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**REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING
FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

Vienna, 17-21 October 1994

ADDENDUM

VIENNA NGO FORUM 94 – CALL TO ACTION *

Approximately 1,200 women, coming from the non-governmental organizations in the ECE region, bringing enormous diversity of backgrounds, interests and perspectives, met in Vienna, Austria, from 12 to 15 October 1994 in the Vienna NGO Forum 94 to examine the interrelated aspects of equality, development and peace, and their impact on women's lives.

Meeting for the first time, the women realized that they were a regional group, whose interests and well-being were interconnected with women around the world. At the same time, the women recognized the distinct heritages of the region and its responsibility towards the global community. Women strengthened and built networks across issues and geography, and developed strategies for capacity building to meet the challenges of a changing world.

The women examined the overarching and interconnected themes of equality, social and economic development, and peace, and they highlighted the enormous gulf that exists with regard to women's enjoyment of resources and rights that exist both within and between States. In particular, they noted the specific problems relating to the political, economic and social status of women in central and eastern Europe, and of indigenous women and women of colour in the

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countries of the region. Women also noted that peace was a prerequisite to the enjoyment of equality and to social and economic development, and young women stressed the importance of peace for their future.

The participants of the Vienna NGO Forum 94 identified the following priority areas for action to advance the status of women in the region:

To achieve the full realization of the human rights of all women;

To promote, achieve and implement social and economic development benefiting the women of the region and of the world;

To create violence-free societies which guarantee the security and well-being of the individual and the community at all levels — local, national and international.

The women taking part in the NGO Forum called on the High-Level ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women to adopt and implement the following recommendations.

Globalization of the economy

The advancement of all women must be a central goal of all economic and social policies and programmes of national Governments, international and regional bodies, and international financial institutions. The NGO Forum rejects the currently dominant economic paradigm, and the resulting economic and social policies, because it is inherently detrimental to the rights of women.

Industrialized countries consume 75 per cent of world resources and represent 20 per cent of the global population. Unsustainable economic growth in the ECE region jeopardizes women's lives and any prospects for sustainable and just livelihoods in the region and world-wide and leads to a widening gap between rich and poor, both within and between countries. The NGO Forum demands that women's rights, sustainable development and environmentally sound changes in consumption and production patterns in the ECE region are introduced as a critical area of concern and action in accordance with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1/ and Agenda 21 2/.

Current economic policies do not provide for sustainable development and peace. Militarization and profits from arms sales, as well as support by donor countries to repressive regimes, cause the destabilization of countries and the flight and displacement of people.

Economic and social policies and programmes should be a means of realizing human rights commitments as articulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex) and the Nairobi Forward-looking

1/ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), vol. I.

2/ Ibid.

Strategies for the Advancement of Women. ^{3/} The commitment of Governments to the equality of all women requires strong social programmes and stable financial support for social services.

Economic and social policies which decrease women's economic and social security, make women more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and coercion, eliminate or diminish women's access to such basic social services as health care and education are violations of women's human rights.

Urgent attention should be paid in economic and social policy formulation to ending the racist targeting of indigenous and minority women and improving their conditions, and to the prevention of the further marginalization of women in central and eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

The NGO Forum also rejects decision-making structures that permit decisions to be made, both in the ECE region and in the South, that have a direct impact on the lives of women and men — such as debt management and structural adjustment programmes — by institutions and bodies that are undemocratic and not transparent. In the ECE region, national Governments must be accountable for the impact of their economic and social policies on women at all stages in their life-cycle, in their own countries and in the South.

1. Economic restructuring

It must be recognized that there are deep contradictions inherent in economic policies of restructuring and globalization. Current structural adjustment policies do not reduce poverty or create meaningful work for people, and the detrimental impact on women is an inherent, not an accidental, feature of these programmes. We demand:

- * That all economic policies and programmes in the ECE region and in the countries of the South must promote poverty elimination, income parity, gender equality, environmental sustainability and access to sustainable livelihoods;
- * That social programmes be designed and implemented to further women's equality;
- * That the debt be cancelled in the poorest countries and reduced or written off for middle-income countries of the South and of central and eastern Europe and CIS nations.

