty.⁵³ Furthermore, the Expert Group argues that the neoliberal economic model left the most vulnerable members of society without social safety nets, while at the same time facing discriminatory norms and gender stereotypes in institutions, the media, and education, stalling the progress of women’s participation.⁵⁴ Monitoring the progress made and accountability for actions taken or not taken by Member States has become more difficult due to the changing nature of the public sector, such as

⁴³ UN-Women, *Beijing +20 Events 2014-2015*, 2014.

⁴⁴ UN General Assembly, *Letter dated 29 September 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nation addressed to the Secretary-General (A/69/396)*, 2014; Japan, *Statement by H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Minami Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations at the Open Debate of the United Nations Security Council On Women and Peace and Security 28 October 2014*, 2014.

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly, *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (A/RES/69/15)*, 2014.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ UN-Women, *Expert Group Meeting: Envisioning women’s rights in the post-2015 context*, 2014.

⁴⁸ UN-Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women’s Rights in the post-2015 Context (EGM/B20/Report)*, 2014.

⁴⁹ UN-Women, *Expert Group Meeting: Concept Note (EGM/B20/INF.1)*, 2014, p. 2.

⁵⁰ UN-Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women’s Rights in the post-2015 Context (EGM/B20/Report)*, 2014.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 6f.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8f, p. 12f.

privatization.⁵⁵ Lastly, extremist movements and religious fundamentalism often deprive women of their rights to self-determination, education, access to reproductive healthcare, etc., as well as militarism, which generally leads to a greater threat of violence against women.⁵⁶ New policies and programs that build state capacity, ensure political willingness, and tackle those challenges on global, regional, national and local levels have to be agreed upon by the global community in its efforts for sustainable development post-2015.

Regional Developments

All five regional commissions, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), have convened within the recent months to conduct regional reviews and support Member States in conducting national reviews of the BPfA.⁵⁷ UN-Women has been setting up a database with all national reviews to date after providing a guidance note to national governments on how to conduct the review.⁵⁸ While most regional reviews have been submitted to UN-Women, ESCWA held the “Arab High-Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region” from 2-3 February 2015 in Cairo, Egypt.⁵⁹ At the conference, international and regional governmental and non-governmental organizations came together with national representatives to conclude the review report for the Arab region.⁶⁰ As of December 2014, there had been a regional workshop on the integration of a gender perspective in the production of statistics in order to improve measures of monitoring and accountability, a seminar to discuss combatting violence against women and girls, and an Expert Group Meeting on the issue of child marriage.⁶¹ In August 2014, a consultation workshop on the topic with the Arab civil society took place in order to discuss achievements, further challenges, and recommendations on a local, national, and regional level.⁶²

Gender-responsive Budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is “the systematic examination of government budgets and policies for the identification of their differential impacts on women, men, girls and boys with a view to proposing interventions that advance gender equality outcomes.”⁶³ This aspect of achieving gender equality was widely considered in the outcome documents of the regional review conferences in fall 2014.⁶⁴ All the regional economic commissions stated that that further application of GRB as an institutional mechanism is required in order to provide sufficient resources for the advancement of women.⁶⁵ The allocation of funds and reform of legislation, policies, and programs depends on the improved acquisition and analysis of gender-disaggregated and gender-responsive data.⁶⁶ UN ECE noted that gender budgeting has been implemented in some Member States; however, progress in terms of funding for gender equality policies is still low and difficult to monitor.⁶⁷ UN ESCAP reported that more than 10 Member States adopted GRB, including: “(a) gender budget statements; (b) the inclusion of GRB in national budgetary frameworks; and (c) designation of a minimum budget allocation for gender equality initiatives.”⁶⁸ Nonetheless, government funding for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment is deemed insufficient for achieving the

⁵⁵ UN-Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women’s Rights in the post-2015 Context (EGM/B20/Report)*, 2014, p. 9f.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11f.

⁵⁷ UN-Women, *Preparations*, 2014.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; UN-Women, *Guidance note for the preparation of national reviews*, 2014.

⁵⁹ UN ESCWA, *Arab High Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region*, 2014; UN-Women, *Beijing+20: Review of progress underway*, 2014.

⁶⁰ UN ESCWA, *Arab High Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region*, 2014.

⁶¹ UN ECW, *Meetings and Events*.

