

4th DRAFT

CONCEPT PAPER

**NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) MINISTERIAL MEETING
ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
MAY 2005, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA**

THEME:

**“EMPOWERING WOMEN IN FACING THE CHALLENGES
OF GLOBALIZATION”**

1. Introduction

The Heads of State or Government of The Non-Aligned Movement at its XIII Meeting in Kuala Lumpur (20 -25 February 2003) has agreed that Malaysia hosts a **NAM Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women (MMAW)**. The MMAW will bring together Ministers whose responsibilities cut across women's issues with a view to chart new grounds within the NAM forum by enhancing the mainstreaming process and the integration of women in NAM countries at all levels and in all sectors in a coordinated, effective and sustained manner.

2. Objectives of the Meeting

- (i) To share experiences among NAM countries on best practices, achievements, gaps and challenges in empowering women and achieving gender equality, development and peace; and
- (ii) To identify specific and practical projects and programmes that NAM, as a group, could implement to help promote the advancement of women in NAM countries.

3. Themes and sub-themes of the Meeting

The Heads of State or Government of NAM realized that while globalization and trade liberalization offer opportunities for economic growth and poverty eradication, they pose certain challenges for gender equality. Women in NAM countries continue to face various problems and obstacles to development, including extreme poverty, low access to economic and productive resources, information and communication technology, health services, education and skills training, low representation in the decision-making process and violence against women.

Realizing that empowering women is an important part of a development strategy that seeks to enable people, men and women, to escape poverty and improve their standard of living in the era of globalization, the theme suggested for the NAM Ministerial Meeting is “**Empowering Women in Facing the**

Challenges of Globalization”, with the following **seven** sub-themes, namely:

- (i) Women and Economic Development
- (ii) Women in Decision-Making
- (iii) Women and Education
- (iv) Women and Health
- (v) Women and ICT
- (vi) Women in Armed Conflict
- (vii) Violence against Women

4. Background to the sub-themes

(i) Women and Economic Development

Transformation in the world economy is profoundly changing the parameters of social development in all countries. While globalization has brought greater opportunities, many are still deprived of its benefits. Poverty has been one of the critical issues faced by the developing countries, including NAM countries, and it remains stubbornly “feminized”. The feminization of poverty has been associated with the absence of economic opportunities and lack of access to economic resources such as credit for women. Therefore, the participation and direct involvement of women in the economic sphere is critical to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication in NAM member countries.

Women constitute between 32 and 46 percent of the labour force in individual economies. Globally, the increase in women's overall share of the labour force has been particularly marked in export-oriented sectors, where women comprise as much as three-quarters of the workforce. Women are known to be particularly active in the informal sector, and their unpaid work constitutes a major contribution to the economy. However, a lot of women, both at the urban and rural areas, do not have the opportunity and accessibility to facilities that will enable them to engage themselves actively in economic activities.

Globalization in the form of transformation of production patterns, accelerated technology innovation and macroeconomic policies, including structural adjustment and privatization, continue to present both opportunities and challenges for women. Reports from developing countries during the Tenth Review of the Beijing Platform for Action 2005 indicate that, although women have enjoyed some benefits in the form of jobs, incomes, trade and investment markets, most of them still suffer from increased poverty, deteriorating working conditions and social security. In many countries, only the few educated and multi-skilled women enjoyed these benefits. Low-skilled women workers were especially vulnerable to job instability, low incomes without employee benefits, heavy workloads, long hours and hazardous working environments.

In the business domain, although the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) owned or operated by women has been a worldwide phenomenon, reports indicated that women-

owned SMEs face gender-specific barriers that limit their capacity to maximize their contribution to economic growth and social development.

At the MMAW, Ministers will discuss further steps and measures that should be taken by NAM, as a group, to empower women in the economic domain. In this context, women's perspectives and specific realities should be taken into account in the formulation and implementation of economic policies, programs, including economic recovery programs, and projects. Sound economic policies for women need to be developed to further enhance their role in income generating activities and employment. Obstacles to their full access to human resource development that recognize the different realities of women and men must be examined and addressed.

(ii) **Women in Decision Making**

Achieving gender equality and human rights are important development goals, as they provide enabling environment in which women and men can participate productively in society, attain a basic quality of life, and take advantage of the new opportunities that development can offer.

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote quality growth. However, women are still largely under-represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial

and other executive bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power. Globally, about 10 per cent of the members of legislative bodies and a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Although women make up at least half of the electorate in almost all countries and have attained the right to vote and hold office in almost all countries, women continue to be seriously under-represented as candidates for public office.

The low proportion of women among economic and political decision makers at the local, national, regional and international levels reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed through positive measures. The equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels is dependent on Governments and other actors undertaking statistical gender analysis and mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and the implementation of programmes. Increased women's participation at the decision-making level is essential to the empowerment of women.