2. Accountability of Governments

The Governments of the ECE region must be more accountable and responsible to the South as well as to residents in the region by:

- * Establishing control mechanisms to ensure a gender perspective, real partnership and empowerment in development cooperation at all levels — national, regional and global. Women outside the ECE region who are affected by decisions taken in the region must be given access to these decision-making processes;
- * Making concrete financial commitments to enable the implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development to be held at Copenhagen

^{3/} *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

in March 1995 and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace to be held at Beijing in September 1995. Such commitments require new funds. Priority must be given to supporting organizations that promote social transformation and the empowerment of women;

- * Taking steps to actively reduce and change the current patterns of overconsumption and dirty production. National consumption and production analysis, to be followed by national consumption reduction strategies and shifts to sustainable systems of production based on reusing and recycling resources should be urgently implemented. Analysis and strategies should empower women as consumers to contribute to change.

3. Accountability of financial institutions

International and regional financial institutions must be required to promote and support economic and social policies that comply with and further international human rights commitments and, specifically, commitments to women's equality. Governments, through their representation in and funding of international financial institutions — such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, regional development banks and regional trade blocks — must make these institutions accountable to parliaments and to the people they represent:

- * By requiring that all transactions and voting records be made public;
- * By providing access to information on the social, environmental and health impact of products, technologies and financial flows;
- * By designing specific mechanisms for monitoring the compliance of international financial institutions with human rights standards;
- * By ensuring, including through providing funding, that NGOs that represent women can participate in the designing of these mechanisms and in the monitoring process;
- * By ultimately supporting the transformation of the priorities of the international financial system from corporate profit to human and environmental sustainability.

4. Accountability of transnational corporations

Governments should make national, multinational and transnational corporations abide by standards which promote women's equality and human and environmental sustainability and make the activities of industry transparent and accountable to the public in consultation with women's and other citizens' organizations. Specifically, Governments should:

- * Develop and promote a code of conduct for corporations;
- * Require all corporations to publicly report to national Governments and appropriate international organizations on their corporate practices for enhancing the economic and social well-being of women and other workers;
- * Reinforce the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and expand its mission to monitor and report on the function and location of TNCs;
- * Provide access to information on the social, environmental and health impact of products, technologies and financial flows;

- * Develop, at national and international levels, policy tools, such as eco-labelling, environmental reporting and obligatory reporting on genetically manipulated organisms.

5. Accountability in commercial advertising

In order to counteract the adverse impacts of commercial advertising in spreading overconsumption, and of the use of images of women for this purpose, immediate steps should be taken to adopt gender-sensitive environmental regulations, codes of conduct and watchdog agencies to oversee the commercial advertising industry at national and international levels and to curb its current alarming and unlimited spread to economies in transition. We recommend that all nations introduce legislation prohibiting television advertising directed at children. New legislation should be developed to provide for the exercise of democratic control over information banks on consumers.

6. Redefining and transforming work

We call on Governments to count, quantify and value unwaged work in the GNP and other economic statistics, which should be disaggregated by gender, and to define the unwaged worker as a worker in the System of National Accounts. We call on Governments to prioritize counting unwaged work and to make this intention clear and unambiguous in the paragraphs of the ECE Draft Regional Platform for Action which refers to women's "unpaid unremunerated" work, in compliance with paragraph 120 of the *Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* (Nairobi, 1985) as well as the draft Platform for Action of the Commission on the Status of Women. The allocation of social and economic benefits must take into account this broader definition of work as well as the changing patterns of women's work.