⁶² UN ESCWA, *Consultation Workshop with Arab Civil Society Organizations on Beijing+20*, 2014.

⁶³ UN ECA, *Twenty-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) + 20: Africa Regional Review Summary Report 1995-2014*, 2014, p. 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ UN ECA, *Addis Ababa Declaration on Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (ECA/SDPD/ACG/BEIJING+20/DEC./2014)*, 2014, p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ UN ECE, *Regional review of progress: regional synthesis (ECE/AC.28/2014/3)*, 2014, p. 15f.

⁶⁸ UN ESCAP, *Review of the progress and remaining challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/GEWE/1)*, 2014, p. 14.

strategic objectives of the BPfA.⁶⁹ The Commission has further recommended strengthening cooperation with CSOs, especially women’s movements, to better implement GRB.⁷⁰ A technical working group on gender budgeting will be established by UN ECLAC in cooperation with UN-Women, which includes not only government representatives but also civil society actors, that identify necessary measures to strengthen financial support of gender equality policies, initiatives, gender budgeting, and accountability for actions taken in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.⁷¹

Conclusion

The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women has gained momentum thanks to upcoming landmark events in 2015 and the tireless engagement of UN entities, governmental, and non-governmental actors. Recommendations for progressive policies, programs, and options for action can mainly be drawn from UN-Women sources on the Beijing+20 review, such as civil society reports and initiatives, expert papers, and national and regional reviews. Furthermore, general initiatives for gender equality and women’s empowerment by UN-Women, the regional UN Economic and Social commissions, or CSOs and women’s movements, as well as General Assembly resolutions on women’s advancement and BPfA follow-ups demonstrate the relevance of the issue at hand. It further shows the importance of further commitment of the international community to gender-sensitive development. Among many important events on Beijing+20 in 2015, the 59th session of the CSW in March 2015 will be the most crucial.

⁶⁹ UN ESCAP, *Review of the progress and remaining challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/GEWE/1)*, 2014, p. 14.

⁷⁰ UN ESCAP, *Report of the Conference (E/ESCAP/GEWE/2)*, 2014, p. 17.

⁷¹ UN ECLAC, *Special Session on Beijing+20 in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2014, p. 2.

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Preparations* [Website]. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations>

This website provides delegates with a UN-Women database of all collected national-level reviews on the implementation of the BPfA. It is a great source for every delegate to check on trends, achievements, and remaining shortcomings and challenges, as well as future plans to step up the commitment of their respective Member State following the UN-Women guidance note on how to conduct national Beijing+20 reviews. It further provides a general overview and further links for the regional Beijing+20 review processes taking place in the UN regional commissions.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women's Rights in the post-2015 Context (EGM/B20/Report)*. Retrieved 5 January 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/csw59-egm-report-en.pdf>

As the 59th session of the CSW to review and appraise the implementation of the BPfA comes closer, UN-Women conducted an Expert Group Meeting in New York in preparation for the global review. The result of the three-day meeting was a report which presents a great source to delegates in order to understand the challenges and opportunities for advocating gender equality and universal women's rights in today's world. The report contains a section on the progress made in women's advancement in the past 20 years, a chapter that explains remaining and emerging threats to further progress, and a chapter that lists recommendations to strengthen and accelerate implementation of BPfA.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Beijing +20 Events 2014-2015*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from:

http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/Field%20Office%20Beijing%20Plus/Attachments/Events/B20_ScheduleofEvents.pdf

The UN-Women event calendar is an exhaustive schedule of Beijing+20 events that occurred in 2014, and that will further take place in 2015. For delegates, this is a great starting point for research on any significant local, national, regional, or international meetings, conferences, or initiatives for their respective Member State or their topic of interest, including an overview of events on the 12 critical areas of the BPfA. Furthermore, the list provides delegates with some dates on civil society events which again play a crucial role in the issue of women's empowerment.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Official Documents* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/official-documents>

This website serves as a source of important information on the topic. First of all, and most interesting for delegates, it presents a list of statements from different NGOs about their results of the Beijing+20 review presented to the Economic and Social Council in 2014. This includes the identification of persisting challenges and various recommendations. Considering the importance of civil society actors for the advancement of women and promotion of gender equality, as well as their close collaboration with UN-Women, this is a good starting point for delegates to find out about some of their propositions. Moreover, the website will include official documents from a number of UN entities on this topic by the end of January/February.

