



# MEA BEIJING +25 and GENERATION EQUALITY - CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUNG FEMINISTS

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AMMAN 26 & 27 NOVEMBER 2019



A MENA Civil Society consultation on Beijing + 25 and Generation Equality was organized in Amman, Jordan on 26 and 27 November 2019 for around 50 different women and gender networks and NGOs from a large number of Arab countries and also young feminists from the region

The meeting commenced with a welcoming note from Mrs. Lina Abu Habib, Director of CRTDA – the organizer, who introduced the speakers; Ms. Lopa Banarjee - Chief of Civil Society section at UN Women, Ms. Soon Young- United Nation representative of the International Alliance of Women, and Ms. Janneke Kukler - UN Women Regional Director for the Arab States

Lopa opened the first sessions with a presentation on Beijing + 25 and an overview of the global forum for gender equality and the pathway until the political declaration is adopted.

Lopa started by thanking everyone for their efforts in coordinating with UN Women in the regional reviews for Beijing +25 and went on to ask the participants “who knows about Beijing platform for action and who actually attended it?”.

Khaula Abu Aziz, the youngest participant, shared what the platform was about and emphasized the importance of sexuality rights which were not sufficiently elaborated in 1995. Mrs Asma Khudr, who was present in Beijing 1995, asked the young generation to build on the achievements and to discuss the new priorities that must be integrated.

Lopa commented that Beijing has created new friendships that have endured the test of time and paved the way for many participants to attain decision-making positions at a later stage. She continued that we shouldn't be convening 25 years later and this is not because the civil society hasn't done its job. On the contrary, CSOs have been working harder and under more difficult circumstances since 1995.

She explained that Beijing 1995 was part of a trajectory from the world conferences on women and was expected to be the ultimate since it gathered forty thousand people from across the globe. It was a two-year preparatory process where governments and organizations from the global north supported governments and organizations from the global south. It was perceived as the ultimate agenda and as such there was no expectation to have a following meeting. All what was required was the review process. Every five years there was a review and things haven't progressed as aspired.

Twenty-five years later, no country has achieved the set of objectives and also, there were some



regressions and new emerging issues. We entered the twenty fifth year with impatience, urgency, and profound anger. Women are at the forefront of the fight for rights, and the promises were not kept and violated.

She emphasized that the two main actors in 1995 were states and civil society organizations, whereas now it is states, CSOs, and private sector. The focus of the Generation Equality Forum is to look at the world the way it is today, activism of young people and activism of inter-generations, actions and accountability for the gender equality agenda as it exists in the world today with all the challenges faced.

What has been compromised since Beijing is the response of states as champions of activism, because the inter-governmental system provides the opportunity for standard setting. UN Women is disrupting the system by bringing the actors of the inter-governmental system from states, civil society, and other actors outside the inter-governmental system and then take it back in, inside outside strategy.

The Forum brings together the champion states with civil society at the center, which is the one responsible for setting the agenda in Mexico, that will culminate in France in July 2020 and be emphasized in the UN General Assembly in September 2020. The meeting is an action and accountability space. It will result in action coalitions on a set of critical issues that are hindering gender equality. These action coalitions will include states, civil society, private sector and other actors who will work together for a five-year acceleration agenda with specific actions, timeline, and budget (2020 – 2025).

Action coalitions will emerge from feminist's agenda driven by voices of youth. It is to be noted that there will be satellite sessions to enable people people's participation from wherever they are. Gender Equality Forum is anchored, results oriented, and amplifies the resolution 1325 +10, ICPD +25, and SDG +5.

There is a new governance structure in the GEF, where civil society sits in decision-making positions for the first time.

GEF legacy are summarized as below:

- Setting an Agenda for gender equality by women, youth, and people of the world.
- Establishing a new model for inclusion
- Expanding the constituency of gender equality actors
- Reclaiming the best aspirations of gender equality.



The focus of action coalitions is actions at the national level on a 2-2-2 basis (one state, civil society, private sector from global north and one from global south). The global north states will implement at the national level and also support the global south.

Member states will be invited to the GEF based on their agreement to be part of action coalitions. UN Women is working with donor countries to raise funds for the participation of 50% of the civil society.

Following Lopa's presentation, Janneke presented the findings of the regional conference which identified the following regional priorities:

- Localizing the international frameworks and creating strategies to address intersectionality and issues of marginalization.
- Ending violence against women
- Enhancing governance of women machinery
- Advancing social protection
- Reflecting on the need to have data to inform decision-making and the use of ICT technology.

She also referred to other five key points raised by the civil society and were not mentioned in the regional report:

- 1- Emphasizing the state's role in the provision of social and protection services from human rights perspective
- 2- Aligning the national policies and laws with international conventions
- 3- Developing action plans for gender equality
- 4- Securing the independence of human rights institutions
- 5- Encouraging states to adopt the recommendations of the Cairo Youth Forum 2019.

