

Vienna Catalogue of Recommendations on Women's Rights – 10 Years After VDPA

Executive Summary

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) of the World Conference on Human Rights 1993 marked the culmination of a long process of review and debate over the status of human rights in the world. It also marked the beginning of a renewed effort to strengthen and further implement the body of human rights instruments developed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

In the meantime, we have passed into a new millennium. The international community has worked intensely during the 1990ies to reflect the changes in world politics by developing international standards in all fields of society, and by setting time-bound targets to reach these goals, most importantly the eradication of extreme poverty by 2015.

The international community has not set a date for a high level review of the implementation of the VDPA. Yet, 10 years after the World Conference on Human Rights, we believe that renewed vigor has to instill the international community in order to reflect on progress and obstacles so far, implement all provisions of VDPA, and to identify new areas in need of international action.

We feel the need to rekindle the spirit of the VDPA, a need felt more urgently at this symbolic time and place. While we agree that nothing would be gained by seeking cautious compromise or approximate solutions at best, we want to demonstrate - by focusing on the human rights of women - that there is work to be done by the international community, and that we are ready to stand up and reflect, speak, assist, explain, develop and agree on further steps to take, together with many who look to a functioning United Nations and a vibrant international community to protect the common language of humanity.

A lot has been achieved for and by women over the last decade, and we need to add to these success stories, as women's lives still face poverty, lack of access to economic viability and independence, ill health, illiteracy, conflict and war, discrimination, exclusion and violence.

There is a gender dimension to globalisation, and international trade policies that limit women disproportionately. The lack of gender sensitivity in development programmes, and lack of interest in health threats which are gender specific slow down the development process and limit sustainable development. Special measures for women and gender mainstreaming are needed to improve women's lives.

While important standards have been agreed on, efforts to integrate women as active participants in peace-making processes have not yet yielded sustainable results. Post-war Iraq must not become another case in point. Women experience violence from the most intolerable tormentors: spouses and family members. While much has been achieved, we need to build awareness and counter these human rights violations.

Women hold up half the sky and their full and equal participation is needed in all spheres of society. Women need to have a say in how their lives are shaped, and need to know that they have a stake in the world. Gender analysis, gender budgeting, gender justice are all steps in this direction.

Recommendations:

- Convene a Fifth World Conference on Women as soon as possible to focus on the new dangers to women's equality, and to reengage the world's women in the international agenda, without jeopardizing the international consensus reached
- Ensure that a gender perspective is fully taken into account in implementing the MDGs
- In order to solve the gender disparities of paid and unpaid work, the idea of basic income as a strategy for social change should be explored
- Ensure a gender perspective in multilateral trade negotiations, and ensure that a gender and human rights clause is applied to WTO rules
- Achieve full literacy for women and girls to enable them to participate in all spheres of life and are not excluded from new communication technologies
- Explore and implement the gender-specific findings with regard to medical treatment and pharmaceutical products
- All States shall accede, ratify, and ensure full implementation of existing women's rights instruments, most recently the United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)
- Ensure the full implementation of the Geneva Conventions also from a gender perspective
- Develop and fund concrete actions to implement the important findings and recent work of the Security Council, the UN-Secretariat, and UNIFEM on women, peace and conflict
- Fight all forms of violence against women at home, at the workplace, and in society with greater vigilance with regard to the legal, security and judicial bodies
- Reopen the international dialogue on questions of reproductive rights, sexual exploitation, the feminization of migration, and trafficking of women
- Intensify research and legal debate about the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular by clarifying the content and scope of the articles of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- In implementing existing equality legislation, introduce and intensify temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between women and men
- Link governments' commitments to gender equality and women's human rights to the distribution, use and generation of public resources by making gender responsive budget analysis mandatory
- Gender justice shall become an integral part of human rights implementation
- End the statistical gender blindness which hides inequality and forstalls sound political decision-making
- Make the VDPA a binding legal document