United Nations General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Advancement of Women – Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/481

The report of the General Assembly Third Committee on the advancement of women is a collection of five relevant draft resolutions to further empower women and promote gender equality. The most relevant to this topic is draft resolution V on the BPfA follow-up which should be accessible in the next months under Resolution 69/151. Delegates may use the resolution to gain an overview of General Assembly engagement with the topic.

UN General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (A/RES/69/15)*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/15&Lang=E

This resolution is a great example for delegates to see how the post-2015 development agenda can shape regional approaches to development in the future. The document recognizes women as powerful agents of change in regards to societal development. The resolution includes a stand-alone section on gender equality and women's empowerment calling for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, strengthened participation of women in all spheres of life, and better education and access to healthcare. The resolution also succeeds in mainstreaming a gender perspective across all sections, demonstrating how future development goals could include gender-sensitive policies, programs, and other measures.

World Economic Forum. (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from:

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf

The Global Gender Report is an annual publication that offers delegates a gender equality profile of their respective Member State. The data available can be used to identify national strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the 2014 report provides data on the development of the gender gap over time from 2000 until 2014. However, the gender gap report does not provide recommendations beyond the analysis and presentation of country-specific or indicator-related numbers.

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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2014). *Regional review of progress: regional synthesis (ECE/AC.28/2014/3)*. Retrieved 30 January 2015 from: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/documents/Beijing+15/ECE.AC.28.2014.3.E.pdf>

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2014). *Special Session on Beijing+20 in Latin America and the Caribbean* [Statement]. Retrieved 30 January 2015 from: http://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/9/53409/14-20873_MDM-51_Beijing_statements.pdf

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2014). *Review of the progress and remaining challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/GEWE/1)*. Retrieved 30 January 2015 from: http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Beijing20_Review_Progress_%28E%29.pdf

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II. Achieving Gender Equality Post-2015 by Eliminating Violence against All Women

Introduction

Eliminating violence against all women and girls and the empowerment of women are at the center of discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.⁷² Through the end of 2014, constant attention was given to the issue by different programs and bodies, including the review processes on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, and the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign.⁷³ According to the World Health Organization, 35% of women worldwide are victims of sexual and/or physical violence.⁷⁴ This figure shows that, despite efforts made, the goal of gender equality remains unmet, and the need to find ways to eliminate violence against women and girls is as great as ever. Understanding the causes, costs, and consequences of violence against women (VAW) is only one part of the equation. The international community must continue to work on preventing violence by educating not only women and girls but also men and boys on the issue.⁷⁵ The UN continues its work towards a post-2015 development agenda that effectively protects women and girls from violence as a precondition for achieving gender equality beyond 2015.⁷⁶ UN-Women contributes to these efforts by providing knowledge and training to the UN and Member States and by assisting Member States' implementation of national and regional programs that address violence against women.⁷⁷

International and Regional Framework

The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, and multiple General Assembly and Security Council resolutions constitute the guiding framework for eliminating violence against women.⁷⁸ The Beijing+20 review process, as well as the discussion on sustainable development goals (SDGs) continuously, name the issue as one of most urgent for the post-2015 development agenda.⁷⁹ During its review process on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) highlighted that, although progress has been made, gender-based violence (GBV) must be further addressed and Member States must accelerate the process of ending violence against women in 2015.⁸⁰

Considerations on the issue have also been taken by General Assembly, which reinforced its commitment to facing the challenges of achieving gender equality and ending violence against women during its sixty-ninth session.⁸¹ Member States adopted several resolutions tackling both issues of gender equality and violence against women.⁸² Resolutions 69/156 on "Child, early and forced marriage" was unanimously adopted as part of the Third Committee's report A/69/484 on the "Promotion and protection of the rights of children."⁸³ Resolutions 69/147 on "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls," resolution 69/149 on "Trafficking in women and girls," resolution 69/150 on "Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations," and resolution 69/151 on the "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were all part of the Third Committee's report A/69/481 on "Advancement of

⁷² UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, *Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary-General*, 2012.

⁷³ UN-Women, *Beijing+20: Review of progress underway*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Resolutions, 69th session*, 2015; UN-Women, *Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence*, 2014.

