

SUMMARY REPORT

# THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION TURNS 20



Progress, challenges and lessons learnt for the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context are presented in this summary, prepared by UN Women, of the Report of the Secretary-General on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3).

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# SUMMARY REPORT: THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION TURNS 20



**UN WOMEN**

New York, March 2015

A summary of the Report of the Secretary-General on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3).





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# FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This report is a wake-up call.

With its up-to-date evidence and analysis of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it is a salutary account of a world that has not, in the main, improved much for women and girls, and for some has got a lot worse. It is also an account of a world where new actors are starting to recognize their shared responsibility for achieving change.

Twenty years ago we were buoyed up by the unified determination and conviction of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Generations have been—and continue to be—inspired by the blueprint for gender equality and women’s empowerment. We are seeing better laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. Girls’ enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased, women are participating more actively in the labour force, especially in Latin America, and most regions have made progress in increasing women’s access to contraception with especially remarkable progress in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Twenty years on, it is a hard truth that many of the same barriers and constraints that were recognized by the Beijing signatories are still in force globally. There are bright highlights where progress has been made. But no country has achieved gender equality.

The overall picture is of slow and uneven implementation, with serious stagnation and even regression in several areas. Progress has been particularly slow for the most marginalized women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Governments and other stakeholders have in many cases taken strong and positive action. But policy prioritization has not been consistent across all critical areas of concern. Change has not been deep enough, nor comprehensive, and it is not irreversible.

The lack of resources, in national budgets and internationally, for implementing the Platform for Action emerges as a key challenge in the review. This is counterpointed by evidence of improvements where official development assistance has been concentrated—for example in education—yet significant underinvestment in other sectors and overall remains an acute concern.

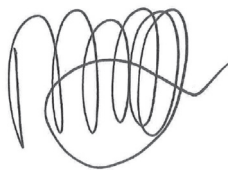
In recent years, progress on gender equality has been held back by forces in the global political and economic landscapes that have been particularly hard to mitigate or combat. Persistent conflicts, the global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, and climate change have intensified inequalities and vulnerability, and have had specific and almost universally negative impacts on women and girls. Fragile gains towards gender equality continue to be threatened by rising extremism and specifically directed backlash against women’s rights in many contexts. Deep-seated discriminatory norms, stereotypes and violence remain pervasive, evidencing gender-based discrimination that continues to be deeply entrenched in the minds of individuals, institutions and societies.

Creating a world with greater equality for generations to come is the defining and most urgent challenge of this century. Gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights are fundamental

for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development and must be central to the post-2015 development agenda.

We have set 2030 as the expiry date for gender inequality. Achieving this will require unprecedented political leadership, dedicated and vastly increased resources, and new partnerships across the whole of society. This review gives us clear direction on where our efforts must and will focus in order to deal, once and for all, with this greatest human rights violation. I urge all our partners to give close attention to this review's recommendations as we turn now to develop

and then implement the new post-2015 development agenda, at whose heart lies the renewed vision of a just, sustainable and prosperous world in balance.



**Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**

*United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
and Executive Director of UN Women*

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

The present report is a summary of the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/2015/3) on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The report provides a review of national level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective, as mandated in the Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18.<sup>1</sup>

The first section of the report provides an overview of twenty years of implementation of the Platform for Action. The following sections of this report highlight the trends and priorities in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern, including an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation. The report concludes with lessons learnt and priorities for accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action and the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context. The full version of the Secretary-General's report can be found here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/official-documents>.

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