Afterwards, Soon Young gave a presentation on Feminist and Women's movements Action Plans of Beijing + 25. She started with a brief historical background on Beijing 1995, and listed the Beijing +25 objectives as follows:



- Looking at the world from women's eyes
- Strengthening the collaboration between UN organizations and CSOs
- Stressing the importance of the inter-generation dialogue

After that, she explained about the parallel reports and how the name was changed from shadow to parallel to be able to praise the successes of the civil society and governments and the challenges that have been faced. The deadline for the reports to be presented in the CSW is the 9<sup>th</sup> of March.

Beijing +25 Action Plan:

Phase 1: Bring Group discussions, findings, and priorities from all regional and national meetings and conferences to be presented and discussed.

Phase 2: Initiate dialogues with local NGOs on priorities

Phase 3: Finalize a global plan at CSW64.

Soon Yong also pointed out to the shortage of time for Beijing +25, and emphasized the role of technology which is allowing stakeholders from around the globe to participate and engage in the discussions. She encouraged participants to register in the six thematic groups and explained the upcoming virtual meetings that will be held between January and February 2020 via Maestro Conferences and Voice- Voice Platforms.

She explained that two groups are to be assembled:

The blue group (Movers) which will be formed from UN Women agencies and will include leadership and editing committees, which will meet on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

The second group (Shakers) which is open for interested participants. The groups will meet online in January and February 2019.

There will be three days meetings where the movers and shakers can get together. The editing committee will be responsible to take from the collective discussions and come up with the agenda for Mexico. Then, in Mexico, they are responsible to come up with the commitments to be presented in France and the General Assembly.



Mrs. Yong referred to the two online books available on the Gender Equality Forum:

- My Memories and Messages for the Next Generation
- My Issues, Hopes, and Dreams

She encouraged participants and their constituencies to contribute to the two online books that will be open for posting starting December 2019.

The presentations were followed by vigorous discussion and Q&As which can be summarized as follows:

- CSW 64 will adopt a political declaration. There will be no negotiations and the declaration will be informed by regional outcomes and declarations. CSW 64 will review strategies pertaining to the next five years. Activists and CSO have two main tasks:
  - 1- Come up with regional recommendations
  - 2- Lobby and work with governments to ensure that the method of work at CSW is game-changing and that civil society is part of the negotiations, at least as an observer.
- 8.5 million Dollars were raised as funds to secure the participation of 3500 CSOs from the south to Mexico and France. The necessity to reflect collective consensus in the comments for political declaration to CSW was emphasized.
- The six thematic areas of Beijing +25 are:
  - 1- Capture the comprehensiveness and intersectionality
  - 2- Social protection (not as welfare but as policy choice, poverty eradication, social change, etc)
  - 3- Freedom of stigma: centralize the idea of changing norms (in laws and practices). New types of violence are emerging as a result of stereotypes and norms.
  - 4- Institutionalization: enshrining parity in political processes and governance, not only in numbers but in decision making as well.
  - 5- Peaceful and democratic societies
  - 6- Environment conservation: women as agents of environmental decision making, resilience and choices.



During the following working group sessions, CSOs were divided into working groups to discuss the pre-prepared position papers by three networks and two NGOs from the Arab region on the six themes. The young feminists participated in the six working groups and gave their own perspective adding to challenges and to the recommendations and to the priorities that should be adopted. An active discussion during the two days has made CSOs and the young feminists able to highlight priority issues they consider them important to address for MENA region.

During the meeting with the UN Executive Director, the priority issues for the region which were intersectional were summarized and presented as follows:

- (1) Eliminating gender-based violence and ensure human security for all Arab women, ensure their security in the private life and their security in the public life. Armed Conflict in many of the Arab countries is coupled with many forms of violence against women and girls. There is a need to address prevention of conflict and there is a need to stop looking at women in conflict as victims but rather look at them as decision makers who have voice in the prevention of conflict to being partners in planning, implementation and monitoring of all programs that affect their life.
- (2) The need for legal reform. Legal reform is harnessed with the necessity to ratify all human rights and women's rights instruments, lift reservations and guarantee the due diligence of governments in making national legislations conform with international instruments. Laws can be enabler to women to access many of their rights where as having inadequate laws or not having laws disenable women. The need to reform family law is a priority to almost all countries of the region. The need for laws such as abortion law, laws to end human trafficking, NGO laws, laws to protect refugees are examples of laws that are needed in the region.
- (3) There is a need to strengthen institutions in order to be gender responsive. There is a need to strengthen national women machineries and establish systems by which they can be monitored and open to feminist groups and organizations. There is a need to revisit and strengthen Ombudsperson offices for gender equality in Arab countries that receive women complainants of discrimination and address their complaints. There is a need to strengthen the role and responsibility of gender focal points in the different ministries and public institutions.
- (4) The need to improve educational and health services provided to women and girls. Providers of these services should be providing services with respect to women's dignity. Sexual health education and services should be available especially to youth and should be provided in a youth friendly fashion. Illiteracy should be eliminated in the



region that has the largest number of illiterate women.

