

# **WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN IN THE YEAR 2000**

## **Advocacy Guide to Women's World Demands**

### **AGAINST POVERTY**

For sharing of wealth

### **AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

For the respect of women's physical and mental integrity

July 1999

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## INTRODUCTION

In Montréal, Québec, Canada, on October 18, 1998, 140 women from 65 countries adopted a platform of world demands for the World March of Women in the Year 2000. The Coordinating Committee of the World March of Women proposes this working tool to support the spokespersons of this project and the ever-growing group of people who are taking part in the relay of this world march.

The Advocacy Guide to Women's World Demands is a tool for individuals or women's groups who will be working with women at a grassroots level, making presentations at special events or lobbying their governments and regional or international bodies.

In addition to putting the demands of the World March of Women in the Year 2000 in their social, economic and political context, this Guide explains each demand from a feminist perspective. Our analysis often strikes a common chord with other groups advocating rights and promoting equality and justice.

Putting the demands in context provides groups with certain key elements for understanding the scope and meaning of each demand. The demands are summarized at the beginning of this Guide.

No doubt, each woman or group will adapt elements of the analysis presented in this Guide according to how it relates to their work and will flesh out the analysis based on their own particular situation and context.

A March to fight poverty and violence against women

The World March of Women is part of the same continuum as the four major world conferences on women convened by the United Nations. It is even more closely linked with the parallel forums organized around these meetings. We are urgently demanding that member States comply with the decisions taken at these international meetings and follow through on the respect of commitments contained in the international treaties, conventions and covenants that they have signed.

Obviously, our demands go beyond the current commitments made by States. The World March of Women in the Year 2000 is a new "international meeting" taking place over many months, convened by the women's movement itself. For the Québec women's movement, it began in May 1995, with the "Bread and Roses" March Against Poverty. It continued later that year in Beijing, where women from Québec proposed an ambitious rallying plan on

an international scale to fight poverty and violence against women. Since the very beginning, women from many countries have helped make this project happen. This project, the World March of Women in the Year 2000, is about women gathering from around the globe. It is being prepared in international meetings, branching out into national meetings in each of our countries. It is about international actions generating national actions with thousands of women around the world.

On March 8, 2000 we will be launching awareness and support card campaigns to demonstrate support for the demands of the World March. In June 2000, the United Nations Organization (UNO) <sup>1</sup> will make an international assessment of the Platform for Action at the Beijing +5 meeting. On October 17, 2000, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, women from the participating countries will meet in front of the United Nations after having marched in their respective country.

We are certain that our international mobilization and pooling of ideas and analyses will generate world political pressure that cannot be ignored. It will be strong enough to initiate radical changes that are indispensable to the well-being of the world's population. This is how women will march forth into the new millennium: they will put the world back on track through sharing, peace and formal equality and they will proclaim that women more than ever will be players in fostering major change.

#### About the Guide's structure

The first part of this Guide is called "A World in Need of Change". It provides an analysis of the social, economic, financial and political system that is primarily responsible for today's generalized poverty and violence against women. The two main themes — poverty and violence — are developed through analytical texts that include the wording of the demands.

The second part summarizes all of the world demands. Demands on the theme of poverty are labeled with the letter "P" and demands concerning violence are marked with the letter "V". The number after the letter is the same number that was assigned in the Special Newsletter. The next section presents each of the demands of the World March of Women in the Year 2000, taking into account a logical sequence and reasoning. The order in which the demands are presented has been changed in keeping with the development of the theses.

The Guide ends with a text linking the various elements of the Beijing Platform for Action to the demands of the World March of Women in the Year 2000. Our platform of demands was inspired by the Platform and other demands brought forth by women's movements around the world. This global action from the women's movements around the world is solidly anchored in the work of many women at the local and international level. It must allow us to engender change and it must become a means to be used by each of us to improve living conditions for women wherever they may be.

The appendix to this Guide contains useful information or definitions on political, economic and legal institutions for understanding the demands of the World March of Women.

#### Objective limitations of a project in constant evolution

Time and material resources have limited the objectives of this project. The multiplicity of ideas, exchanges, and past and future meetings expand the boundaries of the project and make this tool a work in progress. The challenge of writing these pages was to make information available as simply and rapidly as possible, with arguments influenced by the evolution of the world's situation. It is now up to all of us to enrich this Guide with information, notes, quotes and strategies that will be developed in the coming months.

