



PROJECT FIVE-O

Project Five-O Written Statement For the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women 2005

The five member organizations of Project Five-O: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of University Women, Soroptimist International and Zonta International, each in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, are endeavoring to further women's rights and to promote equality, development and peace, both in programs and advocacy of our individual organizations and through our joint activities and projects.

Project Five-O was founded after the Second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen. In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Project Five-O's programs have provided economic opportunities, education and training for thousands of local women throughout the world. Our projects have enabled women to advance their legal, political, health and professional status and improve the lives of their families.

Yet, despite many gains for women since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the United Nations estimates that women still lag behind in virtually all aspects of life in many parts of the world. Issues of older women and mental health concerns for women have been added to the tableaux of major concerns for the advancement of women. The special session of the General Assembly held in June 2000 identified new obstacles and challenges for women's rights and equality such as the uneven benefits of the global economy and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

As women continue to make up the majority of those living in poverty, and who suffer from illiteracy, violence, poor nutrition, ill health, and dislocation, this ten year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is a crucial time in history for Member States, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations, other civil society entities and the private sector to commit themselves with renewed energy and purpose to the actualization of the broad spectrum of equal rights and opportunity for women and girls. These rights are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further elaborated in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The political will to move forward on the complete agenda of women's rights necessitates not only the strengthening of partnerships between governments, the United Nations system, regional and international institutions and non-governmental organizations, but the forging of strong partnerships between men and women in the pursuit of gender equality. It is only through a partnership of respect, shared responsibilities and equal power that the removal of all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life that a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making can be achieved. This must include a commitment by men to address socially constructed gender roles in the family and the community and earnestly punish all violence against women.

Ensuring universal education for girls is key to providing opportunity and promoting gender equality in both the present and the future. Education for girls has a proven role in reducing poverty, improving the health of women and their children, preventing HIV/AIDS, reducing incidents of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage and increasing self-confidence. All advocates for women's rights and gender equality must work to eliminate the economic and social conditions that keep girls out of school.

Eliminating violence against women in all its insidious forms-domestic violence, trafficking, and armed conflict- must be a major concern of the entire international community. We urge commitment to the full implementation of Security Council Resolution. 1325.

Statistical information on most every facet of the lives of women and girls are woefully inadequate. Many children are unregistered at birth, information on child-brides and migrant women difficult to obtain. Countries need to collect more and better information about women so an accurate assessment of their condition and needs can be addressed.

Only with more complete information can the achievement of benchmarks and measures for the advancement of women worldwide be assessed.

Information technology has a greater impact on our society than ever before. In this context, the important responsibility of the media in breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting positive examples of women's equality is obvious.

Why are we still so far from the fulfillment of the Platform for Action and other international commitments to women? One key reason is the commitment of financial resources to date has been grossly inadequate. The expansion of gender budgeting coupled with the strengthening of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women at all levels of government can aid Member States in allocating resources to programs that benefit women. Regional and international financial institutions must continue to invest in women as the best means to promote economic and social well-being.

We, Project Five-O partners, are eager to move forward in our work to implement the Platform for Action and address other challenges in partnership with the United Nations and the women and men of the world committed to gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

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