The situation of women in employment is worsening. Governments must take concrete and immediate steps:

- * To protect and enforce women's right to paid employment regardless of current economic conditions;
- * To provide legal protections, including the right to employment-related benefits, to part-time workers and speedily ratify and enforce ILO Convention No. 175;
- * To provide adequate support structures for women who are combining family responsibilities with participation in the paid labour force, in particular paid maternity leave and quality child care;
- * To recognize and ensure that women are entitled to social benefits as individuals;
- * To ensure that the existence of protections for women's reproductive health, including for pregnancy and lactation, are not used as a justification for discriminatory treatment in the workplace;
- * To recognize that unemployment makes women vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced labour and that women are entitled to effective protections from these forms of abuse.

The contribution that women of colour have made through unwaged and low-waged work must be acknowledged. As the Women of Colour Caucus stated in their Concerns and Recommendations: "Women of colour, including indigenous, migrant, immigrant and refugee women, whose people have worked unwaged and low-waged creating wealth for Europe and North America for centuries, yet remain

at the bottom of the economic scale, call on Governments at the ECE High-Level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women to signal a halt to the present increase in racism and climate of ethnic cleansing by quantifying and acknowledging the work people of colour, starting with women of colour, have been contributing to the standard of living and quality of life for everyone in Europe and North America."

7. Women's participation in industry

Governments must act to create an enabling environment for women's participation in industry:

- * Women entrepreneurs need access to money and resources, information and tangible encouragement and support;
- * The full participation of women in democratic control mechanisms in planning, research, design, development, testing, regulation and production of all new products and technologies should be increased and integrated with safeguarding environment, health and basic human needs;
- * Such economic instruments as changes in prices and national accounting systems to reflect the value of resources and unpaid women's labour and shifts in taxation from labour to resources should be urgently implemented.

Community development

Grass-roots women are critical to the health of families, communities and nations and must be politically included in decisions affecting their lives. Government officials, public policy makers and community planners should be required to develop policies in partnership with grass-roots women and their organizations. Women's participation, at a minimum, must include their co-design, co-implementation and evaluation of development efforts and should reflect the diversity of women and their families. In central and eastern Europe, Governments must move from formal recognition through registration to real dialogue, joint planning and project implementation with women's non-governmental organizations.

Governments should assist in the establishment of a United Nations affiliated global organization and fund (Grassroots Development Fund) for the express purpose of supporting new and existing community-based organizations which promote comprehensive, gender-sensitive, environmentally sustainable community development in poor and low-income communities in both the North and the South. The Grassroots Development Fund would finance exchanges between leaders of community-based organizations nationally, regionally and internationally. The establishment of information centres for NGOs at the national and regional level in central and eastern Europe would support this process.

Recognizing that women are at the forefront of coping with the effects of conflict and recognizing the leadership role of women in resolving conflict at all levels by: (a) providing necessary economic, social and emotional support to others; (b) providing education; (c) creating alternative structures needed for peace based on justice; and (d) facilitating the development of values that contribute to peace such as tolerance, respect for differences and caring, women should be actively involved at all stages and levels of official peace negotiations and in the design and implementation of their related aid packages.

Grass-roots women understand the problems of women, children and families and local values, and support their families and communities through their work. Grass-roots women should be paid and, where necessary, trained to continue the tradition of mutual help that makes communities strong. In this

way, poverty can be eased, the forces of cohesion restored, and self-reliance, self-confidence and dignity promoted. In turn, the political power of grass-roots women increases.

Poverty, homelessness and social displacement or exclusion are primarily the result of socio-economic conditions. Grass-roots women, including women of colour, indigenous women, migrant, immigrant and refugee women who are working in low or unwaged jobs, creating wealth for central, west and eastern Europe and North America call on the Governments at the ECE High-Level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women to count the double and triple low-waged and unwaged working day of grass-roots women. Counting all of women's work will quantify and acknowledge the actual contributions of grass-roots women to the region and signal a halt to the increasing marginalization and impoverishment of women. All women, including women living in poverty, have the right to be self-determining and Governments must assist in their empowerment through the provision of credit for business start-up, remuneration for unwaged labour and funded access to training and education of their choice.

Women's human rights

The human rights of women of all ages are universal, inalienable and indivisible and must be protected and promoted by all Governments and the United Nations. In relation to the human rights of particular groups, we recommend the following.