The vast majority of the women who worked on this text are North American — with the distinct characteristic of being French-speaking. This influence will surely be apparent within the text or between the lines. We are aware of this fact and we strongly encourage women to enrich this text from their own viewpoint, based on their own realities. We must look upon this Guide as a collective work in constant evolution.

#### NOTE

1 See the appendix for more information on the structure of the ONU and its various international instruments.

## ELIMINATING POVERTY

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As we embark upon a new millenium, our planet's population is nearing 6 billion, but the overwhelming majority of humanity lives in poverty. Four billion people live below the relative poverty level, of whom the vast majority are women and children, and 1.3 billion live below the absolute poverty level, of whom 70% are women <sup>1</sup>.

The gaps between countries has progressively increased over the past thirty years.

- Income for the richest countries is now 59 times the income of the poorest countries (versus 30 times in 1960)! The same is true for individuals: the gap between the richest 20% of the world's population and the poorest 20% has doubled.
- The world's wealth has multiplied by a factor of 5 whereas the proportion of poor people increased by the same ratio, from 3 to 1 to 15 to 1!

These gaps are all the more significant for women. Thus, women represent half of the world's population and toil 2/3 of world's working hours. However, they earn only 1/10 of the world's income and own less than 1/100 of the world's wealth.

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### A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

The president of Nike owns US\$4.5 billion in assets, including an annual salary of \$1 million. An Indonesian woman working for Nike in one of the many sub-contracting firms throughout the world (for a total of 75,000 workers, of whom 70% are women aged 17 to 21 years old) earns the equivalent of US\$360 per year. She would have to work for 15 centuries to have the same salary as the president.

Human poverty is more than the absence of material goods necessary for one's well-being: it is the negation of the most essential opportunities and choices for human development — longevity, health, creativity — but also of decent living conditions, dignity, respect for one's self and for others, access to all that makes life worth living. <sup>2</sup>

Poverty is a denial of fundamental human rights; it is a breach of citizenship. Poor people are thus relegated to the margins of humanity and, among them, women are pushed out even further. For women, poverty is a particularly heavy burden since they usually are responsible for feeding and caring for their children, often in very precarious conditions. Poverty thus makes them more vulnerable to discrimination and violence, of which they are the primary victims.

To put an end to poverty, the World March of Women intends to attack its structural causes, to mobilize the international community to ensure equality between women and men, and to demand that each State implement a plan to eliminate poverty.

### COMBATING STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF POVERTY

The World March doesn't want to simply reduce poverty or mitigate the maddening consequences. On the eve of a new millenium, the World March is mobilizing women around the world so that humanity may rid itself at last of this poverty that ravages the lives of billions of individuals, particularly women.

While specific forms of poverty have existed at each epoch of humanity, this does not mean that it is a "natural" or inescapable phenomenon. If men and especially women have always lived in poverty, this does not mean that it is caused by a "genetic defect" or the result of "improper lifestyles", contrary to the prejudices often transmitted by society. Women were poorer than men long before the advent of neo-liberal capitalism. Over the past few centuries, and despite revolutionary popular liberation struggles, women have been relegated to the ranks of second-class citizens. Most of them were dependent on their husband's income. They did not have the right to possess land; in fact, they had no legal rights. Yet they have had to work hard to contribute to their family's subsistence while

bearing the full burden of raising and educating their children. This description illustrates the patriarchal ideology that persists, even on the eve of the 21st century.

Certainly, owing to their efforts, women have progressed in the recognition of their rights, especially since the Second World War. Yet the majority of women are poor. This poverty can be explained by women's confinement to unstable and underpaid jobs, by the difficulty that millions of girls have in access to education, by the responsibility of children, and so on.

Poverty is a phenomenon that is created politically, economically, culturally and socially. It is up to us to put an end to it.

This is the reason why we must combat the structural causes of this phenomenon. In recent history, the results of this phenomenon have been manifested in policies based on neo-liberal capitalism paired with patriarchy and its various forms of discrimination against women.

Domination of a single economic system: neo-liberal capitalism

The emerging capitalism in the late 18th century was built on the free labour of women in the domestic sphere. It grew from the exploitation of all workers, including children and on colonization and imperialism of the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America and North America. It profited from the domination and the destruction of indigenous peoples in Australia and in the Americas in particular.

Economic growth did not go hand in hand with social progress. Although there was a definite explosion in the means of production, this production came with the catastrophic upheaval of people's lives.

