

In the last decade of the 20th century governments of the world committed themselves to advance gender equality and women's rights in a series of international conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and the World Summit on Social Development (1995). These commitments were reaffirmed at five-year review meetings and incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals adopted by UN Member States in 2000.

The Millennium Declaration establishes the values that underlie global development. Stating that gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but is critical to our ability to reach all development goals, the Declaration resolves "to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable."

Any assessment of progress towards gender equality requires an understanding of the context in which our world is currently shaped: economic globalization, national fragmentation and conflict and problems without borders — all with major consequences for women's lives. The financial crises in Asia and Latin America and the world trade negotiations have highlighted the issues that need to be addressed in globalization. While many women have benefited from new opportunities opened by globalization, others have experienced new or deepening inequalities in access to opportunities and resources. We must make globalization work for all women, so that those relegated to badly paid jobs in the informal and casual sectors or struggling for livelihoods in poor, rural areas can benefit.

A parallel process is one of fragmentation, along lines of ethnicity, language and religion. There are more intra-state conflicts today than at any time in recent history. The use of gender-based violence, including rape, forced pregnancy and deliberate infection with HIV/AIDS, has become a horrifying feature of ethnic and religious conflicts. While gains have been made in terms of international frameworks and national plans of action to combat violence against women, it remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations worldwide.

Both globalization and fragmentation have been accompanied by a rise in problems that know no borders, including trafficking in women and children and the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS, a disease which has decimated families and communities, leaving AIDS orphans in the care of women who themselves are ill.

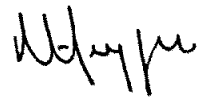
Against this background, it is significant that 189 nations adopted women's empowerment and gender equality as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. One month after the Millennium Summit, in October 2000, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, which recognized the impact of war on women and included specific recommend-

## P R E F A C E

ations for improving women's protection during conflict and women's leadership in peace-building and reconstruction. And in June 2001, at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, nations agreed to a set of targets to promote girls' and women's empowerment as "fundamental elements in the reduction of the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS."

These resolutions and documents unite the goals of human development, human security and gender equality. They build upon the commitments to gender equality made at the world conferences of the 1990s and in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has now been ratified by 171 countries. Nevertheless, they leave critical questions unanswered: What will it take for all the countries and communities of the world to meet these goals? How do we measure gender equality and women's empowerment? How can we prevent the gains of the last decade from being lost in the current world context?

The fact that tracking progress on gender equality and women's rights is on the agenda is, itself, a sign of progress. But for commitments to have an impact, we need accountability, action, and political will. *Progress of the World's Women 2002* is issued at a time when there is a deeply held hope of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and of progress for all people. This hope can be fulfilled only in a world where human rights and human security move from the margins to the centre, to create a safer, better world for all.



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