

## **The Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals**

### **Introduction**

Ten years after the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, we meet here again, united by fraternity and solidarity, in the search for turning into concrete actions the principles expressed in our Platform. We bring with us rejoice for the achievements, as well as frustration for what we could not achieve. We bring accumulated reflection and maturity to understand the ongoing process. Above all, we bring deep concern with an international scenario where violence has exploded, economic inequalities among countries have increased, all forms of fundamentalism have expanded and, as a consequence, human rights are being more violated than ever. For these reasons it is necessary to reaffirm those principles which consensus required such an endeavor in Beijing.

In my country, Brazil, considerable progress has been achieved in the last ten years, but we are fully aware that much is yet to be done. During the 2003 opening session of the Brazilian Congress, President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva stated that “our commitment to all Brazilian women is based on deepening democracy, combating prejudice and racism, and promoting decisive actions to combat discrimination and exclusion. If poverty has the face of a woman, the struggle against poverty also has it.” Encouraged by this spirit, we come here as the Brazilian delegation, and with this same spirit I will try to build the relations – whether they exist or not – between Beijing and the Millennium Summit.

### **The UN Conferences and women’s human rights**

Thirty years have gone since the first women’s conference held in Mexico and many other conferences have dealt with issues related to women in a fairly comprehensive way. The most important link among them is that in almost all – if not all – of them the basis of their resolutions were the human rights of women as acknowledged in Vienna (1993) as “an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights”. The Beijing Conference could build on all the previous ones and further advance. Its broadness, encompassing all dimensions of women’s social life, translated into its Platform for Action, became the most complete guide for those who were in their countries fighting for the advancement of women, as well as for those governments willing to face gender inequalities and formulating policies on this basis.

Although centered in women, the Platform has a strong component of integral social development. Once again women break the paradigm according to which their interests are restricted to the area of care. Also, they clearly indicate that in order to overcome the huge problems posed by global development, the gender perspective must be mainstreamed and equality reaffirmed, with the highest respect to differences.

### **The Millennium Development Goals**

“According to UNDP, a withdrawal in the development process has been experienced in a large number of countries during the nineties. In 46 countries, the population is poorer now than in the previous decade. In 25 countries, the number of people in hunger has increased. If this pace is kept, the MDGs will not be fulfilled in many countries. We are convinced that the resources – either material or human – for the solution of the main world problems do exist. It is a matter of political decision and willingness.” (Stated by President Lula in the Brazilian 2004 report on the MDGs.)

The importance of the world mobilization derived from the decision of States to sign the Millennium Declaration should be seen within this framework.

represents a major obstacle for the achievement of gender equality for women. They are more educated than men. Discrimination is expressed in the analysis of indicators of their participation in the labor market, as well as in politics, aggravated by the domestic violence they suffer." The conclusion is that education is a necessary but not sufficient condition to produce significant changes in the life of women.

### **Conclusion**

The Millennium Development Goals represent the possibility of a minimum agreement among governments towards a fairer and more equitable development stage. As opposed to any refusal, we must adopt them in our work, enlarging their perspective and adapting them at the country level, so as to reflect the level of advancement of women. We should not be limited by those lines which reinforce traditional roles and care assigned to us throughout the centuries in societies governed by men. Our assignment is that of building, at all levels, another global development pact in which men and women play the leading roles in a new history of a more just and equitable world.