⁷⁴ WHO, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*, 2013.

⁷⁵ UN-Women, *Annual Report 2013-2014*, 2014, p. 10.

⁷⁶ UNDESA, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, 2015; UN-Women, *The post-2015 development framework and gender equality: Opportunities and risks*, 2012.

⁷⁷ UN-Women, *Ending violence against women*.

⁷⁸ United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20/Add.1)*, 1996; UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979; UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)*, 1993.

⁷⁹ UN-Women, *Beijing+20: Review of progress underway*, 2015.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ UN General Assembly, *Promotion and protection of the rights of children: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/484)*, 2014; UN General Assembly, *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*, 2014.

⁸² UN General Assembly, *Resolutions, 69th session*, 2015.

⁸³ UN General Assembly, *Promotion and protection of the rights of children: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/484)*, 2014.

women” and adopted without vote.⁸⁴ With 2015 marking the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Member States seem especially committed to resolving the 12 critical areas of concern.⁸⁵ A special focus is given to ending VAW, which is reflected not only in the resolutions passed by the General Assembly but also in the range of global, regional and national awareness-raising activities.

Activities

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November marked the starting point of the Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign.⁸⁶ The campaign’s 16 days of activism, which is coordinated by UN-Women, raised worldwide awareness through numerous activities spread across five continents under the motto “orange your neighborhood.”⁸⁷ At the World Economic Forum in Davos, held from 21 - 24 January 2015, the HeForShe campaign presented its *IMPACT 10X10X10* pilot initiative, which aims to build an innovative partnership between governments, corporations, and universities.⁸⁸ These three groups are seen as “instruments of change” in addressing women’s empowerment and gender equality, hence pivotal to accelerating efforts towards ending VAW.⁸⁹

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women also met for the fifty-ninth time to discuss, inter alia, the post-2015 development agenda and the need to further actions to eliminate violence against all women and girls.⁹⁰ Civil society organizations have also remained active on the matter by launching specialized training programs how to address violence in emergencies or after natural disasters.⁹¹ As an example, the Fiji Red Cross Society hosted its White Ribbon Day in November to educate on “gender-based issues, violence against women and the available support networks in Fiji.”⁹² The Fiji Red Cross Society is also undertaking a two-year program, funded by UN-Women, that seeks to train women and girls to act as multipliers in the fight to end violence against women and girls.⁹³

Recent Developments

Causes, Consequences, and Costs of Gender-Based Violence

Presenting the 2014 Secretary-General’s report on women, peace and security at the Security Council Open Debate on women, peace and security on 28 October 2014, in New York, UN-Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stressed the imminence ongoing conflicts have on women’s and girls’ safety.⁹⁴ During conflict situations, women often face displacement and, as a result, more easily become victims of sexual violence, forced marriages, and trafficking.⁹⁵ The Security Council stressed that 2015 marks the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and that the Council will take this as an opportunity to resolve remaining issues during its High-level Review of resolution 1325 (2000) planned for October 2015.⁹⁶ At the same time, the Council welcomed news that the Secretary-General had commissioned a global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which will highlight good practices, remaining gaps, and identify needs for further action on peace and security.⁹⁷

In cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its MEASURE Evaluation initiative, Carolina Meija and others published a study on GBV and economic empowerment of women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Findings included the importance of understanding the interdependence of GBV and economic

⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*, 2014.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ UN-Women, *Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence*, 2014.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UN-Women, *Press release: UN Women launches HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 Initiative*, 2015.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/2014/III/CRP)*, 2014.

⁹¹ UN-Women, *In Fiji first responders train to address sexual violence in disasters*, 2014.

⁹² Fiji Red Cross Society, *White Ribbon Day*, 2014.

⁹³ UN-Women, *In Fiji first responders train to address sexual violence in disasters*, 2014.

⁹⁴ UN-Women, *Press release: As nature of conflicts change, UN Women urges swifter action to protect targets of violence*, 2014.

⁹⁵ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2014/693)*, 2014; UN-Women, *Press release: As nature of conflicts change, UN Women urges swifter action to protect targets of violence*, 2014.

⁹⁶ UN Security Council, *Verbatim record of 7289th meeting (S/PV.7289)*, p. 11.