(iii) Women and Education

Education is an essential and a powerful tool for achieving gender equality, development and peace. Recognizing that educational inequality is a major infringement of the rights of women and girls, and an important barrier to social and economic development, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges the right to education, and declares that elementary

education should be free and compulsory to all. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child also contain the most comprehensive set of legally enforceable commitments concerning both rights to education and gender equality.

Reports have shown that investing in the education of girls drastically increases their personal and social well-being. Investing in the education of girls is, in fact, one of the best ways of ensuring that the well being of the future generations will be improved. It has been proven that when mothers are educated, their children, both boys and girls, will be healthier, better nourished and have greater chance of going to school. Unfortunately, reports have demonstrated that in many developing countries, despite significant shifts towards greater gender parity, girls continue to face sharp discrimination in access to schooling.

At the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, the international community made a commitment that by 2005, gender disparities in enrolment in primary and secondary education should be eliminated. However, the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 revealed that millions of children around the world still failed to gain access to schooling, and even larger numbers among those who did enroll left prematurely, and dropped out before the skills of literacy and numeracy had been properly gained. A majority of such children were girls.

The Tenth Review of the Beijing Platform for Action, 2005 revealed that in some developing countries, the trend of the

enrolment of female students in primary, secondary and tertiary education is encouraging. However, women are still very much under-represented in the field of science and technology, particularly in engineering, sciences, physics and mathematics. Studies by UNESCO and ICSU, in 1999, reported that the under-representation of women in science, mathematics and engineering was not due to women's poor academic abilities, their difficulties with scientific and mathematical concepts, or their inclination to work less hard. Rather, the under-representation was due to the structure and culture of the departments and schools of science, mathematics and engineering, which did not recognize gender differences in many aspects of learning.

One of the goals at the United Nations Millennium Summit agreed to by the Heads of State/Government in September 2000 was "to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education by 2015. This agreement was the endorsement of one of the "Education for All" goals set at Dakar World Education Forum.

Members of NAM are collectively committed to gender equality in education and supportive of the target set, in this area, by the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, NAM should continue to work towards achieving this goal. The advancement of women in NAM countries depends very much on their educational level and the quality of education. Girls and boys in NAM countries should have equal chances to go to school and to enjoy teaching methods, academic orientation, counseling and curricula free of stereotyping and unaffected by gender-bias. In this regard, the

MMAW is an important venue for ministers to share countries' experience in addressing the obstacles and challenges in the area of education and make concrete and practical suggestions.

(iii) Women and Health

Women's health is recognised as a central concern in promoting the well being of women and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. Therefore, health issues concerning women that cover the entire women's life cycle from newborn care to elderly women and women's health in terms of physical, psychological as well as social aspects should be given special attention.

Women have different and unequal access to and use of basic resources, including primary health services for the prevention and treatment of various diseases. A report by UNFPA states that in 2000, some 500,000 maternal deaths occur each year in developing countries, where only 53% of all births are professionally attended. Each year women undergo an estimated 50 million abortions, 20 million of which are unsafe, resulting in the deaths of 78,000 women and the suffering of millions more.

The report of the Tenth Review of the Beijing Platform for Action 2005 demonstrates that despite efforts made over the past decade, women's need and rights with regard to health are still not being met. Reproductive health needs are inadequately addressed and maternal mortality remains high in many countries. Disparities

in access to reproductive health services between rural and urban areas need to be addressed.

In recognition of the health-related challenges faced by women, the MMAW should come up with better strategies to improve the situation of women in this area, including in the areas where women are affected the most such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The number of women with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) infection and AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) that has been increasing steadily in developing countries is a special concern to NAM. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), by the end of 2003, 19.2 million women were living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, accounting for approximately 50 percent of the 40 million adults living with HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, the social, developmental and health consequences of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases need to be examined by NAM member states and need to be seen from a gender perspective. NAM should also promote the increased availability of more affordable and easily accessible methods of preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as one component of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health strategy and an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy that addresses gender equality and women's empowerment.

(iv) Women and ICT

The emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICT) poses opportunities and challenges for the promotion of gender equality. The NAM Ministerial Meeting should emphasize the role of ICT as a tool for development and as central to the empowerment of women. ICT has been increasingly used to share knowledge, enhance participation of all members of society, increase networking, give voice to marginalized groups, organize political action, empower people, fight poverty and enhance economic development. It is therefore, particularly important to address gender-based discrimination and inequalities that undermine women's access to opportunities in the emerging knowledge and information society, and that diminish the potential of ICT and the media to be an effective tool for the promotion of gender equality.

In the new global, knowledge-based economy, competitive advantage requires a highly skilled and diversified workforce that will increase productivity and fuel innovation. Economies need the talent of their entire population, male and female, to create a leading-edge workforce, including in the area of ICT. This will be achieved through policies that place greater emphasis, not only in science and technology, but also in the field of ICT.