Women with disabilities: As there are 300 million women with disabilities in the world, their full participation in all societies is essential. Governments should include representatives of disabled persons' organizations in their delegations to the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 1995), and in their delegations to the Beijing Women's World Conference. All meetings to all sessions must be made fully accessible to all persons with disabilities and all documents must be made available in alternate formats, such as Braille.

Older women: The effects of discrimination based on both gender and age need to be more critically appraised and policies developed to counteract such discrimination. Older women's issues should be fully integrated into policy and planning because older women are the fastest growing segment of the population world-wide; the life expectancy of women is higher than that of men; and older women have special issues to be recognized. Governments must take measures to assure older women the right to work as a human right and to participate in determining when and at what pace withdrawal from the labour force takes place. Violence against women does not stop with age. In fact, older women are often the most silent sufferers of abuse in all its forms. The rights of older women to participate fully in their societies and communities must be affirmed and enforced. Discrimination against women because of age must be eliminated.

Lesbian women: Governments should expressly recognize that the rights of lesbians, single women and all women who are not attached to men are fundamental components of human rights and that lesbians have the right to recognition as families and to live without fear of discrimination, harassment or persecution. Governments should commit themselves to eliminating heterosexual bias in education, economic and social policies, and legislation in order to ensure that all women enjoy sexual autonomy and freedom from coercion. The particular ways in which government policies and societal norms impact on lesbians, single women and all women who are not attached to men should be addressed in each critical area of concern and strategic objective outlined in the Platform for Action.

Racism: The ECE Regional Platform for Action should recognize, address and prohibit racial discrimination against all women. Racial discrimination is defined as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and

fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of life. It should be noted that racial discrimination can be compounded by discrimination on the basis of religion. A manifestation of racial discrimination has been the non-inclusion or limited participation of all affected women in global forums and local, regional, national and international decision-making processes. In particular, the historical exclusion of Gypsy (Roma) and black women in Europe and women of colour in North America should be noted. Refugee, displaced, migrant and immigrant women, and women of colour, even those with citizenship, face racism, discrimination and harassment. Governments should adopt laws and implement measures to eradicate all forms of racism, xenophobia and homophobia, including institutionalized racism, and to create channels for reporting, investigating and prosecuting violators. Education on human rights, cultural diversity and tolerance of difference must be provided.

As the Women of Colour Caucus stated in their Concerns and Recommendations: "Governments must acknowledge and remedy the fact that in the ECE Regional Platform for Action it is not evident that women of colour are part of Europe and North America, and that our communities are in crisis. Governments must also remedy the exclusion of women of colour from the ECE Preparatory Meeting which occurred because of lack of money, resources and information; under-representation of women of colour; and lack of government accountability."

Indigenous women: Urgent attention must be given to the rights of indigenous women such as self-determination and land rights, in addition to preservation of language, cultural values and ethnic identity.

Human rights education and mechanisms

As part of the proposed United Nations Decade of Human Rights Education, Governments should: (a) engage in education to make women aware of their rights and to make society at large conscious of their duty to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all; (b) create gender-sensitive training and support NGO initiatives for human rights education on women's human rights and all human rights instruments, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (c) develop specialized programmes in human rights education with particular attention to the rights of women of all ages and the girl-child for groups such as the military, law enforcement personnel, police, and legal and health professionals to ensure their understanding and application of international human rights standards.

Governments should support the work of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women appointed by the Commission on Human Rights. This includes establishing a process for documenting violence against women, supplying this information to the Special Rapporteur, carrying out the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, and involving NGOs. Governments are urged to provide voluntary contributions and other services to support the Special Rapporteur. The Special Rapporteur should consider the appointment of five regional consultants to assist in carrying out her mandate.