The current neo-liberal thinking is an identical copy of the same old untamed capitalism of the turn of the century, but newly reformed to better suit the globalization of markets.

While globalization in itself could provide considerable leverage for solidarity and cooperation among peoples and cultures, it is perverted by the will of the world's powerful to dominate. As a result, the globalization of markets spawns the globalization of poverty and exclusion since inequalities are exacerbated. Rights are no longer promoted nor protected; they are subordinated to the dictates of the market and to profit. Women in particular are maintained in an endemic state of economic inferiority.

Yet the system continues to maintain that only a market free of all constraints can ensure both maximum production of wealth and equitable distribution...! This is the source of the enormous pressure brought to bear at the national and international levels for privatization, deregulation and the free circulation of assets. The world is becoming a vast supermarket... for the better off. Economic liberalism takes on a new face: free-trade zones, free-trade agreements, speculation, and so on.

Free-trade zones

Free-trade zones are territorial enclaves set up within countries, with the complicity of governments, whose activities are not subject to any national legislation or control. Multinationals use this means to process their products at production costs that are below competitive rates. Wages and working conditions closely resemble slavery. Investors can avoid all the minimum rules concerning worker safety, health standards and environmental protection. The situation of women is particularly dramatic.

Free-trade agreements

The integration of markets and the opening of borders to commercial trade have accelerated since the end of the Second World War. These exchanges are regulated by free-trade agreements, which have as their common base:

- to negotiate behind closed doors, far from democratic forums;
- to abolish policies based on protectionism<sup>3</sup>;
- to entrench new rights for investors.

For example, a company may sue a government for compensation if it believes that a policy impairs its profits. These are unilateral rights since States have no recourse against companies.

Free trade exacerbates unbridled competition. The laws of the market provoke a downgrading of working conditions and social policies: the lowest common denominator prevails.

Unions and grassroots organizations as well as the women's movement, the environmental movement and rights advocacy groups are exerting political pressure so that these agreements respect the rights of all workers, women and indigenous peoples and that they take environmental protection into account. So far the results are rather feeble: two parallel agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on working conditions and the environment. These results are more symbolic in nature since there is no mechanism for sanctions.

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The MAI and similar projects are eloquent examples of the orientation of capitalist investors.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) was concocted in secret within the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). It aims to adopt a Bill of Rights for investors in order to allow unhindered circulation of assets over and above State powers. Following significant public outcry, the proposal was withdrawn, but it has reappeared recently under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO) <sup>4</sup> and is being implemented in several separate treaties. These treaties all have the same objective: unconditional access to all markets, in all sectors. Free-trade zones constitute another example of the preponderance of investor rights.

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WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

P-2 f) The rejection of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

Speculation

We have entered the age of the virtual economy, one which is highly speculative. <sup>5</sup>

For the entire year 1995, \$4,300 billion in goods and services were traded on the planet, whereas each day, currency transactions amounted to \$1,300 billion.

This market is so big and so volatile that States are no longer able to protect their national currency. In a fraction of a second, it is possible to withdraw hundreds of billions of dollars from a country, to empty its central bank of its reserves and thus put its economy in peril and provoke serious social crises. Most recently, Mexico, Brazil, Russia and the countries Southeast Asia had a taste of the bitter medicine of money markets.

This financial system produces instability, insecurity and inequality. It is urgent that control systems be set up — even if they are very rudimentary — and later that speculation be eliminated. It is therefore urgent to experiment with various forms of capital taxation on a worldwide scale.

Acting on speculation through the Tobin Tax

In 1972, to stem rising speculation, James Tobin, economist and advisor to President Kennedy, proposed that a small tax of 0.1% to 0.5% be imposed on each speculative transaction.

We can differentiate speculative transactions from capital transactions for investing in goods and services by their rapidity and repetition. Speculative transactions on currency happen repeatedly, thousands of times per day. Investment transactions occur once and remain immobilized for years and allow national economies to prosper. The Tobin Tax would control speculative transactions through a fee for every time currency changes hands or accounts.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that US\$40 billion per annum are required to eliminate extreme poverty and to allow universal access to safe water and essential services (specifically health and education). However, a tax rate as low as 0.1% based on US\$1000 billion per day would generate

revenues of US\$72 billion per year... nearly enough to eliminate extreme poverty twice over! With a tax rate of 1%, UNCTAD calculated revenues at US\$720 billion per year, a colossal sum which is technically enough to put an end to poverty.