(5) Leadership and participation of women should be ensured by the constitutions, in the different institutions, in all governance structures and in the private sector. Coupled with that norms and practices that discriminate against women should be changed and their change should be monitored and accountability should be the way to address those who perpetuate them.

(6) Women at all forms of work; informal work, non-paid work as family work and agriculture work should be recognized statistically by governments and workers with all their diversity should be protected, covered by social security and health security. They should be made able to combine their different roles and there should be sharing in undertaking the reproductive role in the family.

(7) Data on the situation of women in all spheres should be regularly collected and analyzed with transparency and should be made available to civil society which greatly need it in planning their activities at the grass root level.

(8) Ratification of international conventions pertaining to harassment in the work environment (ILO), refugees, and removing the reservations on the articles 2, 15, and 16 of CEDAW. Trainings for parliamentarians on the international conventions as they are not fully aware of its recommendations is emphasized.

(9) Accounting for the disparities between the various groups of Arab women, with more intersectionality that aggravates vulnerability particularly among poor women, illiterate women, refugee women, and rural women.

(10) Combating the stereotype of refugee women as victim or recipients of welfare, but as agents of change and participants in decision making.

(11) Building partnerships with the private sector and advocating for gender mainstreaming within this sector (gender sensitive work environment and policies)\

UN Executive Director ended the meeting with her explanation of the gaps in Beijing 1995 and are being made sure to be addressed in Beijing + 25 which are: looking at gender as binary ignoring the diversity, Ignoring the role of the private sector and the lack of investment plan for implementing Beijing agenda.

She also stated some of the priorities that are coming from the different regions such as the need to address gender based violence, the need to change norms that negatively affect women, the need for legal reform, the need to address the architecture of national women machineries and their underfunding, the need for accurate data in order to evade the illusion of progress of women and the great need to increase the resources available for feminist movements and for achieving gender





equality.

The consultation ended with a draft regional consensus on priority issues that was presented on 29 November in a meeting with UN Executive director, with UN staff from different Arab countries, with different donor agencies and international NGOs as well as a number of CSOs.

Finally, the workshop concluded with some guidelines for drafting parallel reports:

- Frame discussions of violence around security (human and physical in private and public spaces), and achieve security with all what that entails
- Respond to the right of freedom and bring the issue of intersectionality
- Shed light on enabling and disabling laws (absence or inadequate framing of laws)
- Intersectionality
- Analyze leadership and participation: institutional and constitutional laws and practices
- Approach the issues from a broader perspective for example not economic empowerment, but women and work in all its diversity.
- Provide recommendations on practices that have the potential to scale up, and strengthen for accountability and responsiveness



**MENA BEIJING +25 and GENERATION EQUALITY  
CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUNG FEMINISTS CONSULTATION**

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**By  
Dr. Fatemah Khafagy**

A MENA Civil Society consultation on Beijing + 25 and Generation Equality was organized in Amman, Jordan on 26 and 27 November 2019 for around 50 different women and gender networks and NGOs from a large number of Arab countries and also young feminists from the region . The consultation ended with a draft regional consensus on priority issues that was presented on 29 November in a meeting with UN Executive director, with UN staff from different Arab countries, with different donor agencies and international NGOs as well as a number of CSOs.

Ms. Lopa Banarjee , Ms. Soon Young and Ms. Janneke Kukler participated in the two days CSOs consultation. Lopa gave a presentation on Beijing + 25 and an overview of the global forum for gender equality and also gave information on the action coalitions. She explained the road until the political declaration is adopted. Soon Young gave a presentation on Feminist and Women's movements Action Plans of Beijing + 25 and presented the NGO guidelines for parallel reports. She encouraged participants to register in the six thematic groups and explained the upcoming virtual meetings. She also encouraged participants and their constituencies to contribute to the two on line books on hopes and dreams and on artistic work. She explained also the events planned in CSW64.

The two presentations were followed by vigorous discussion and questions from participants.

During the two days CSOs were divided into working groups to discuss the pre prepared position papers by three networks and two NGOs from the Arab region on the six themes. The young feminists participated in the six working groups and gave their own perspective adding to challenges and to the recommendations and to the priorities that should be adopted. An active discussion during the two days has made CSOs and the young feminists able to highlight priority issues they consider them important to address for MENA region.

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- (5) Leadership and participation of women should be ensured by the constitutions, in the different institutions, in all governance structures and in the private sector. Coupled with that norms and practices that discriminate against women should be changed and their change should be monitored and accountability should be the way to address those who perpetuate them.
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