

BRIEFER: BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA)¹ AND THE BEIJING +25 REVIEW PROCESS



The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)** was adopted by consensus on 15 September 1995 by 189 countries during the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China. The BPfA is an internationally agreed declaration that both reaffirms as well as builds on CEDAW. Considered to be a major milestone of the global women's movement, it is considered a 'blueprint' for women's rights that identifies the central issue of inequality as the deterrent to achieving human rights and women's rights, gender equality, peace and security, and freedom from poverty.

The BPfA covers **12 key critical areas of concern** : (1) women and poverty; (2) education and training of women; (3) women and health; (4) violence against women; (5) women and armed conflict; (6) women and the economy; (7) women in power and decision-making; (8) mechanisms for the advancement of women; (9) human rights of women; (10) women and the media; (11) women and the environment; and (12) the girl child. These issues are regarded as of high importance and need proper attention for gender equality and women's human rights to be achieved in cultural, economic, environmental, political, and social dimensions. For each critical area of concern, a roadmap was created by setting strategic objectives and concrete actions for implementation to improve the situation of women.

Although its commitments are not binding, the BPfA upholds women's human rights and calls for strong commitments on the part of the governments and other institutions to fully achieve and implement the roadmap set by the BPfA. Among the requirements outlined in BPfA are mobilising of resources for the advancement of women, strengthening capacity of institutions advancing women's rights, providing equal opportunities and equal participation of women in all policy-making bodies at all levels, and establishing mechanisms for accountability to the world's women.²

¹United Nations (1995). Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>

²United Nations (1995). The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Institutional Arrangements, Financial Arrangements. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat2.htm>



Demonstrations during 1995 Beijing Conference

Photo Credit: Jo Freeman



BPfA +25 Review Process

The accountability framework for the BPfA requires member states to undertake a review every 5 years of their implementation at regional and global level. At the global level, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is leading the review of progress made on the implementation of the BPfA. In its 64th session, which is set to be held in March 2020, representatives of member States, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders will gather in New York to conclude the review process of the BPfA implementation, 25 years after its inception.³

At the regional level, Regional Commissions in cooperation with UN Women regional offices are leading the coordination of national review processes on the Beijing +25 review as informed by the national reports. In the Asia and the Pacific Region, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), through its Committee on Social Development, is also drafting an outcome document for the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+25 Review as a contribution to the global review process of the Beijing +25.

Ahead of both the regional and global process, member States of the United Nations are encouraged to work with the civil society organisations and other stakeholders to come up with comprehensive national-level reviews on the implementation of the BPfA. These national-level reports are also expected to reflect on the challenges encountered in the implementation of the BPfA and to integrate the broader discussion around the 5-year mark for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 20th anniversary for the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Civil society is also encouraged to submit shadow reports to UN Women to inform the regional review processes.

Asia Pacific Civil society engagement in the Beijing +25 review

ESCAP and UN Women are replicating the Beijing + 20 process in the Asia Pacific Region by establishing a Beijing +25 Civil Society Regional Steering Committee made up of ten organisations. The Committee's main objective is to guide CSO participation and contributions in the Beijing +25 review process in the Asia Pacific region as well as connecting the process with the global review to take place at the 64th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) in New York in March 2020.

The official Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will take place on 25-28 November 2019. The Steering Committee will organise a Civil Society Forum immediately prior to the intergovernmental meeting and facilitate calls for participation and inputs from all sub-regions of Asia Pacific as well as specific constituencies.

APWLD Priorities

APWLD sees the BPfA as a key tool for accountability on women's rights issues. The 25-year review needs to be a space where both achievements and failures are frankly and openly discussed. Systemic barriers to achieving substantive equality must be acknowledged and addressed.

The global BPfA review coincides with the review of the CSW methods of work and proposals of future themes of CSW. Therefore, it is important for civil society participating in the regional processes to already come forward with recommendations for both of these for States to hear and take forward.

³ UN Women (2019) CSW64 / Beijing+25 (2020). Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

