



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN MONDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 1995

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW), meeting in Beijing, China from 4 to 15 September 1995, will discuss and adopt a Platform for Action, as well as hear Plenary statements and commitments from governments regarding the women of the world. The draft Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/L.1), which will serve as the basis for negotiations, was originally prepared by the FWCW Secretariat, with input from five regional group meetings, four expert group meetings, consultations with UN agencies, and informal, open-ended consultations in December 1994. The UN member States began negotiations on the draft Platform from 15 March to 7 April 1995, at UN Headquarters in New York, during the 39th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Negotiations continued during informal consultations, which were held from 31 July to 4 August 1995 to reduce the number of outstanding issues to be discussed here in Beijing. Opening ceremonies will be held today, 4 September, after which delegates will begin to hear statements from States and agencies. Negotiations on the draft Platform for Action will resume on Tuesday, 5 September.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION

In resolution 45/129, the UN General Assembly endorsed resolution 1990/12 of the Economic and Social Council, which called for a world conference on women to be held in 1995 and requested that the CSW serve as the preparatory committee for the conference. In section III of resolution 37/7, the CSW requested that the Secretary-General prepare a draft Platform for its 38th session. Following that meeting, the CSW requested, in resolution 38/10, that the Secretary-General further develop the draft Platform, taking into account the results of regional group meetings.

### REGIONAL GROUP MEETINGS

The regional group meetings were organized by the UN Economic Commissions. The High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting of the ECE was held in Vienna from 17-21 October 1994. The Sixth Regional Conference on the Integration of

Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean met in Mar del Plata, Argentina from 20-25 September 1994, where the region's Platform for Action was discussed. The Platform was finalized at a 16-18 November meeting in Chile. The Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development was held at Jakarta, Indonesia from 7-14 June 1994. The Fifth African Regional Conference on Women was held at Dakar, Senegal from 16-23 November 1994. The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting was held at Amman, Jordan from 9-10 November 1994. Each meeting adopted a regional platform, which identified specific problems faced by women in that region.

### EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS

The Expert Group meetings focused on the subjects of: gender, education and training; women and economic decision-making; institutional and financial arrangements for the implementation of the FWCW's Platform for Action; and gender and the agenda for peace. The Expert Group meeting on the promotion of literacy, education and training, including technological skills, took place at the ILO International Training Center in Turin, Italy from 10-14 October 1994. The Expert Group on women and economic decision-making met in New York, from 7-11 November 1994. The Expert Group considering institutional and financial arrangements met in New York from 21-23 November 1994. The Expert Group meeting on peace and women in international decision-making took place in New York from 5-9 December 1994.

### THE 39th SESSION OF THE CSW

The 39th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, acting as the preparatory body for the FWCW, held its third and final preparatory session at the UN Headquarters in New York from 15 March to 7 April, 1995. This Session presented the first opportunity for delegates to examine and negotiate the draft Platform for Action to be adopted in Beijing. Due to the number of amendments to the Secretariat's draft Platform and the lack of agreement on numerous issues, negotiations moved to informal sessions early in the meeting. Delegates agreed to extend the CSW by three days in order to complete examination of every section of the draft Platform. The draft Platform, as adopted by the CSW, focuses on 12 critical areas of concern. In addition, a draft Declaration was drawn up by the G-77/China for

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negotiation and adoption at the FWCW, and an extra section dedicated to the girl child was added to the Platform.

Two key debates marked the Session. A small group of delegations objected to some sections of the draft that reaffirmed commitments adopted at previous UN conferences, notably the ICPD in Cairo. Secondly, a number of delegations objected to the use of the term "gender" in the Platform and proposed that it be bracketed throughout. A Contact Group was set up to report on this question to the FWCW. At the close of the CSW 20 percent of the draft Platform remained in brackets.

Mindful of modest resource commitments and with a view to pressing for an action-oriented Conference in Beijing and adequate effort to implement the Platform, the meeting also focused on two initiatives: an Australian call for a "Conference of Commitments," and a proposal to install an ombudswoman and unit in the office of the Secretary-General.

