



August 2, 2012

POSITION PAPER

5th World's Conference on Women & 20 Year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women, Equality, Peace and Development (1995)

1. POSITION STATEMENT

The NGO CSW-Geneva supports the holding of a 5th World Conference on Women including the 20 Year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). This Position Paper provides the background to this decision; the rationale for such support and the key issues for considerations. The paper is presented pursuant to the rights of NGOs in consultative with the United Nations.

2. ABOUT THE NGO CSW-GENEVA

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women – Geneva is one of the substantive committees of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO), an organisation in consultative status with the United Nations. It works collaboratively with its sister Committees in New York and Vienna in creating and leveraging space for civil society and especially women's organizations' engagement with the United Nations, particularly in such forums as the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Human Rights Council, among others. The NGO CSW-Geneva has played a leadership role in supporting stronger institutional mechanisms within the UN systems including the inter-governmental processes and within the secretariat, programmes, funds and specialized agencies. Since 1973, the NGO CSW-Geneva mobilized the inter-generational voices of women and girls from a human rights and empowerment perspective.

3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1 The NGO CSW-Geneva has for years supported the lobby for the 5th Women's World Conference and the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women, Equality, Peace and Development (1995). The Women's World Summit Foundation is one of the member organisations leading this global advocacy effort through the NGO Core Group. Since 2001 the Core group had been involved in many lobby activities including statements during the UN CSW, public awareness activities, including a website (<http://5wcw.org/>); public petitions and engagement with many actors, leaders

and women such as Getrude Mongella, Secretary General of the 4th World Conference on Women.

3.2 On October 12, 2011, the NGO CSW-Geneva held its strategic planning consultation, identified priorities of work and recommitted to monitoring of BPFA, CEDAW and UN Resolution 1325 among other international standards on women's rights and empowerment. On 5th of December 2011, the NGO CSW-Geneva at its membership meeting clarified its position on the proposals and lobby for the 5th Women's Conference on Women and the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. The meeting adopted a resolution, which states "*The NGO CSW-Geneva supports the 20 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Such a conference should not open the BPFA and should focus on implementation and emerging issues.*"

3.3 The 5th World Conference on Women– UN Proposals:
On the 8th of March, 2012, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban ki Moon and President of the General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, officially made a joint proposal for a Fifth World Conference on Women.

New York, 8 March 2012 - Joint announcement by the President of the General Assembly and the United Nations Secretary-General on the occasion of the International Women's Day

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations would like to jointly propose the convening of a Global Conference on Women by the United Nations in 2015, 20 years after the last women's summit in Beijing.

<http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=5904>.

The NGO CSW-Geneva welcomed this statement in principle as a step forward in opening opportunities for greater consultation and discussion on the matter.

3.4 On announcement of the proposal by the UN Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly on March 8, 2012; the NGO CSW-Geneva convened two meetings under a special initiative on the 5World Conference for Women that were coordinated by WWSF. The NGO CSW-Geneva members also:

- Participated in the AWID Forum and especially the Caucus meetings discussing the 5WCW.
- Received information from some its member's on their propositions, and held some informal consultations with the UN and with some governments.

- Reviewed materials from other organizations and Networks such GEAR, media reports, online materials and discussions.
- Noted and respected the approaches adopted by sister NGO CSW Committees in New York and Vienna.

4. RATIONALE FOR THE NGO CSW-GENEVA POSITION

The following are the main factors and reasons taken into account:

- 4.1 A 5WCW is about a global collective assessment and monitoring of the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action (1995), CEDAW, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 among others. It is an opportunity for collective accountability and recommitment to women's rights and empowerment. It is important to seek global accountability and ensure that the global, regional and national policies and commitments are translated to practical lived realities for women. Such a conference should NOT RENEGOTIATE EXISTING commitments, international laws and standards on women. A 5WCW must identify the barriers and bottlenecks affecting implementation and propose strategic and practical solutions. Such a conference should identify the deep-rooted trends as well as emerging issues impacting negatively on efforts to accelerate the advancement of women and gender equality. The conference should also identify the positive and facilitating factors that can unleash potential and opportunities for women and girls.
- 4.2 A 5WCW will provide the opportunity to assess progress, celebrate and announce achievements over the decades, made such as a) at national level: the adoption of legislation on violence against women, gender responsive budgeting, girls education initiative, campaigns to reduce maternal mortality, mobilization of women in the AIDS response etc; b) the significant progress in various regions such as the European Union Declaration on Violence Against Women; the Africa Protocol on Women's Rights among others, c) the global progressive steps such as the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325/2000, the systematic monitoring through CEDAW and the establishment of UN Women, just to name a few. Such a conference offers a unique opportunity for the women and governments of the world to name and affirm their achievements and progress at the local, national and international level.
- 4.3 A 5WCW creates a significant opportunity for citizens, women and men to robustly debate and reposition women's rights and gender equality as central to the post Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)s agenda. It brings into sharper focus the importance of centering women's rights and empowerment in the new development framework, thus offering options to the current MDG framework where gender agenda was marginal. It provides the policy space and scope for national and regional consultations that are catalytic to policy

change. In the last twenty (20) years the world has changed, demographically, economically and technologically. More than half of the world's 7 billion people are women, majority who remain disempowered and with human rights unfulfilled. These elements have reshaped the world and how we live in it with great successes and also with major gaps and challenges across regions and diversities of opportunities.