⁹⁷ UN-Women, *Preparations for the 2015 High-level Review and Global Study*.

empowerment and that interventions on the latter can either increase or decrease GBV.⁹⁸ The study finds that economic empowerment interventions have a positive impact on GBV but only if programs consider cultural and social specifics, include men, and provide safe spaces for women and girls to share their experiences.⁹⁹

Addressing Abuse of Ageing Women and Women and Girls with Disabilities

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its twelfth session from 15 September to 3 October 2014.¹⁰⁰ Member States presented reports on their national policies with regard to citizens with disabilities, thus providing further insight into the living conditions of women with disabilities.¹⁰¹ Based on the reports, the Committee drew further conclusions and urged governments to provide more information on measures taken to prevent violence against women and girls.¹⁰² Additionally, the Secretary-General's report on women, peace, and security highlighted the importance of including women and girls with disabilities in program design.¹⁰³

Prevention and Education

Collaborating with the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign and UN-Women, the government of Cambodia presented its second "National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women" in November 2014.¹⁰⁴ The plan, effective from 2014 to 2018, aims to use evidence and reports from survivors of GBV to promote policymaking that is responsive to the actual needs of women.¹⁰⁵ Rather than just preventing violence against women, the plan seeks to improve response mechanisms and facilitate women's access "to legal protection, law enforcement, health care, legal aid and counseling services".¹⁰⁶

UN-Women further joined with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts' (WAGGGS) to provide educational training to young girls in December 2014.¹⁰⁷ With the "Voices against Violence" curriculum UN-Women, WAGGGS, and Zonta International aim to provide tools to young girls to address issues of violence within their communities.¹⁰⁸ The initiative will reach girls and young women in approximately 20 countries over the next two years and will be backed by online tools that can reach even further and multiply knowledge on how to conduct local campaigns, child protection policies, and country-specific challenges.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Further actions to eliminate violence against women will be a constant issue in 2015. The Beijing+20 review process, as well as negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs all, address the elimination of violence against women as a precondition for gender equality, economic empowerment, and development. However, challenges such as emerging conflicts and a lack of education and data on GBV still hinder efforts made by the international community.¹¹⁰ This especially affects vulnerable groups such as ageing women and women with disabilities.¹¹¹ While UN-Women can support the international community by collecting data and providing training on a national and regional level, there also needs to be a deepened understanding of how VAW affects other goals. Thus, a holistic approach is needed to fully capture the structural, institutional, cultural, and social causes and consequences of VAW.¹¹²

⁹⁸ Mejia et al., *Perspectives on Gender-Based Violence and Women's Economic Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, 2014, p. x.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. x, 7, 24.

¹⁰⁰ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2015.

¹⁰¹ International Justice Resource Center, *Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities focuses on women and conditions in Belgium, Denmark, Ecuador, Mexico, New Zealand, and South Korea during its 12th session*, 2014.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2014/693)*, 2014, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ UN-Women, *Cambodia takes multi-pronged approach to confronting gender-based violence*, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ UN-Women, *Innovative "Voices against Violence" curriculum mobilizes efforts to address the pandemic*, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo (A/HRC/26/38)*, 2014, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Violence against women – A pervasive human rights violation calls for a binding standard of accountability at the international level*, 2014.

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Mejia C. et al. (2014). *Perspectives on Gender-Based Violence and Women's Economic Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from:

<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/sr-14-111/>

This study gives a comprehensive overview of causes and consequences of GBV and how the issue is interlinked to other development goals. It provides lessons learned from past programs and shows how future programs can be improved. Delegates will find this source useful in understanding that gender equality and the elimination of violence against women cannot be achieved without taking other issues into consideration. Thus, it can be a useful resource for delegates when drafting their own solutions.

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2014). *Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo (A/HRC/26/38)*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/26/38

This source is a comprehensive report on the causes and consequences of violence against women and how they are interlinked to other issues. Furthermore, the report provides an overview of the activities of UN-Women, other UN bodies, and Member States. The source is very helpful in understanding current shortcomings to the elimination of VAW and which actions would be necessary to further the issue. Delegates will find this source helpful as it provides them with an overview of the topic as well as an analysis of the interdependence between VAW, human rights, gender equality, and development.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*. Retrieved 4 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/481

The Third Committee's report entails all resolutions that have been adopted at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly concerning gender equality and the elimination of violence against women. The report also summarizes some of the ongoing discussions among Member States thus giving delegates an insight into the current debate. The resolutions adopted will also help delegates distinguish areas that have been left out or those that need further attention in the post-2015 development agenda. It is thus a very helpful resource when preparing their position papers.

