

# **Report of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review**

**BANGKOK, 17–20 NOVEMBER 2014**



Report of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality  
and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review  
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## Foreword



The significance of gender equality and women's empowerment for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development was highlighted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, when the global community adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have come to constitute global policy guidance for actions through which all women and girls will be able to fully exercise their rights, and gain equal access to opportunities for lives of dignity, choice and freedom.

To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2013/18, called on all Member States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in implementation of the Platform for Action. The resolution further encouraged "the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2015 review", overseen by the Commission on the Status of Women.

In accordance with this mandate, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convened, in cooperation with UN-Women, the "Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review" from 17 to 20 November 2014 in Bangkok.

Occurring at the juncture between the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals and the formulation of new global sustainable development goals, the Conference brought together more than 700 representatives from Governments, civil society and development partners from more than 50 countries, to address issues critical to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. These included reducing poverty among women, eliminating violence against women and girls, empowering women economically, increasing their political participation at all levels of government and addressing emerging environmental challenges.

ESCAP member States highlighted three key areas of achievement with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific, namely: (a) strengthening gender equality in national governments and governance; (b) addressing violence against women and girls; and (c) promoting the leadership and political participation of women. ESCAP member States also highlighted progress in the areas of women's economic empowerment, education and health, as well as in peace and security.

Alongside these achievements, ESCAP member States also identified regional challenges in realising gender equality and women's empowerment. The common challenge concerned normative frameworks and institutional mechanisms, with associated obstacles pertaining to policy and legislation formulation, implementation and monitoring; technical capacity; data and statistics; and patriarchal ideology. While delineated as areas of achievement, ESCAP member States noted that further progress was also required to end violence against women and girls; increase women's political participation and leadership; enhance women's economic participation; improve women's and girls' health; and address such environmental issues as climate change and natural resource management, as ongoing challenges to the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Building on this review of progress, remaining challenges and priority actions needed, ESCAP member States adopted the "Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", which is presented in this document.

The Ministerial Declaration represents a strong and united voice of the Asia-Pacific region, signifying intensified efforts by ESCAP member States to eliminate gender discrimination and inequality, as a matter of human rights, and for the development and prosperity of the region. Governments from across the region also pledged to strengthen institutions, enhance accountability, increase resources, forge stronger partnerships and support regional cooperation in order to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Implementation by Governments of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration, alongside the Beijing Platform for Action, will require engagement with non-State actors, including civil society, research and academic institutions, the private sector and the media. Importantly, Governments have committed to exploring dedicated funding mechanisms and programmes to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, from the national to local levels.

In the coming years, and in alignment with both regional priorities and the new global development agenda, the Ministerial Declaration will guide the collective efforts of Asia-Pacific countries in accelerating implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the realization of the goals of gender equality, human rights and opportunities for all women and men, girls and boys.



**Shamshad Akhtar**

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Convenor, Asia-Pacific United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism

## Explanatory note on ESCAP

ESCAP is the regional development arm of the United Nations and serves as the main economic and social development centre for the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific. Its mandate is to foster cooperation among its 53 members and 9 associate members. ESCAP provides the strategic regional link between global and country-level programmes and issues. It supports Governments of the ESCAP region in consolidating regional positions and advocates regional approaches to meeting unique Asian and Pacific socioeconomic challenges in a globalizing world. The ESCAP secretariat is located in Bangkok.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org).

## Explanatory note on the Beijing+20 review process

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which were subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Every five years since 1995, progress in achieving the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action is reviewed by the Commission on the Status of Women, which is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. There have been three reviews to date—2000, 2005 and 2010—with each review resulting in a declaration that reinforces global commitment to the empowerment of women and girls.

2015 will mark the fourth review and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In its resolution 2013/18, the Economic and Social Council called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action. In addition, the resolution of the Economic and Social Council encouraged “the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2015 review” overseen by the Commission on the Status of Women.

In accordance with this mandate, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in cooperation with UN-Women, undertook a regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Asia and the Pacific, which culminated in the “Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review”, which was held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014.

The “Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review” brought together ministers and senior officials from Asian and Pacific countries, including representatives of national women’s machineries and key ministries, as well as representatives of intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations and civil society. The outcome of this Conference, namely the “Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”, serves as the Asian and Pacific regional input to the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held in New York from 9 to 20 March 2015.

## ESCAP Members and Associate Members

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