

UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE

UN Chief Urges Action To Ensure Women's Rights, Marking 15 Years Since Adoption Of Landmark Beijing Plan

Thousands converge on UN Headquarters to examine progress since historic women's conference; Secretary-General opens event for International Women's Day, 3 March

New York, 1 March 2010 – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will call for the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the outcome of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 – as he opens the event observing International Women's Day, at United Nations Headquarters on Wednesday, 3 March.

The Secretary-General will address an audience including ministers from over 50 countries and more than 2,000 representatives of women's groups, who will gather in New York for the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which this year will undertake a 15-year review of the Beijing Platform, from 1 to 12 March.

"The landmark Beijing Declaration has had a deep and wide-ranging impact. It has guided policy making and inspired new national laws. It has sent a clear message to women and girls around the world that equality and opportunity are their inalienable rights", said the Secretary-General in a message to mark International Women's Day.

Fifteen years after its adoption, the Beijing Platform remains the most comprehensive global policy framework for the full realization of women's rights. However, while progress has been made since the Beijing Conference, most significantly in educating women and girls, disparities remain between regions and within countries. Global averages also hide differences among women based on economic status, ethnicity, age, disability and other factors.

Many challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment require urgent and priority attention from Governments, including maternal mortality rates, violence against women and girls, women's access to decent work, and women's equal participation in senior decision-making positions.

In recognition of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, the theme of this year's International Women's Day – which is observed worldwide on 8 March – is **Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All**.

Dozens of events will take place around the world to mark the Day, organized by UN offices working with government and civil society partners. From Austria to Zambia, events planned include rallies, seminars, press conferences, exhibits, film screenings and concerts, involving women's groups and ministries, schools, faith-based organizations and many others.

"The Beijing Declaration remains as relevant today as when it was adopted...On this International Women's Day, let us look critically at the achievements of the past 15 years so we can build on what has worked, and correct what has not", concluded the Secretary-General in his message.

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