



PRESS RELEASE

(Issued by the Information Service of ECA)

15 September 1995

CONFERENCE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S CLOSING STATEMENT AT CONCLUSION OF FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Their diversities should now make women 'greatest multipliers of prosperity, rather than greatest victims of poverty,' states Gertrude Mongella

As I rise to make my closing remarks at this most special of all United Nations world conferences, I cannot help but heave a big sigh of relief. Relief, not because the numerous meetings, consultations and events associated with the Fourth World Conference on Women are officially over. But relief and happiness, that we have made it.

My dear sisters and brothers, we have made it we have managed to transcend historical and cultural complexities; we have managed to transcend socio-economic disparities and diversities; we have kept aflame our common vision and goal of equality, development and peace. In a number of areas, we have significantly expanded the horizons of previous conferences. Finally, we have managed to achieve our consensus document - The Platform for Action - a task that was accomplished through the hard work and cooperative spirit, dedication and determination of governments and other groups represented here.

It is a wonderful feeling. I am sure that we all share this moment for which we have all diligently worked from all levels. We all contributed our part so we can all join together to celebrate our common achievement of today in the same spirit of solidarity which guided our activities and actions up to, and including Beijing. Each and every one has contributed time, energy and vision to enable us all to arrive at this critical turning point in the history of humanity. I thank you all sincerely.

To our hosts, the Government and People of China, no words can adequately express my gratitude for the physical infrastructure you placed at our disposal; for the moral and friendly support you provided to make us feel we are at home here; for the untiring efforts you made to secure and protect us; and also for the many

- more -

spectacular entertainment and events arranged for participants to both the NGO Forum and the Conference. Thank you for all these. We are especially grateful to the China Organizing Committee and the All-China Women's Federation and all the volunteers for their dedication and commitment and for the smooth coordination of all preparatory arrangements.

The 1995 NGO Forum on Women, which was held from 30 August to 8 September, "to bring together women and men to challenge, create and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women", brought together over 25,000 women, men and youth to discuss in workshops, symposia and other consultations, different aspects of concerns which touch the very lives of women. Some of the debates that took place generated animosity which reflects divergent views and the difficult process of consensus-building. For after all, ladies and gentlemen, do we know of any conferences that did not have these impassioned debates.

The all-inclusive celebrations of women's work which took place at Huairou helped to cement the bonds and networking among women from all corners of the globe. I thank the organizers of the 1995 NGO Forum for their drive, dedication and support.

To the Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has been with us from the very beginning, I thank him for his support and for placing his trust in me. I thank him also for committing himself to the follow-up actions to meet the aspirations of so many, many women and he has done so.

I also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the secretariat of the United Nations as well as colleagues from other United Nations agencies, specialized organizations and bodies, who are too many to enumerate here, for their unflinching support. Had it not been for their hard work throughout the preparatory process and certainly in Beijing, the Conference would not have proceeded as smoothly as it has been.

I thank and bless the youth. You have been with us throughout. It is you, with your creativity, courage, energy and vision, who will make us move forward. For as I have said before, the youth own the future and you have a right to own the actions of Beijing. We will, therefore, rely on you to carry on the revolution.

And now, friends, we have our Platform, a Platform from which we should manage the changes expected of us. We owe much to the able chairmanship of Mme. Chen Muhua, President of the Conference, Patricia Licuanan, Chairperson of the Main Committee, Obaapanyin Nana Ama Yeboaa, Chairperson of Working Group I, Irene Freudenschussreichl, Chairperson of Working Group II and all the other, whose efforts have facilitated the process towards the adoption of this platform. We now have in our hands, the mandates

for which we have been working; our legitimate basis to demand change. Our Platform which presents a global consensus for social change cannot now be hidden away and allowed to collect dust.

Friends, the Fourth World Conference on Women is concluded, but the real work of transforming words into action is only now beginning. Let the spirit of organization and goal-setting which marked the preparatory phase of this conference become the energy to propel implementation. Let the diversities of women now be channelled into making women indeed, "the greatest multipliers of prosperity" rather than the "greatest victims of poverty".

We have taken the decisive, irreversible step forward; there is no going back. The strands for weaving a better world for humanity are here; let us, therefore, act, and act now. While I do not wish to under-estimate the problems which would accompany the implementation of the Platform, I believe firmly that if we all do our little bit, no matter how small it is, we shall succeed in making even the impossible, possible.

For, as our Chinese hosts say, the journey of a thousand miles, begins with one step. The journey will, however, not be on super-highways on which we can gear up to full speed: it might rather take us over seas and lakes; over hills, mountains and valleys; it will take us many years of hard work and sacrifice to journey to the end. We may have to rest a little at rest-stops when the going gets tough so that we can re-fuel, re-fresh, and re-direct ourselves. Social justice demands that we move on. Not even when we stray a little away from our course can we reverse the social revolution which has been launched.

Let Beijing be the first step of our thousand miles to implement the attainment of true equality, development and peace in the world. Let Beijing be the platform from which our global crusade will be carried forward. Let us all commit ourselves, as we have been doing all along, to carry the spirit and hopes of Beijing to all women, men and the young hamlets in our hamlets, villages, towns, cities in every nation of the globe. Disseminate the Platform on your return home to your countries and let the message be loud and clear: action now.

The eyes of the world are upon us. The world will hold us accountable for the implementation of the good intentions and decisions arrived at in Beijing. I, therefore, charge you, my dear friends and sisters, to re-assemble in your ranks, sharpen your focus and march on. Let us ensure that we carry the torch which was lit in Mexico, and rekindled in Copenhagen and Nairobi, further forward from Beijing. We shall surely get there.