Governments are called upon to ratify without reservations and before the Fourth World Conference on Women, all international and regional human rights treaties and to develop implementation plans. Governments should withdraw reservations that are incompatible with the object and purpose of the relevant treaty, and monitoring bodies should find more effective means to limit reservations. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should quickly propose recommendations to introduce the right to petition by individuals or on behalf of affected persons through the preparation of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Governments are urged to support this process and to adopt and ratify the Optional Protocol.

Governments should recognize that independent NGOs and individual women play a critical role as monitors and defenders of human rights, and that such NGOs and women need to be able to exercise their internationally recognized rights to freedom of expression and association to make a full contribution in this field.

Violence against women

Every Government is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of women. They must recognize, name and institute sanctions against all forms of violence against women as one of their fundamental obligations established in numerous international human rights instruments. All laws and social policies should be consistent with human rights principles and should not hinder women leaving violent relationships.

An effective political campaign on violence against women must:

- * Be based on a long-term community prevention programme as well as on training for the personnel involved including police, justice, health, education, housing and social workers;
- * Ensure that all women have access to linguistically and culturally appropriate information about their rights and that these services are available to women who have survived violence;
- * Provide all women who have survived violence with immediate access to services that welcome and assist them, so that they may obtain justice, redress and compensation.

Such an approach requires major financial support which must be part of every State's budget, including the long-term funding of NGOs and feminist organizations.

Regarding the impact of religious and cultural traditions on gender violence the ECE Regional Platform should recognize that traditional religious and cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation, must be contained within the framework of national laws which should guarantee the human rights of all children, women and men.

Young women have a special concern about date rape and incest and call for the development, implementation and allocation of resources for programmes which assist young victims of violence against women, particularly programmes developed by young women. In addition, it should be recognized that young women are the fastest growing segment of society who are becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. Information on HIV/AIDS must be made available to young women.

Current concepts of masculinity need to be transformed from being based on power and control, which lead to violence, to being centred on values of respect for others, cooperation and nurturing.

Governments should develop guidelines for the media, to eliminate the glorification of violence and the negative portrayal of women.

Traffic in women

Governments should develop a new convention on the traffic of women based on civil, economic, social and cultural human rights, especially the right to sexual and economic self-determination. It should be based on a broad definition of traffic in women, including all forms of forced migration into slavery-like, dehumanized, dependent and violent working and living conditions such as mail order and other forced marriage, forced sexual labour, forced domestic work and private sexual exploitation.

Governments should recognize that sex trade workers are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses. Measures should be taken to ensure that such workers can exercise the full range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and laws that criminalize prostitution should be repealed.

Migrant and refugee women

All forms of violence against women in public and private life are experienced by refugee, displaced and migrant women, regardless of individual status or condition. This is further exacerbated by the disintegration of traditional support structures, and inaccessibility and/or lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services. ECE Governments should make gender-related persecution grounds for granting asylum. Women should be employed as interviewers and interpreters, especially for female asylum seekers who may have suffered sexual assault or abuse, and women must be able to have confidential interviews.

All efforts need to be undertaken to bring refugee and migrant women into decision-making and full and effective participation in the management and implementation of the services and resources that they use.

Women need to be recognized as independent persons with full legal capacity. A change in marital status should not result in a change in legal status. Domicile carries the right of mobility and protection to the full extent of the national law. Governments must recognize the right of all women to a safe return to their own home and to freedom from discrimination. For refugee women, this includes protection and the right to asylum, and for both refugee and migrant women it includes the right to obtain family reunification, work, citizenship and integration into the receiving country. All migrant, refugee and displaced women have the right to practice and maintain their religious and cultural traditions.

The right of refugee, migrant and displaced women, whether documented or undocumented, to work — free of slavery, indentured servitude, exploitation and sexual harassment — in a safe environment must be recognized. Anti-migrant laws must be repealed.

All residents of the ECE region should have access to full participation in the labour market irrespective of legal status. National labour laws, social programmes and equality guarantees for women must apply to refugee, displaced and migrant women, and Governments of the region should immediately ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (General Assembly resolution 45/158, annex).