Of course, the Tobin Tax alone cannot definitively solve the problem of speculation, and is even less able to resolve the rising inequalities. But it can help throw a bit of sand in the well-oiled gears of financial speculation. It is part of a new wave of proposals for taxing capital.

The World March has chosen to target the Tobin Tax in particular, both for its immediate impact on speculation and because this tax would generate a significant world fund. The Tobin Tax is an attainable objective in the short term. There are already many citizens' movements around the world that are actively demanding that their governments adopt this plan.

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- The Canadian parliament has adopted the Tobin Tax proposal.
  - In Germany, the government party is getting ready to propose the adoption of a Tobin Tax to its parliament in the fall of 1999.
  - Ministers and members of the parliament in France, Belgium, Finland and Brazil propose the adoption of speculation control measures in the same vein as the Tobin Tax.

ATTAC-Québec (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the benefit of Citizens)

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The World March of Women in the Year 2000 is demanding the Tobin Tax yet is also demanding that the specific nature of women's poverty as well as the necessary equal representation of men and women in the management of a world fund be taken into account in its orientation and application.

WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

P-2a) The urgent implementation of measures such as the Tobin Tax.

To stem speculation and to create a special fund:

- earmarked for social development;
- managed democratically by the international community as a whole;
- according to criteria respecting fundamental human rights and democracy;
- with equal representation of women and men;
- to which women would have preferred access.

The weight of economics over politics and state capitulation to the market

The current imbalance between the world's supranational financial powers and States can be seen particularly in a growing loss of States' ability to levy taxes, in the imposition of deficit-reduction measures, and in draconian measures such as SAPs. At the same time, international aid is stagnating or diminishing.

The erosion of States' tax base

Globalization erodes States' tax base through the opening of borders, the volatility of capital and through tax breaks granted to attract investors. For example, States cannot tax profits on financial speculation nor on goods consumed through the Internet where there are no borders or taxes paid.

Deficit reduction

In order to comply with the standards dictated by the major financiers, countries in the North have set deficit-reduction objectives. The consequences of these budget cutbacks have been detrimental to all social measures, including the quality of and access to health services and education. Cutbacks in social programs (unemployment insurance, welfare, low-income housing) have gravely affected the living conditions of women and children.

Services that are no longer provided by public authorities now generally fall on the shoulders of women who work many unpaid and unrecognized hours in the private sphere.

#### Structural adjustment programs (SAP)

The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) <sup>6</sup> have imposed structural adjustment programs (SAP) on developing countries to pressure them into paying back their international debts by stabilizing and restructuring their economy. SAPs affect:

- monetary policies: currency devaluation, increased interest rates;
- budgetary policies: tax increases, cutbacks in public services and privatization of public companies;
- market policies: lifting of price and wage controls and suppression of subsidies;
- trade policies: lifting of trade obstacles, promotion of growth in exports and in attracting foreign investments.

SAPs have disastrous effect on: public services, employment, through layoffs in the public sector; standard of living, through social spending cutbacks; balance of trade, the debt rate and the environment. For example, sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing public school closures and the resurgence of contagious diseases as a result of the scarcity of resources granted to the most basic hygiene in health services.

These programs also carry heavier consequences for women: drop in income, cuts in essential services, suppression of food aid. Women and girls are too often deprived of education, food and health care for the benefit of boys and men in their family.

The IMF is clearly imposing measures that punish States, elected officials and especially citizens.

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#### Cause for celebration?

In an interview granted to the daily newspaper Le Monde, the World Bank president James Wolfensohn, who works closely with the president of the IMF, commented that the bank's mistakes arise from the fact that their analyses and expectations are too highly focussed on financial criteria. He suggested that the bank must also take into account the social situation of a country, the provisions of a social safety net, for example, that would attenuate the shocks. Up to now, debate has always been reserved for finance ministers and financial institutions <sup>7</sup>.

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The World March wants structural changes rather than structural adjustments.

#### WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

- P-2d)            and e) An end to  
                     structural adjustment  
                     programs and to cutbacks  
                     in social budgets and public services.

Downward spiral of debt

Starting in the 1970s, several factors led to the increase in the debt of Third World countries.

The 1970s:

- Oil crisis. The price of petroleum quadrupled in 1972 then rose again in 1979. This made costs rise for all countries with the most disastrous consequences for poor countries.
- Commercial bank loans to Third World countries.