United Nations Security Council. (2014). *Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2014/693)*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/693

The Secretary-General's report explains in detail how women and girls are affected by conflicts and the consequences they are facing. It also gives information on how UN-Women is collaborating with the Council, UN bodies, civil society, and Member States on issues regarding women in conflict or post-conflict situations. Delegates will find this source helpful to get an overview of recent developments in this field and how the issue is interlinked to efforts on eliminating violence against women.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Innovative "Voices against Violence" curriculum mobilizes efforts to address the pandemic* [Website]. Retrieved 3 January 2015 from:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/12/innovative-voices-against-violence-curriculum-mobilizes-efforts-to-address-the-pandemic#sthash.v9aPw66.dpuf>

This short press release details significant information on how UN-Women is working in the field with civil society organizations. It is a good example of programs implemented and how these work to address the issue. Delegates will find this source interesting by focusing on methods to fight violence against women that might not have been taken into consideration by UN bodies on a broader scale.

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session [Website]. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://www.ijrcenter.org/2014/10/06/committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-focuses-on-women-and-conditions-in-belgium-denmark-ecuador-mexico-new-zealand-and-the-south-korea-during-its-12th-session/>

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III. Strengthening Women's Political Participation

“The goal of development, equality and peace cannot be achieved without meaningful participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making.”¹¹³

Introduction

Women's advancement and the further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) are both on the agenda of the 69th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.¹¹⁴ As one of the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA and a major focus of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), women's equal political participation remains crucial for achieving gender equality.¹¹⁵ UN-Women, along with civil society organizations (CSOs) and Member States, continues to collaborate and work towards closing that gender gap.¹¹⁶ While progress has been made, there is still no Member State that has fully closed the gender gap in political participation.¹¹⁷ According to the World Economic Forum, by the end of 2014 only 21% of the political participation gender gap had been closed.¹¹⁸ There are 98 countries below the world average with Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Lebanon, and Brunei Darussalam having the lowest score, of which Brunei Darussalam scored zero.¹¹⁹ While international efforts continue to close the gender gap, barriers, such as stereotypes and social norms, still exist, that challenge women's equal political participation.¹²⁰

Role of the International System

During its 69th session, the General Assembly Third Committee produced the report A/69/481 on “Advancement of Women,” which included five draft resolutions and one draft decision.¹²¹ One of the draft resolutions focuses on the “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly” (A/C.3/69/L.67) and was adopted by the General Assembly.¹²² This resolution calls upon the UN system to include a gender perspective in reports of the Secretary-General and other intergovernmental processes.¹²³ Furthermore, women's groups' participation in capacity building, increased outreach, and funding of the intergovernmental process on the empowerment of women were also highlighted and encouraged in the draft resolution (A/C.3/69/L.67).¹²⁴

Recent Development

Setting Norms and Standards

UN-Women conducted an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Envisioning Women's Rights in the post-2015” Context in New York from 3-5 November 2014.¹²⁵ During the meeting, the Expert Group identified challenges to, and priorities for, achieving gender equality and proposed action-oriented recommendations to meet them.¹²⁶ The EGM identified emerging challenges including the inefficiency of human rights law, the negative influence of militarism and extremism, discriminatory norms, neoliberal economic paradigms, and the unstable national and global environment as challenges to women's political participation.¹²⁷ The meeting recognized the progress made

¹¹³ UN ECA, *Twenty-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) +20: Africa Regional Review Summary Report 1995-2014*, 2014, p. 26.

¹¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Agenda of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly (A/69/251)*, 2014, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ UN-Women, *Women in Power and Decision-Making 2014*.

¹¹⁶ UN-Women, *Civil Society*.

¹¹⁷ World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, 2014, p. v.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ UN-Women, *Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation*, 2015.

¹²¹ UN DPI, *Adopting 68 Texts Recommended by Third Committee, General Assembly Sends Strong Message towards Ending Impunity, Renewing Efforts to Protect Human Rights*, 2014.