Governments and NGOs in the ECE region should cooperate with relevant United Nations bodies to establish a regional instrument which is gender specific to provide protection to groups of people who are victims of war and internal conflicts and should interpret the 51/67 Convention, to recognize women as members of a specific social group entitled to asylum based on gender persecution.

Gender violence in conflict situations

Violence against women and violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts or occupations including torture, rape, genocide; martial law; apartheid; forced abortion, sterilization, pregnancy or infanticide; sexual slavery or other forms of gender-specific violence or violations of human rights or fundamental freedoms require effective and urgent action at the national, regional and international levels. The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women should create mechanisms to facilitate the identification of perpetrators and instigators responsible for acts of violence against women and genocide in situations of armed conflict and occupation. Once identified, these perpetrators should be subject to punishment under all applicable international, regional and national laws. Crimes committed against women in situations of

armed conflict or occupation should not be considered the "internal affairs" of a nation. Pre-planned atrocities against women should be recognized as a violation of the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (General Assembly resolution 260 A (III), annex).

An internationally mandated and funded permanent tribunal should be created to prosecute crimes against humanity and genocide with special attention to gender-specific crimes. A special office should be created for investigation and prosecution of gender-based crimes. All international, regional and national tribunals should provide a means of redress for women who are victims or survivors of international human rights violations. International tribunals should adopt rules of procedure and evidence that protect the physical and psychological well-being of victims, survivors and witnesses. Women of diverse backgrounds should be included in international tribunals. Individuals with experience in prosecuting gender-specific crimes should be appointed and their expertise used to ensure that all investigative and prosecutorial personnel involved are trained on the issue. Adequate resources should be allocated for full and vigorous investigation and prosecution of gender-specific crimes. International tribunals should establish methods for providing victims and survivors of human rights violations, war crimes and genocide with compensation and rehabilitation.

Political participation

In order to redress the democratic deficit and establish a truly participatory democracy, it is necessary that:

- * Women's participation at all levels of political decision-making reflect their representation in the population;
- * ECE member States identify and nominate women to the ECE-appointed bodies and posts so that there is parity at all levels of decision-making, and ensure that all nominees, both women and men, subscribe to the fundamental principles of human rights and democracy;
- * Women's diversity in terms of race, class, age, sexual preference and disability be fully reflected in the composition of those in decision-making positions. Young women stressed their need to be fully integrated into decision-making and the political process;
- * Women outside the ECE region affected by the decisions taken in the region participate in these decision-making processes. For this purpose proper structures must be set up and adequate resources be made available so that a constructive dialogue can take place;
- * Governments recognize NGOs as essential to democracy, serving as a link between individuals and political institutions. Governments must respect and work with women's movements, and other NGOs that represent constituencies currently marginalized in political structures, in order to further women's equality. Governments must provide funding and other forms of public support for the work of women's NGOs.

Indigenous women

Indigenous women whose ancestors were stripped of the enjoyment of traditional lands and resources through wars, unfair treaty negotiations and colonial domination, and who are not recognized as members of sovereign nations, must be compensated appropriately and have their land claims recognized. Governments must recognize the right to self-governance and sovereignty of indigenous peoples.

Women from countries in transition

Governments should acknowledge the existence of, and assist in strengthening NGOs in the countries in transition, by providing resources and other support. Support should be provided specifically to assist in the creation of an information centre for NGOs to allow for networking throughout the region and internationally.

Health and reproductive rights

Governments should recognize that women's reproductive rights are basic human rights which enable every woman to freely decide whether, with whom, when, if and how many children to have. Social, economic, legal and political conditions must be created to ensure that women enjoy full access to these rights. All women should have unrestricted access to full protection of their reproductive rights; to unbiased information, including information on breast-feeding, and to sex education and confidential counselling; to the whole range of safe and effective methods of fertility regulation including voluntary sterilization, post-coital methods and abortion; and to the prevention and treatment of infertility. Governments should eradicate and condemn any coercion in reproductive health laws, policies and practices.

