

# The United Nations

## Fourth World Conference on Women

Beijing, China - September 1995  
Action for Equality, Development and Peace

### PLATFORM FOR ACTION

**Strategic objective J.1.** Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.

**Strategic objective J.2.** Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

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### J. Women and the Media

234. During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.
235. More women are involved in careers in the communications sector, but few have attained positions at the decision-making level or serve on governing boards and bodies that influence media policy. The lack of gender sensitivity in the media is evidenced by the failure to eliminate the gender-based stereotyping that can be found in public and private local, national and international media organizations.
236. The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed. Print and electronic media in most countries do not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. In addition, violent and degrading or pornographic media products are also negatively affecting women and their participation in society. Programming that reinforces women's traditional roles can be equally limiting. The world- wide trend towards consumerism has created a climate in which advertisements and commercial messages often portray women primarily as consumers and target girls and women of all ages inappropriately.
237. Women should be empowered by enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to information technology. This will strengthen their ability to combat negative portrayals of women internationally and to challenge instances of abuse of the power of an increasingly important industry. Self-regulatory mechanisms for the media need to be created and strengthened and approaches developed to eliminate gender-biased programming. Most women, especially in developing countries, are not able to access effectively the expanding electronic information highways and therefore cannot establish networks that will provide them with alternative

sources of information. Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact.

238. In addressing the issue of the mobilization of the media, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

#### Strategic objective J.1.

Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication

#### **Actions to be taken**

239. By Governments:
- a. Support women's education, training and employment to promote and ensure women's equal access to all areas and levels of the media;
  - b. Support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action and review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective;
  - c. Promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research;
  - d. Aim at gender balance in the appointment of women and men to all advisory, management, regulatory or monitoring bodies, including those connected to the private and State or public media;
  - e. Encourage, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, these bodies to increase the number of programmes for and by women to see to it that women's needs and concerns are properly addressed;
  - f. Encourage and recognize women's media networks, including electronic networks and other new technologies of communication, as a means for the dissemination of information and the exchange of views, including at the international level, and support women's groups active in all media work and systems of communications to that end;
  - g. Encourage and provide the means or incentives for the creative use of programmes in the national media for the dissemination of information on various cultural forms of indigenous people and the development of social and educational issues in this regard within the framework of national law;
  - h. Guarantee the freedom of the media and its subsequent protection within the framework of national law and encourage, consistent with freedom of expression, the positive involvement of the media in development and social issues.
240. By national and international media systems:
- Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, that promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media and international communication systems and that promote increased participation by women and men in production and decision-making.

241. By Governments, as appropriate, or national machinery for the advancement of women:
- a. Encourage the development of educational and training programmes for women in order to produce information for the mass media, including funding of experimental efforts, and the use of the new technologies of communication, cybernetics space and satellite, whether public or private;
  - b. Encourage the use of communication systems, including new technologies, as a means of strengthening women's participation in democratic processes;
  - c. Facilitate the compilation of a directory of women media experts;
  - d. Encourage the participation of women in the development of professional guidelines and codes of conduct or other appropriate self-regulatory mechanisms to promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals of women by the media.
242. By non-governmental organizations and media professional associations:
- a. Encourage the establishment of media watch groups that can monitor the media and consult with the media to ensure that women's needs and concerns are properly reflected;
  - b. Train women to make greater use of information technology for communication and the media, including at the international level;
  - c. Create networks among and develop information programmes for non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and professional media organizations in order to recognize the specific needs of women in the media, and facilitate the increased participation of women in communication, in particular at the international level, in support of South-South and North-South dialogue among and between these organizations, inter alia, to promote the human rights of women and equality between women and men;
  - d. Encourage the media industry and education and media training institutions to develop, in appropriate languages, traditional, indigenous and other ethnic forms of media, such as story-telling, drama, poetry and song, reflecting their cultures, and utilize these forms of communication to disseminate information on development and social issues.

Strategic objective J.2.

Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media

### **Actions to be taken**

243. By Governments and international organizations, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression:
- a. Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles;
  - b. Encourage the media and advertising agencies to develop specific programmes to raise awareness of the Platform for Action;

- c. Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media;
  - d. Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;
  - e. Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive;
  - f. Take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.
244. By the mass media and advertising organizations:
- a. Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women;
  - b. Establish, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct that address violent, degrading or pornographic materials concerning women in the media, including advertising;
  - c. Develop a gender perspective on all issues of concern to communities, consumers and civil society;
  - d. Increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the media.
245. By the media, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in collaboration, as appropriate, with national machinery for the advancement of women:
- a. Promote the equal sharing of family responsibilities through media campaigns that emphasize gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family and that disseminate information aimed at eliminating spousal and child abuse and all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence;
  - b. Produce and/or disseminate media materials on women leaders, inter alia, as leaders who bring to their positions of leadership many different life experiences, including but not limited to their experiences in balancing work and family responsibilities, as mothers, as professionals, as managers and as entrepreneurs, to provide role models, particularly to young women;
  - c. Promote extensive campaigns, making use of public and private educational programmes, to disseminate information about and increase awareness of the human rights of women;
  - d. Support the development of and finance, as appropriate, alternative media and the use of all means of communication to disseminate information to and about women and their concerns;
  - e. Develop approaches and train experts to apply gender analysis with regard to media programmes.