(v) Women in Armed Conflict

In a world of continuing instability and violence, the implementation of cooperative approaches to peace and security is urgently needed. It is estimated that close to 90 per cent of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90 per cent of those who lost their lives were military personnel.

The Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women declared that rape in armed conflict is a war crime, and could, under certain circumstances, be considered genocide. However, in conflict situations women and girls are often raped, sometimes using systematic rape as a tactic of war. They are also victims of acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, sexual abuse and forced pregnancy. Despite all these, women should not be viewed solely as victims of war. They assume the key role of ensuring family livelihood in the midst of chaos and destruction, and are particularly active in the peace movement at the grassroots level, cultivating peace within their communities.

Women's equal participation in all aspects of peace processes and attention to gender issues in such processes have been an important focus of international action, especially since the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). This momentum was significantly accelerated with the adoption by the Security Council Resolution

1325 (2000) in which the Council called upon all actors to adopt a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements and to address the special needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Since then many governments have sought to protect women and children in conflict situations around the world.

Women's human rights are integral to peace and security, and their involvement in reconstruction and reconciliation efforts are essential to their advancement. In 2004, the Economic and Social Council paid particular attention to peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and to women's participation in post-conflict electoral processes. This and other initiatives taken by the governments to enhance participation by women in their efforts to maintain and consolidate peace, should have created more opportunities for women and women's organizations to contribute to the prevention of conflict and to participate in conflict resolution, peace-building and peace negotiations.

However, the number of women who participate in formal peace processes remains very small. Even when women participate or are included in formal peace negotiations, their roles are only limited to a formal presence without having the capacity, or mandate to contribute to setting or shaping the agenda of such negotiations. The absence of women from the peace table causes insufficient attention to and reflection of the concerns of women in peace agreements.

The MMAW has a key role in supporting women's participation in peace processes. In this regard, NAM member countries will discuss and recommend creative strategies and interventions that need to be taken to increase women's participation and place gender concerns within the framework of ongoing peace processes.

(vi) Violence against Women

Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Violence against women takes a dismaying variety of forms, from domestic abuse and rape to child marriages and female genital mutilation.

Violence against women and the human rights of women are two of the 12 critical areas of concern identified as the main obstacles to the advancement of women in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Platform indeed declared that "violence against women constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace".

In the context of violence, women are particularly vulnerable to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs in the family, including battering; sexual abuse of female children in the household; female genital mutilation and other traditional

- practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; and violence related to exploitation;
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs within the general community, including rape; sexual abuse; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution;
 - Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

Thus, MMAW has a key role in working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life. Combating violence against women requires changing the way that gender roles and power relations are articulated in society. In many NAM countries women still have a low status. They are considered as inferior and there is a strong belief that men are superior to them and even own them.

Changing people's attitude and mentality towards women will take a long time, at least a generation, many believe, and perhaps longer. Nevertheless, raising awareness of the issue of violence against women, and educating boys and men to view women as valuable partners in life, in the development of a society and in the attainment of peace are just as important as taking legal steps to protect women's human rights. This is perhaps one of the areas that NAM, as a group, could collaborate and work closely in our efforts to eliminate violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOME

The NAM Ministerial Meeting on Women is expected to come out with a declaration, called the **Putrajaya Declaration on the Advancement of Women in NAM Countries**. This declaration will be formulated to reaffirm NAM's commitment to the empowerment of women and their full participation in all sectors and at all levels.

6. TENTATIVE FORMAT OF MEETING

The meeting will consist of two segments:

i. Senior Officials Meeting – 2 days (7 - 8 May 2005)

Working sessions to finalize a draft declaration called the **Putrajaya Declaration on the Advancement of Women in NAM Countries**.

ii. Ministerial Meeting – 2 days (9 – 10) May 2005

Following the official opening, there will be **plenary and interactive sessions**. During the sessions, Ministers/Heads of delegations will be invited by the Chair to make **5 minutes intervention** on the **sub-theme/s**.

At the closing session, the Ministers will consider and adopt the **“Putrajaya Declaration on the Advancement of Women in NAM Countries”**.

7. CONCLUSION

The MMAW to be held in Putrajaya Malaysia on the 9 -10th May 2005 is another milestone in NAM's efforts towards achieving gender equality. Other than the sub-themes discussed above, it is hoped that the meeting will also discuss important steps that have to be taken in mainstreaming gender perspectives and interests into the development process of NAM member states and their development activities at all levels and in all sectors.

To accelerate progress towards gender equality, member countries will formulate the Putrajaya Declaration, which among others, outlines the concern of NAM countries on the situation faced by women in NAM countries and their commitment towards the advancement and the empowerment of women in various identified areas.

*Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
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