

## **SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN**

Council Meeting United Nations, New York, 08 and 09 July 2015

### **SIW's Vision for Beijing+20 – Gender Equality, Democracy and Political Participation in a Global World**

Dear sisters and comrades,

we are here today to discuss our vision of Beijing plus 20 – a topic already addressed during the 58<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women – this time so that the Council can make its contribution to the new Sustainable Development Goals.

Let us begin by admitting the failures of MDGs:

- 1) They did not recognize the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in development;
- 2) They did not take advantage of women's adaptive and innovative potential to change the world, treating them as beneficiaries rather than as agents of policies;
- 3) They treated some topics as "too hot to handle" – and still do!

The Open Working Group has suggested goals and targets that are far more encompassing on gender equality, girls' and women's empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights than those included in the MDG framework.

In the past two years of preparing the SDGs we have been working to make our own contribution.

The priorities of the SIW, as we announced at the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the CSW, are:

- The eradication of violence against women;
- The eradication of poverty; and
- Education and training for women and girls.

At the 59<sup>th</sup> session we added four more priorities:

- Equality as the precondition of a fair and equal society;
- The participation of women in political decision-making, the precondition of a democratic society;
- The promotion of a culture of democracy, respect for rights, and of tolerance,

the foundations for living together in harmony;

- An equitable distribution of income and resources between nations and between men and women, so as to overcome global, regional and local imbalances and prevent conflict.

Above all, we assert that gender equality and the human rights of women and girls must be recognized as a cross-cutting issue critical to the success of the post-2015 development agenda.

All these priorities are confirmed in our concluding resolution.

It is one thing to be clear in our priorities. But it is another to take concrete steps. Allow me to suggest a few.

First, we must ensure that issues critical to women are at the center of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Our job must be to put pressure on our parties, parliaments and governments to share these priorities and support them in the negotiation process. Otherwise they will be “a dead letter,” as has too often been the case.

Second, some of you may remember my proposal at our March event for the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the CSW in March. I proposed – for the 60th session of CSW – an event co-hosted by different women’s organizations within our socialist, social democratic, labor family? I was thinking of SIW, PES Women, CEE Gender Network, Foundation for European Progressive Studies -FEPS, Jean Jaures Foundation .....

My appeal was to join forces, to join agendas, and to join plans of action.

The Socialist International and Socialist international women are worldwide organizations that bring together 152 political parties and organizations from every continent. We need to fully exploit our potential. We need to show that we are a **global** organization and a well-connected organization. And when we decide to act, we act globally...

Let me suggest some campaigns that could be launched simultaneously by our organizations in each country where we are present.

There are three specific fields of actions where women should take the lead. I realize that some of these issues are not new, but we have never committed to common simultaneous campaigns, except for the campaign to end violence against women, which also involved the Socialist International.

- Self-determined lives

- Healthy lives
- Productive lives

### **Self-determined lives:**

We must remain committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of girls, adolescents and women. Our priority in this field should be to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriages.

### **Healthy lives**

We must remain committed to promoting the highest attainable standard of health for girls, adolescents and women. Our priority in this field should be to promote and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### **Productive lives**

We must remain committed to enacting and implementing laws to assure the economic and social empowerment of women also through equal access to ownership and control of economic resources, including land property and inheritance rights. The priority should be on ensuring women's equal access to full and productive employment and decent work and equal pay for work of equal value, including formalization and regularization of informal sector activities.

This leads me to a philosophical and a practical consideration. Experience has shown me that in their campaigns, our organizations tend to leave behind and even completely ignore the younger generations: girls and adolescents. Too often we have dedicated our attention and commitment to "women," without recognizing that the needs of a girl child can be different from those of an adolescent girl, which can be different from those of a woman.

As a member of the Italian Parliament, I work with AIDOS, an Italian NGO dedicated to women and development. AIDOS has worked to draw attention in Italy and Europe to "Girl Declaration." Girls were left out of the original Millennium Development Goals. So the purpose of the Girl Declaration was to make sure the mistake would not be repeated. Their rights to education, health, safety, economic security, their right to their dreams for the future.... This Declaration is the fruit of the efforts of organizations that have worked with some five hundred adolescent girls living in poverty in 14 countries across four continents. These adolescent girls were asked what they thought they needed to have a chance to achieve their potential.

So let's start our campaign with girls, whose rights, whose human rights are

violated. I am speaking of the dramatic issue of child, early and forced marriages. I would like to propose a campaign to prevent and eliminate child early and forced marriages.

The millions of girls married every year are denied not only their right to choose whom and when to marry: they are deprived first and foremost of their childhood, of their health, of their wellbeing, of their lives. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death among girls aged 15 to 18. They are denied the right to childhood, the right to assume household responsibilities, the right to education and employment prospects, the right not to be violated or raped by their husbands....

We know that child marriages are the product of poverty. Our commitment to eradicate poverty is thus the pre-condition to the fight against child early and forced marriages.

So I conclude by asking SIW to consider the possibility of launching this campaign in cooperation with the Socialist International.

The topic is on the agenda of UN: the General Assembly approved a resolution last December and the Human Right Council in Geneva approved one last week. But it is not enough to pass resolutions: we also need to implement them. So this could be our first action for the post-2015 development agenda.

Investing in girls and adolescents means investing in the future. We are the largest and oldest political organization of women in the world: investing in future is a must to continue to live.