4.4 A 5WCW will re-engage the women of the world to reclaim and own the agenda for women's rights and gender equality as well as their contribution to a world of peace, justice and development. There is significant fragmentation at the moment, and the mobilization for women's agenda is more technocratic and confined more and more to the mainstreaming approaches. A 5WCW will bring back the transformative process and offer stronger impetus for coherent implementation of the peace, equality and development agendas.

4.5 A 5WCW by nature is MORE than a single event in one place and for a few people. It is global multi level and multi year mobilization effort that re-energizes and sustains the women's movement; creating open spaces for stakeholder dialogues. It offers opportunities to many young women to own and experience the women and gender equality agenda in their own way. It is an inter-generational space of learning, sharing, nurturing and positioning the women's rights and empowerment agenda. In a context of many crises such as financial, food, fuel, conflict, values and norms ~ it is critical that there is a clear space for a recommitment to women's rights and gender equality. The Process is as important as the outcome. The 5WCW's approach, role and benefit cannot be reduced to the singular global event of a few, but should be the encompassing processes at all levels.

5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

There have been many voices and legitimate concerns erring on the side of caution. The NGO CSW-Geneva discussed the following issues and informed itself on how these could be addressed. Debates and discussions continue around these key issues, which require judicious considerations.

5.1 **Modality and Format.** We recommend to an inter-governmental approach with clear modality for civil society's effective participation, consultation and critical involvement. The modality and format adopted must enable and facilitate adequate ownership of the agenda by women and people in communities; enable country level consultations and with a strategic and visible regional level engagement. It should build on existing mechanisms and maximize synergies. The global conference should be a culmination of a bottom up process. There should be opportunity to maximize the use of social

media and new technologies for more inclusive dialogues. A rights based approach and accountability framework should be adopted. One of the key outcomes from an inter-government process is to strengthen the gender equality mechanisms within countries as well as at the UN such as UN Women.

5.2 The BPFA IS NOT Open for Negotiation. In the past women's world conference, there has never been a precedent for renegotiating a prior agreement. The focus should be on monitoring implementation; accountability and identifying emerging issues. The Conference and reviews should focus on expanding the women's human rights approaches and jurisprudence; bridge the gap between the normative and the operational, create opportunities for resourcing gender equality and strengthening the accountability frameworks. The civil society and women's organisations are cautious following the experiences and disappointment with the 56th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the outcome of Rio plus 20 Conference. A 5WCW therefore offers the voice again to women, gender advocate and others at local, national, regional and international level to reclaim the space and recommit to women's empowerment and human rights.

5.3 What about the costs with this financial crisis. The NGO CSW-Geneva is equally cognizant of the current resourcing and financing environment. We recommend that the core costs of conference and review should be integrated into the regular budget of the United Nations. Stronger partnerships with various sectors of civil society should be leveraged, as well as women and community funds, to compliment the resources from governments and other governmental institutions. It's also important to draw on the extensive volunteer movement that exists as well as the generosity of many people of good will. We continue to encourage government to reduce military expenditures and invest in social services and economic development programmes in communities.

5.4 Timing & Venue. This is one critical decision considering the broader UN and development agenda. The 2014 – 2015 calendars include the ICPD plus 20 and the MDG focused Assembly in 2015. If the 5WCW is held before 2015 it can influence the development agenda significantly. If held post 2015 this should be at a strategic moment to define and generate commitment to implementation of women's rights and empowerment commitments in the new agenda. In either cases adequate time which be budgeted for the preparations, and quality national and regional consultations. The venue for the actual global conference should be in a country, which is accessible without many visa and travel restrictions. The conference should be in a

country that promotes rights of women; freedom of movement and participation of citizens.

6. SOME EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 The existence of UN Women and other mechanisms for gender equality including with the Human Rights Council and the Security Council offers strategic opportunities for such a conference. Together with the policy commitments on gender equality, women and girls of other UN agencies, programmes and funds, treaty bodies and other mechanism, this is indeed a timely opportunity convene a process around the 5WCW.

6.2 A stronger inter-generational and diversity perspective is a catalyst for practical and strategic focus on long life women's rights and empowerment agenda. Bringing a strong engagement of the young people and especially girls, adolescents and young women provides the benefits of the demographic youth bulge and hands the agenda to a new generation; while involving the older generations in maintaining and reaffirming the importance of the gained equality and gaps. The involvement of adult and older women sustains the struggle over generations and offers opportunity to defend the gains already achieved. This enables to bring voices of persons with disabilities, men and boys, displaced communities such as refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.

6.3 Leveraging the Information Society, the social media and new technologies. This another new world of possibilities in communications, the media, mobile telephony, technologies for enhancing equality and quality of life, radio and old forms of media like drama, drums and word of mouth mobilization.

6.4 And many more...

The document forms the foundational position of the NGO CSW -Geneva and it will be reviewed periodically. Organizations and individuals endorsing this position are requested send a note to ngocsw-geneva@hotmail.com.

Note: Members of the NGO CSW-Geneva retain their rights to articulate their positions in accordance with our rules of procedure.

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