¹²² UN General Assembly, *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*, 2014, p. 11.

¹²³ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/C.3/69/L.67)*, 2014, p. 7.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ UN-Women, *Expert Group Meeting: Envisioning women's rights in the post-2015 context*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ UN-Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women's Rights in the post-2015 Context*, 2014, pp. 6-12.

on women's power in decision-making, especially since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on "Women, peace and security" that for the first time discussed gender equality in the context of the mandate of the Security Council.¹²⁸ The meeting recommended Member States develop legal frameworks and measures to accelerate women's equal political participation.¹²⁹ It further recognized that while reforms of legal systems and national frameworks could be conducted in a short period of time, changing social norms and stereotypes against women will take up more time and thus hold back the progress of gender equality.¹³⁰

Women's Political Participation in the Development Agenda

A study on violence against women in politics demonstrated that being isolated from public and political participation increases women's vulnerability to violence.¹³¹ However, findings also show, that taking a larger role in decision-making, might expose women to even greater risks of violence as their commitment can be interpreted as a threat to men's social status.¹³² Thus, empowering women with equal opportunities for political participation and preventing violence against women (VAW) from happening in cases where women have reached an equal share in political decision-making is crucial.¹³³ To that end, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (ECE) regional review on the BPfA, which took place on 6-7 November 2014, concluded that through legislation and voluntary agreements, women's political power and proportion on the boards of companies in Europe have increased.¹³⁴ While no country in the ECE region reached equal representation of men and women among national parliamentarians or managers, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden were the closest to achieve equal representation of men and women in their national parliaments.¹³⁵ Similarly, the 9th African Regional Conference on Women took place from 17-19 November 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.¹³⁶ The conference outcome indicated that women secured elected positions in houses of parliament in 12 countries, where effective strategies such as designated quotas and legal framework reviews contributed significantly to this progress.¹³⁷ Still, the conference noted that gender-insensitive work environments and perpetuations of VAW during the electoral cycle continue to obstruct closing the gender gap.¹³⁸ On 17-20 November 2014, the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 took place in Bangkok, Thailand, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).¹³⁹ According to data collected during the conference, the quota of female ministers reached approximately 20% in the 29 Member States of the region but was less than 10% in 17 countries.¹⁴⁰ Member States raised the need to revise socio-cultural values and to adopt and enforce legislation in order to achieve women's equitable political representation.¹⁴¹

Participation in Societies in Transition

The UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS) released a *Gender Forward Looking Strategy 2014-2018* in 2014 that emphasizes the advantages of a gender perspective in peacekeeping.¹⁴² To meet that emphasis, the strategy recommends creating more roles for women in peacekeeping operations like gender advisers, women's protection advisers, and focal points for women that help to improve women's safety and equal participation in peacekeeping.¹⁴³ The strategy also presents mechanisms to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of the strategy within the next four years.¹⁴⁴ Echoing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), DPKO and DFS emphasize that increasing women's participation in

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

¹³¹ UN-Women, *Violence Against Women in Politics: A Study Conducted in India, Nepal and Pakistan*, p. 15.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ UN ECE, *Regional review of progress: regional synthesis (ECE/AC.28/2014/3)*, 2014, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁵ UN ECE, *Trends in gender equality in the ECE Region (ECE/AC.28/2014/6)*, 2014, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁶ UN ECA, *Beijing plus 20*, 2014.

¹³⁷ UN ECA, *Twenty-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) +20: Africa Regional Review Summary Report 1995-2014*, 2014, pp. 26-27.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

¹³⁹ UN ESCAP, *Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review*, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ UN ESCAP, *Review of the Progress and Remaining Challenges in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/GEWE/1)*, 2014, p. 9.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² UN DPKO and UN DFS, *Gender Forward Looking Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. iii.

political processes and governance structures in all levels of decision-making as a top priority that must be considered alongside human rights protection, peacekeeping security sector reform, legal reformation, and conflict-related VAW.¹⁴⁵

