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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Disabled Peoples’ International and Friends World Committee for Consultation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

As organizations committed to women's human rights, development for all and the elimination of violence against women, the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, together with Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, Disabled Peoples' International and Friends World Committee for Consultation submit this statement to bring attention to concerns of Asia-Pacific women. Our statement focuses particularly on the concerns of the most marginalized women: indigenous, rural, migrant women and those living with disabilities.

In the Asia-Pacific region violence against women remains widespread, systematic and culturally entrenched. Women experience violence within a continuum that includes daily acts of harassment and extends to murder, "femicide" and the disappearance of women, simply because they are women. Violence against women is the manifestation of inequalities that are pervasive and tolerated. We believe that violence against women must be addressed by challenging the structural causes of violence against women: patriarchal systems fused with militarization, fundamentalism and neo-liberal global economic systems.

While there have been significant legal and policy achievements in addressing violence against women in the region, we believe that States have failed to act with due diligence to eliminate violence against women. Very few countries in the region have fully developed, integrated and fully funded national plans of action to eliminate violence against women as required by the Beijing Platform for Action. No State has yet taken every reasonable step to prevent violence against women by both State and non-State actors (including corporations, military and private militia, religious authorities as well as family members), fully addressing patriarchal practices and beliefs in the community and addressing structural inequalities that fuel violence against women; no State has yet provided the full services required for all survivors of violence that cater for the particular needs of women with disabilities and for indigenous, rural and migrant women; no State has yet properly prosecuted all perpetrators of violence by State and non-State actors.

The Beijing Platform for Action defines violence against women as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. Few States prioritize the elimination of violence against women in their national development or poverty alleviation policies. Violence against women has been shown to deepen poverty as it reduces women's opportunities for employment, often renders them homeless, and causes long-term physical and psychological health problems. The Millennium Development Goals did not acknowledge violence against women as a crucial indicator for development. The present session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be an opportunity to remedy that failure and generate support for an indicator on violence against women in the post-2015 development agenda.

Globalization and neo-liberal policies that focus on economic growth, trade liberalization and privatization of public services have contributed to fuelling violence against women as well as reduced services to support survivors. Privatization, coupled with large debt burdens and diminished revenue resulting from trade liberalization, has reduced public funds available for expenditure on health care, crisis accommodation, and the legal aid and rehabilitation services required for survivors of violence against women in many countries. Economic crisis, conflict and war have pushed women into migration. Domestic work is the

single largest form of employment for women in the Asia-Pacific region and the most common form of employment for women migrant workers. However, States in the region have failed to uphold domestic workers' rights, particularly within "receiving" countries where domestic workers are excluded from the full protection of labour laws, and health and safety codes.

Neo-liberal development policies, which have resulted in widespread ecological disasters as well as land grabbing, have fuelled new forms of violence against women in the region. Women displaced and rendered homeless are at increased risk of abuse, and there have been repeated examples of trafficking of women and girls and forced migration following climate disasters.

Militarization has been shown to fuel violence against women by both State actors and non-State actors. Militarized communities have high rates of violence, which has been normalized. It is increasingly recognized that being a woman in war is now more dangerous than being a soldier in war.

While the United Nations has given increasing attention to women, peace and security, particularly through Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), States continue to exclude women from peace negotiations and very few have produced national plans in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). We would like to draw particular attention to the recent establishment of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council. The Council failed to include any women in its membership.

Religious, cultural and political fundamentalism commonly reveal themselves to be punitive as far as women's bodies are concerned. The control and discipline of women's movements, their choices and their sexuality spans countries, religions, cultures and political systems. The failure of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to adopt the agreed conclusions on the basis of safeguarding "traditional values" reveals the increasing influence of fundamentalism even in space dedicated to women's rights.

We believe it is particularly important to address the specific and intersecting forms of oppression that impact on:

- Rural and indigenous women, who are disproportionately affected by systematic land and resource grabbing, destruction of their traditional livelihoods, physical and economic displacements compounded by the lack of basic social services and access to justice. This condition increases the vulnerabilities of indigenous and rural women to violence as they struggle to fend for themselves. Being uprooted from their traditional sustainable livelihoods, rural and indigenous women are exposed to a high risk of trafficking, sexual violence and labour exploitation, including girl-child prostitution in many countries in Asia.
- Women with disabilities, who experience regular and ongoing discrimination ranging from public comments and insults to institutionalized violence. They may be subject to violence in State-run institutions, and by carers and by family members. They are often denied their sexual and reproductive autonomy, including the right to make decisions about their own sexuality, their relationships and their own fertility. Structural impediments to legal systems, including accessibility of specialized legal support and entrenched bias against women with disabilities, means they are rarely able to secure

convictions against perpetrators of violence. They are routinely excluded from policy making and denied a political voice. Numerous cases have been recorded in the region of girls with disabilities being given away in arranged marriages and continuing to face violence in the forms of neglect, punishment and abuse by their spouses.

- Migrant women in Asia, who face increased threats and experiences of violence, particularly where the State fails to provide equal services and legal protections to all citizens. Migrant women are often unable to report experiences of violence perpetrated by spouses, in particular where migrant couples are dependent on spousal visas; by employers, who threaten women with deportation or detention; and by police, military or other State forces.
- Women human rights defenders continue to be targeted for who they are and what they do. Women are targeted both because of the political nature of their work and also because speaking out in public is challenging to gendered assumptions about women's role in the public space. The regulation of their sexuality forms part of how they experience sexual-based violations that take the forms of sexuality baiting, sexual harassment, rape and sexualized abuse.

We call on States:

- To commit to the inclusion of a global indicator on violence against women in the post-2015 development framework
- To commit to a new development paradigm that addresses the vast global inequalities caused by economic growth-led policy making that has exposed women in the Asia-Pacific region to violence and poverty
- To recognize the forms of gender-based violence caused by land grabbing, displacement and deregulated labour markets dependant on women's cheap and unpaid labour
- To uphold international instruments on women's human rights and principles, particularly the principle of non-regression; making a commitment to do so is to eschew any attempt to introduce references to "traditional values" in the Commission on the Status of Women that serve to undermine existing international standards or the advancement of women's rights
- To commit to upholding the Beijing Platform for Action by putting in place national plans of action to eliminate violence against women that fully recognize the specific needs of marginalized women
- To address the specific, widespread forms of violence against women committed against migrant domestic workers and endorse the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)
- To ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and address the multiple discrimination and violence faced by women and girls with disabilities
- To adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensure full protection of indigenous women and girls against all forms of violence and discrimination

- To create an enabling environment, which acknowledges that the most compelling enabler for effective policy and law to eliminate violence against women is the existence of strong, autonomous women's movements; States must commit to sustained partnerships with women's movements, particularly marginalized women's movements, in all policy formation
 - To increase funding to women's organizations that address the structural causes of violence against women, particularly in the global South.
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