

## 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration on women's rights

4<sup>th</sup> September 2020, New York

25 years ago, the **4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women** in Beijing set a path-breaking agenda for women's rights. As a result of the 2 weeks gathering with **more than 30 000 activists, representatives from 189 nations** unanimously adopted the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. This historic blueprint articulated a vision of **equal rights, freedom and opportunities for women**, everywhere, no matter what their circumstances, that continues to shape gender equality and women's movements worldwide.

A quarter century on, the UN Secretary-general Antonio Guterres, calls for urgent action “ **With nations around the world searching for solutions to the complex challenges of our age, the leading way for all of us to rebuild more equal, inclusive, and resilient societies, is to accelerate the implementation of women's rights, the Beijing Platform for Action. That vision has been only partly realized. We still live in a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture, and this simply has to change**”

25 years later, a major stock-taking UN Women report published earlier this year showed that progress towards gender equality is faltering and hard-won advances are being reversed. **Women currently hold just one quarter of the seats at the tables of power across the board. Men are still 75% of parliamentarians, hold 73% of managerial positions, are 70% of climate negotiators and almost all of the peacemakers.**

The anniversary is a wake-up call and comes at a time when the impact of the gender equality gaps is undeniable. Research shows the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and threatening to halt or reverse the gains of decades of collective effort, with just released new data revealing that **the pandemic will push 47 million more women and girls below the poverty line**. We are also witnessing **increased reports on violence against women** throughout the world due to the lockdowns, and **women losing their livelihoods faster because they are more exposed to hard-hit economic sectors**.

While much work remains on fulfilling the promises of the Beijing Platform for Action, it continues to be a global framework and a powerful source of mobilization, civil society activism, guidance and inspiration 25 years later?

It was at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Women where Hillary Clinton coined the phrase: “**Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights**”

The current UN General Assembly held right now is a key opportunity to bring to the forefront the relevance of the Beijing Declaration and move the needle on implementation, **with a High-Level Meeting attended by global leaders on “ Accelerating the Realization of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls”** on 1 October. The event will showcase how building equal and inclusive societies is more urgent than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic ravages lives and livelihoods.

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka said: “**This is a re-set moment. On this important anniversary, let us reaffirm the promises the world made to women in 1995. Let us draw on the activist spirit of the Beijing Conference and commit to forging new alliances across generations and sectors to ensure we seize this opportunity for deep, systemic change for women and for the world**”

The anniversary will be further commemorated in the context of **the Generation Equality Forum**, a civil society-centered, global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of France and Mexico, foreseen to take place in the first half of 2021.

Based on UN Women release

Martine Gayon

UN Representative, New York.