The 1980s:

- Major rise in interest rates. Rates had been at 1% since 1944, but rose to 5% and 6% at the beginning of the 1970s, then to 20% and 22% in the 1980s, skyrocketing the costs of debt repayment.
- Drop in the price of raw materials on world markets (fell by 30% on average). Third World revenues plummeted, slowing foreign debt repayment.

- Implementation of SAPs.

The 1990s:

- Intensification of foreign debt load and liberalization of economies of borrowing countries.

Consequences of the debt:

- Every year, the Third World reimburses more than \$200 billion. Governments of sub-Saharan Africa spend four times more on debt repayment than they do on health and education for their population. Africa now owes three times more than was initially borrowed.
- Poor countries with heavy debt loads demonstrate higher rates for infant mortality, disease, illiteracy and malnutrition than other developing countries.
- For every dollar of public aid to development that a poor country receives, \$3 are spent in foreign debt repayment.
- Countries that cannot repay their debts must turn to the IMF, which offers additional loans according to strict conditions, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP).
- Tropical forests are being destroyed, fish stocks are being depleted and the land is being stripped to increase exports in order to pay the foreign debt.

WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

P-3: Cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries, taking into account the principles of responsibility, transparency of information and accountability.

- We demand the immediate cancellation of the debt (approximately US\$341 billion) of the 53 poorest countries on the planet, in support of the objectives of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

The Jubilee 2000 Coalition has gathered 12 million signatures around the world as part of its “Jubilee 2000” campaign. The 12 million signatures were tabled in Cologne, Germany where the G8 Summit met from June 18 to 20, 1999.

- In the longer term, we demand cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor debt write-off, ensuring that this money is employed to eliminate poverty and further the well-being of people most affected by structural adjustment programs, the majority of whom are women and girls.

Constant cutbacks in international aid

Public aid to development is financial assistance provided by taxpayers through official public bodies, including the State and local public bodies, to developing countries or to multilateral institutions, as donations or low-interest loans. Aid for purchasing military supplies is excluded.

Proposed for the first time in 1992, the 20/20 formula sets out the guiding principles for universal access to basic social services. In this scheme, 20% of sums paid by donor countries must be earmarked for social development and 20% of the receiving State’s expenses must be reserved for social programs.

The Oslo Formula (1996) defines basic social services as basic education, primary health care, in particular gynecological and obstetric care and population programs, nutrition programs, access to safe water and to sanitation, as well as institutional means to provide these services. For the World March, it is not a simply question of “needs” but rather of fundamental “rights”.

At the end of a century that has witnessed economic growth at exponential rates, to continue speaking of “aid” toward certain countries demonstrates the failure of neo-liberal capitalism and its unavoidable inequalities. Only “fair trade” would have allowed the equitable development of all. However, we are still far from that goal.

Furthermore, public aid to development continues to decrease. As a percentage of the gross national product (GNP) of donor countries, this aid has declined to an average of 0.25% in 1996, compared with 0.34% in 1990. It is the lowest rate on record since 1970, the year when the target was set at 0.7% of the GNP. Public aid to development provided by industrialized countries as a whole has decreased for the fifth year in a row. Only Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark have maintained their aid at a rate of at least 0.7% of their GNP.

According to the UN, at this rate, there will be no more aid in the year 2015.

#### WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

- P-4: The implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and the recipients of international aid.
- P-2b) The investment of 0.7% of the rich countries’ gross national product (GNP) in aid for developing countries

#### RALLYING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

##### Change through mobilization

The World March of Women is part of a long line of organizations where people have strived to rally together and organize the international community in order to guarantee justice and equality among all inhabitants of the planet. The World March is an autonomous grassroots initiative of the women’s movement. It is trying to influence the economic and political powers to act on the “decision-makers” of States and the United Nations.

The international meeting held last October 1998 was only one of countless initiatives from civil society where women reaffirmed their determination to eradicate poverty and violence against women, with the conviction that this change must come from a large-scale mobilization of women around the world.

Obviously, the primary objective of this international meeting was not to carry out a systematic analysis of the United Nations. However, several participants shared their doubts about the UN and their hope that substantial changes will allow this international organization to intervene efficiently and structurally to combat poverty and violence against women.

##### The UN: an organization to call into question

From the first conference in The Hague in 1898 until the creation of the UN in 1945, many political leaders have attempted to set up an international structure that can guarantee peace and security and settle differences between nations peacefully while abandoning the use of weapons (conventional or nuclear). They have sought to develop the means to achieve cooperation between countries citizens, and to provide the world with international instruments (declarations, covenants, conventions, protocols, courts of justice) to guarantee the protection of the fundamental rights of all human beings.