Participation in Civil Society and Support Through Civil Society

Women’s Action for New Directions (WAND) and the EastWest Institute’s Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention jointly held the *Advancing the Role of Women Political Leaders in Peace and Security* conference in Rabat, Morocco, from 18-20 November 2014.¹⁴⁶ Female delegates from Afghanistan, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and the United States of America attended the discussion.¹⁴⁷ The conference identified violent extremism, rises in militarism, displacement, security threats at the regional level, and the absence of effective national action plans (NAPs) as the main challenges to protecting women’s equal rights.¹⁴⁸ All participants reached the agreement that individual comprehensive NAPs are needed to implement women’s rights in political decision-making.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the conference recognized that forming coalitions with international and national lawmakers will help to realize the women, peace and security agenda of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which eventually could serve as a tool to advance women’s role in politics.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

As the International Alliance of Women, a CSO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, stated in its statement during the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “the most important reason for the lack of fulfillment of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals...is their lack of [a] framework of participatory monitoring and accountability mechanisms to evaluate commitments of duty bearers.”¹⁵¹ As the BPfA enters its 20th year and the deadline for achieving the MDGs approaches, transforming ideas into actions has never been more crucial. Enhancing the existing international frameworks with effective monitoring systems, upholding Member States’ responsibility for their commitments and actions, and increasing gender-sensitive policies are significantly important to strengthen the BPfA’s effectiveness and efficiency on an international level. Further, at the national-level Member State’s can create an equal and safe environment for women to practice their rights and play a fundamental role in advancing women’s participation in political decision-making through by developing and establishing comprehensive national actions plans and legal frameworks. Strengthening women’s political participation does not only empower and enable women to live in freedom and joy, but it also empowers humanity to create a better world through increased equality. Although several barriers and obstacles remain, responsible international collaboration coupled with the UN system’s continuous support can deliver a brighter future for both men and women of the world.

¹⁴⁵ UN DPKO and UN DFS, *Gender Forward Looking Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, pp. 12-15.

¹⁴⁶ WAND, *Advancing the Role of Women Political Leaders in Peace and Security*, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ UN CSW, *Statement Submitted by International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.6/2015/NGO/102)*, 2014, p. 4.

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2014). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Envisioning Women's Rights in the post-2015 Context*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/csw59-egm-report-en.pdf>

This document focuses on current gaps and priorities in achieving gender equality in the post-2015 agenda. It provides delegates with information on what impact women's adequate political participation and power in decision-making could have in accelerating the process of closing the gender gap. As 2015 marks the deadline of the MDGs, delegates could also use this document to analyze more effective and realistic ways to strengthen women's political participation in the post-2015 agenda.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2015). *Beijing +20 Events 2014-2015*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from:

http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/Field%20Office%20Beijing%20Plus/Attachments/Events/B20_ScheduleofEvents.pdf

Since women's equal political participation and empowering women in decision-making are both critical areas of concern of the BPfA, keeping track of the ongoing process of the review process and Beijing +20 would be helpful for delegates to analyze the current international trend and events on the topic. This document provides a timeline of relevant events on Beijing +20. Delegate could use this source to find related events that involve women's political participation and keep track of the upcoming events, as well. This schedule also provides some national and regional events that could help delegates research on any national or regional progress and development.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Advancement of women: Report of the Third Committee (A/69/481)*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/481

This is a summary report on the advancement of women from the GA Third Committee. It not only includes the adopted draft resolutions that focus on accelerating the implementation of BPfA in post-2015, but also other topics, including ending all violence against women, that are related to gender equality. By reading this document, delegates get a clearer idea of the most important areas of concern regarding gender issues in the UN. Additionally, the five draft resolutions and diverse topics could also broaden possible research paths on issues that influence women's political participation.

Women's Action for New Directions. (2014). *Advancing the Role of Women Political Leaders in Peace and Security*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: http://www.wand.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WAND-PN_ConferenceRabatInsights_final.pdf

Civil society organizations (CSOs) contribute a significant amount of resources and expertise in the fight against gender equality. This conference report is a great example to show delegates how CSOs could get involved in the process of strengthening women's political participation. Having collected opinions and needs from five nations from different regions and development status, the outcomes this report provide could also represent the broad interests of many Member States.

World Economic Forum. (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf

The World Economic Forum has collected comprehensive data and established a unique model to calculate gender gaps on both global and national level. Delegate would find this document helpful during the process of researching appropriate gender indicators and measurements. The specific national data and progress would also provide insights for delegates to gain more knowledge on the obstacles and opportunities to close gender gap in post-2015.

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (n.d.). *Civil Society* [Website]. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/civil-society>

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