



***Accelerating the Realization of Gender Equality and
the Empowerment of all Women and Girls***
**High-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World
Conference on Women**

United Nations Headquarters, New York
1 October 2020

Background

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/340 of 19 September 2019 and decision 74/562 of 22 July 2020, the Assembly will convene a high-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, on 1 October 2020, with the overall theme of “Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. The high-level meeting will build upon the mandated multi-stakeholder hearing of 21 July 2020, and will take place in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and its theme of “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”. This meeting will form part of the high-level week of the seventy-fifth session of the Assembly.

Introduction

Twenty-five years after its adoption, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Its 2020 progress review for the first time takes place in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda, including SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, highlight the centrality of gender equality to progress across all the Goals and targets.

The Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, launched by world leaders in September 2019, contributes to the mobilization of stakeholders to tackle both emerging and existing gaps in the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General

Assembly (E/CN.6/2020/3) demonstrates that important gains have been achieved since 1995: for example, more girls are in school than ever before and more countries have reached gender parity in educational enrollment; the global maternal mortality ratio has decreased significantly, and the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased over the past decade.

However, in recent years progress has not been fast or deep enough, has been uneven and even stalled in some areas. No country has fully achieved gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Major gaps remain and challenges persist that affect the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and their enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Many women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization throughout their life course.

The gender gap in labour force participation has stagnated over the past 20 years, and the majority of employed women work in the informal economy. Women and girls are disproportionately responsible for unpaid care and domestic work, and women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Women still hold only a quarter of seats in single or lower houses of parliament around the world, and reports of attacks on women in political and public life are increasing. Violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres remains pervasive. Despite shrinking civic space, stakeholders all over the world have been inspired by women's movements and energized by youth activists and are mobilizing to accelerate progress and achieve systemic change.

As the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates pre-existing inequalities and threatens to halt or reverse the gains of decades of collective effort, it is more important than ever to accelerate action for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, women and girls are disproportionately affected. World leaders must acknowledge and support the critical role that women play in building resilience and recovery efforts in both the rapid response and the long-term of building back better.

Action by all stakeholders, from Governments to civil society, the private sector to academia, trade unions to national human rights institutions, and from the local to the global and multilateral level are now more urgent than ever. Only through concerted efforts will the promise of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after its adoption, and of the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development be realized, for all women and girls, everywhere.

The high-level meeting is an opportunity to demonstrate the political will and leadership that will bring about the transformative change needed to address root causes, structural barriers and discriminatory practices and social norms that underpin discrimination and inequality. Achieving gender equality is everyone's responsibility.

Format

Opening segment

As per General Assembly resolution 73/340, the opening segment, to be held from 09:00 to 10:00, will feature statements by:

- the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session,
- the Secretary-General,
- a representative of China as the host country of the Fourth World Conference on Women,
- the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women),
- the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund,
- the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,
- the Chair of the Working Group of the Human Rights Council on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice,
- the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on violence against women, its causes and consequences, as well as
- an eminent high-level champion of gender equality, to be selected, in consultation with Member States, by the President of the Assembly,
- a representative from civil society to be selected, in consultation with Member States, by the President of the Assembly, and
- a young woman leader, to be selected, in consultation with Member States, by the President of the Assembly.

Plenary segment: concrete action for accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

As per General Assembly resolution 73/340, Heads of State and Government and other leaders are encouraged to present concrete new actions and demonstrate commitments to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030, including in support of the role of civil society organizations and youth.

Such action is urgently needed in regard to the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the new challenges that have emerged in their implementation. The Political Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session ([E/2020/27](#)) drew attention to these and identified a range of strategies that can be successfully deployed for measurable progress. Sustainable Development Goal 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, sets out specific targets that are to be achieved by 2030.

Committing to new and measurable concrete actions will demonstrate the political will and leadership to galvanize transformative change. Actions to counter the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and well-being of women and girls everywhere are especially critical in three cross-cutting areas: Ensuring women's equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making; Driving transformative change for equality by addressing the care economy (paid and unpaid), as well as violence against women; and Targeting women and girls in all efforts to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

Closing segment

The closing segment, to be held from 18:30 to 19:00, will comprise concluding remarks by the President of the General Assembly.

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will circulate a summary of the high-level meeting to Member States, relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders.

The high-level meeting will be webcast and given the highest visibility through all relevant UN and UN-Women media, including social media platforms.