### **INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS**

Due to the large number of outstanding issues in the draft Platform for Action, ECOSOC mandated an additional week of informal consultations, which were held from 31 July to 4 August 1995 at UN Headquarters in New York. Delegates established the ground rule that agreements made in New York would be respected in Beijing. Delegates used two working groups to address disputed text by issue area, aided by an informal note prepared by the Secretariat that grouped bracketed text into issue "clusters". Working Group I, chaired by Patricia Licuanan (Philippines), addressed issues related to the macro-economic framework, resources and institutional framework. Working Group II, chaired by Irene Freudenschuss (Austria), addressed issues related to human rights and diversity. Progress was made in removing brackets from references to a number of economic and human rights issues, including structural adjustment programmes, sustainable development, international human rights instruments and economic rights. Other issues, such as references to the concepts of equity/equality, proved more difficult and remain bracketed. All issues related to health were held over for discussion in Beijing. The product of the informal consultations (A/CONF.177/L.3), which notes all text successfully negotiated during the informal consultations, is to be transmitted to the FWCW for consideration.

### **PRE-CONFERENCE CONSULTATIONS**

Pre-Conference consultations were held 2-3 September, 1995, at the BICC in Beijing to consider organizational and procedural matters. Secretary-General Mongella opened the consultations, after which Li Zhaoxing, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the PRC, was elected Chair of the pre-conference consultations. UN Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali conveyed his regrets to the conference that he was too ill to attend the FWCW opening ceremonies. Delegates moved quickly through the agenda, which included recommendations to the FWCW on the adoption of: the provisional rules of procedure (A/CONF.177/2 and A/CONF.177/3); election of officers (A/CONF.177/3); adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (A/CONF.177/1); organization of work, including the establishment of the Main Committee (A/CONF.177/3); credentials (A/CONF.177/3); report of the Conference (A/CONF.177/3); and report of the pre-Conference consultations. Delegates were informed that the results of the August informal consultations were being submitted for their consideration (A/CONF.177/L.3), and were reminded of their agreement to endorse the outcome.

### **DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

The draft Platform for Action consists of six chapters: the mission statement; the global framework; critical areas of concern; strategic objectives and actions; institutional arrangements; and financial arrangements. The twelve critical areas of concern, which are elaborated on in the chapter on strategic objectives and actions, relate to: women in poverty; education and health care; violence against women; effects of conflict on women; power-sharing and decision-making; mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; human rights; mass media; women's management of natural resources and the environment; and the girl child. The G-77/China proposed a draft Conference Declaration, to which the EU, US and Canada proposed amendments. The Declaration will be negotiated entirely in Beijing.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**WELCOMING CEREMONY:** The Government of the People's Republic of China has issued invitations to a welcoming ceremony in The Great Hall of the People, Tiananmen Square, at 10:00 am.

**PLENARY:** The opening Plenary will meet at 3:00 pm in BICC Hall No. 1. Tickets will be required for admission. Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kittani, will give the opening address. Chen Muhua, Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the PRC, is expected to be elected President of the Conference. As recommended by the 2-3 September Pre-Conference Consultations, delegates are then expected to adopt: the rules of procedure (A/CONF.177/2 and 177/3); the agenda and other organizational matters (A/CONF.177/1); election of officers other than the President (A/CONF.177/3); and organization of work, including the establishment of the Main Committee of the Conference (A/CONF.177/3). They will also appoint members of and receive a report from the Credentials Committee (A/CONF.177/3). Patricia Licuanan (Philippines) is expected to be elected chair of the Main Committee. Secretary-General of the Conference Gertrude Mongella will then address the Plenary. The general exchange of views will commence following her address, and is expected to continue until Thursday, 14 September. Many speakers are expected to announce commitments to take action in support of the Conference objectives during their seven minute statements. Some evening sessions may be necessary to accommodate all the speakers. The first speakers in the general exchange of views will be Prime Minister Bhutto (Pakistan), President Finnbogadottir (Iceland), Prime Minister Zia (Bangladesh), and Vice-President Kazibwe (Uganda).

**MAIN COMMITTEE:** The Main Committee will begin negotiations on the draft Platform for Action Tuesday morning. Two working groups are scheduled to examine the outstanding issues. Two contact groups may be necessary to negotiate the Declaration and the draft section on health. The Main Committee is expected to begin by considering the report of the Informal Contact Group on Gender (A/CONF.177/L.2) and the Non-Paper (A/CONF.177/L.3) that was transmitted to the FWCW from the August informal consultations.

**UN WORKSHOPS:** Agencies of the UN have organized a series of workshops and panels on Conference-related issues, which will be held in the Securities and Exchange Building, opposite the BICC from 5 to 14 September.