We call for:

(a) Respect for the right to sexual autonomy of all women including the right to freely express their sexuality without legal, political, cultural, social or religious sanctions;

(b) Reaffirmation of the right to health as specified in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)); and reproductive health as recognized in the Action Programme to the International Conference on Population and Development and its full and swift implementation;

(c) Disaggregation of data collection and data systems by gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and other criteria including data on quality of life indicators, as well as the involvement of women and women health advocates in all stages of research;

(d) Comprehensive, quality, gender-sensitive and culturally sensitive health-care services to be available and accessible to all women throughout the life cycle, with particular attention paid to older women and female children;

(e) A shift from a curative to a preventive attitude in solving health problems and the provision of unbiased, culturally sensitive information and education by specially trained health-care providers;

(f) Priority attention to the health problems of women with HIV/AIDS, to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and to the treatment and care of those who contract them.

Environmental links to women's health

The effects on women and unborn and newborn infants from chronic low-level exposure to toxics like dioxin or to nuclear radiation in many areas in the industrialized world are alarming. The rise in cancers, especially breast cancer, immune system related diseases, the disruption of hormonal systems as well as birth defects have been scientifically related to these causes.

We call for:

(a) The phase out of organochlorines, radioactive materials and other hazardous substances for which there exist less polluting and clean alternatives;

(b) The phase out and ban of nuclear energy production;

(c) Substantial investment in the development and implementation of massive energy efficiency and conservation programmes and development and implementation of safe renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass;

(d) Assistance from wealthy countries to economies in transition to develop renewable energy systems, conservation and energy efficiency programmes;

(e) Enforcement of bans on toxic and nuclear waste and exports of goods and wastes rejected for local consumption and storage in the countries of origin, and safe management and storage of toxic and hazardous wastes;

(f) A moratorium on the patenting of life-forms, including human genetic material until the full, scientific, health and ethical implications have been widely reviewed.

Education

1. Educational equality: A separate critical area of concern

Education is a basic human right and must be recognized and supported as such in its own right and not merely in relation to employment. Lack of education and economic opportunities is a key contributor to the feminization of poverty in the ECE region and throughout the world. Education, at all levels and in both the formal and informal sectors, is a crucial mechanism for the empowerment of women. However, women continue to be discriminated against, marginalized or excluded from education in vital ways, including access; equal representation in educational policy-making and administration; curriculum design and development; teaching and delivery mechanisms.

2. Equality of access in representation in education for all women

Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations, must take all necessary measures to ensure life-long equal access for women to education and training at all levels and in all sectors. Particular measures must be adopted to address educational discrimination and exclusion which result from the interactive impact of gender inequality with structural inequalities based on class, ethnicity, race, age, religion, sexual orientation and disability. Similarly, particular measures must be adopted to ensure equality of access for women at all points of the life cycle.

Feminist expertise and perspectives should be represented in all decision-making bodies in education.

3. Elimination of sexist perspectives and practices in education

A radical transformation of both the content and pedagogy of education is required to achieve equality for all women. This transformative process must apply throughout the educational system, in both academic and institutionalized settings as well as in community development programmes and in informal educational settings. Such curricular and pedagogic transformation should be informed by the expertise, insights and findings of feminist research and teaching world-wide. Women teachers are important to provide role models for children, and are particularly important as role models for girls and young women in non-traditional disciplines and areas of study.

Gender equality training should be mandatory for teachers at all levels and in all educational sectors. Further, gender equality sensitization programmes should be targeted at specific groups, including educational policy makers and administrators.

The collection and dissemination of information is vital to the empowerment of women, therefore every country should establish and support at least one women's documentation centre, with support for the development of electronic communications systems.

The importance of women's networking, regionally, nationally and internationally, in respect of education and information must be recognized, supported and funded by Governments and international bodies such as the European Union and the United Nations.

4. Strengthening women's studies and feminist perspectives in education

The significance of the contribution of feminist, gender, lesbian and women's studies, research and teaching programmes must be recognized and supported. Such programmes should be integrated at all levels and in all educational sectors.

Gender impact assessment should be a mandatory process in all educational policy-making and planning.

5. Women and literacy

Illiteracy continues to be a major obstacle to women's empowerment throughout the world, including the European and North American countries. Literacy programmes must be designed specifically to address the needs of particular social groups of women, and particular attention should be paid to literacy for young women. Such programmes must be initiated where they do not exist and further developed where they do. Adequate resources must be provided by Governments to achieve the goal of universal female literacy.

6. Peace and human rights education

Education on gender, peace, democracy and human rights is essential, especially for boys and girls.

Media

Media issues are a human rights issue, a development issue and a women's issue.

(a) Because the means of mechanical and electronic production and distribution are, in most countries, concentrated in a few hands or owned by Governments, the voices of women are muted and their views are not accessible to a wide public. Within the global context, it is essential that women have access, inclusion and gender parity in cultural productions, media institutions and media policy-making to counter the imposition of a corporate monoculture.

(b) Through the appropriate agency, the United Nations must support the principle of non-sexist media. Governments, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, must ensure that media is free of sexist, racist, homophobic and ableist bias and that it does not promote militarism and violence, especially in media products produced for children.

(c) Fair and equitable portrayals of women and girls that are not limited to age-related stereotypes are essential in all aspects of media.

(d) Equal access to all media, including information and communication technologies, particularly in the area of policy-making, financial decisions, production resources and education, is necessary.

(e) Governments, in partnership with NGOs, should require the media to monitor its own conduct on issues such as employment, portrayal and gender parity in decision-making and ownership.

Armed conflict, militarization, disarmament, peace and conflict resolution

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, peace is one of the three main themes. Women's movements in all regions, across national borders, and from local to global levels, recognize the attainment of peace as the highest priority. Without peace — not only the absence of war but also the demilitarization of all aspects of society — it is impossible to overcome poverty, violence against women, discrimination and inequality.

This is true for all regions of the world, including the ECE region, a highly overarmed area, where a number of destructive conflicts are taking place.

There is a vital link between people-centred development and the use of resources. Military expenditures directly affect the availability of national resources which should be used to improve the welfare of women and for the development of civil society as a whole.

In spite of the reduction of military expenditures in the region, too many resources are still used for arms production and military purposes. Insufficient resources are being used for pursuing conversion from military production to environmentally sound and socially meaningful production. Significant cuts in military expenditures are necessary. While reduction of arms is an immediate goal, full and total disarmament must remain the final objective.

The testing, manufacture and use of conventional and nuclear weapons remain a deadly threat to people and the environment. Nuclear testing must be halted and the production of nuclear weapons and fissile materials banned. The dismantling of all nuclear production facilities and weapons must be carefully monitored.

Adequate health services and compensation for damage caused by environmental policies, or other abuses of the environment such as nuclear testing and production and chemical and biological weapons testing, must be provided.

Closely linked to the promotion of women to decision-making positions, as well as to the objective to eliminate violence against women, is a need for Governments to take action to increase the participation of women in peace negotiations and conflict resolution where women continue to be underrepresented at all levels. Guidelines can be drawn from the Declaration on the Participation of Women Promoting International Peace and Cooperation (General Assembly resolution 37/63, annex) proclaimed by the General Assembly on 3 December 1982. Governments should draw on the experience of non-governmental women's peace organizations.

While fundamental changes in the ECE region present opportunities for economic cooperation, at the same time armed conflicts present the ECE and Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) area with new challenges and hinder rapid progress in the full development of societies in the region. The evolution of CSCE structures and institutions should contribute to increased efficiency, cooperation and an improvement of the ability of the CSCE to diffuse crisis situations, strengthen the mechanisms designed to prevent military conflicts, and — most important — to manage peaceful change in the ECE region.

On to Beijing

In the light of the intense interest shown by women's NGOs in the region, Governments are urged to provide assistance to ensure the widest possible attendance of members of these organizations at the NGO Forum at Beijing in September 1995.