Despite considerable progress, we must acknowledge the great difficulties that lie in the UN’s path. This international organization frequently cannot act or is powerlessness in the face of the multiple conflicts that have ravaged our century and that continue to disturb the peace and security of the world: two world wars, Nazi concentration camps, and the persistence of armed conflict with States and between nations.

The UN remains by and large dominated by Western countries, their values and their vision of modernity, to the detriment of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Its economic institutions (the IMF and the World Bank in particular) possess a greater power than the UN itself in the economic sphere and promote neo-liberal policies

everywhere, which is the main source of growing inequalities. Technocracy and bureaucracy often constitute obstacles to full and mindful democratic participation.

Up to now, despite its considerable aid and development programs that have helped avoid many catastrophes, the UN has demonstrated its inability to contribute to combating and eliminating the growing gap between countries and citizens, between rich and poor, between women and men.

The UN: future in need of nurturing

This is the challenge that the UN faces as we enter the third millennium. A plethora of proposals are forthcoming from civil society. They appeal for true democratization of the UN (including a full reform of the Security Council and the suppression of veto rights), the creation of a world annual meeting of non-governmental participants (a type of permanent assembly of NGOs), and a substantial reform of international financial institutions.

Clearly, the World March cannot take a position on every one of these proposals. However, the World March has put forth a demand that, although far from fully addressing the issue, indicates the general direction that we want the UN to take. It also shows women's commitment to strengthen international political legitimacy.

IN A MORE IMMEDIATE FUTURE,  
WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

P-2c) The adequate financing and democratization of United Nations programs that are essential to defend women's and children's fundamental rights, UNIFEM (UN Women's Programme), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (UN children's fund).

P-5: A non-monolithic world political organization, with authority over the economy and egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth (ensuring parity between poor countries and rich countries) and equal representation of women and men.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

The World March expects to contribute to setting up a world economic system that is fair, participatory and socially cohesive. It puts forth a more structural demand for a Council for Economic and Financial Security<sup>8</sup> to take charge of:

- redefining the rules of a new world financial system geared toward a fair and equitable sharing of the planet's wealth, toward social justice and the improved well-being of the world population, specifically for women who make up more than half of this population;
- exercising political control over financial markets;
- "disarming" markets, preventing them from damaging societies and systematically creating instability, insecurity and inequality;
- ensuring diligent regulation and monitoring of economic, financial and commercial organizations;
- exercising democratic control over commercial trade or, in other terms, applying "zero tolerance" on the criminal tendencies of the economy.

The Council's membership is not yet defined and must be debated at the international level. We do, however, put forth a few general guidelines in the Council's makeup that are part of the strict minimum: the Council's membership must include representatives from civil society (NGOs, unions, etc.), ensure parity between men and women and reflect parity between countries from the North and South.

Among the conditions for achieving this goal, the World March's demands for the immediate future are:

- the elimination of all tax havens (there are about forty havens including Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, etc.) whose very existence constitutes a form of legalized theft by allowing financiers,

- companies, political leaders, etc. to hide “their” money and to avoid paying taxes and obeying the laws and regulations of States;
- the end of banking secrecy, an anti-democratic practice that constitutes another form of legalized theft;
- the redistribution of wealth currently monopolized by the seven richest industrialized countries.

## LEGAL ISSUES

- The World March considers that the elimination of poverty is not merely a goal to reach but a right that must be implemented immediately. This is the source of our demand for a protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF POVERTY, ESPECIALLY WOMEN’S POVERTY

Patriarchy exerts discrimination on the living conditions of women. Since the dawn of time, and in all dominant economic systems, patriarchy has put women at a disadvantage: no right to own property and no right to the range of natural resources, restricted access to well-paid jobs, used as cheap labour in free-trade zones, layoffs, inequality, wage freezes or cutbacks. Women are always at the end of the line when it comes to enjoying the benefits of economic growth.

Traditionally, women have greater responsibility for their close relatives, children, the elderly or the ill. They bear the brunt even more so when there are cutbacks in social programs, endangering their own health and their jobs. As those primarily responsible for the well-being of their children, women are the ones who look for water, food and shelter for themselves and their families in a world where sharing of resources, even vital ones, is out of step with economic growth.

These conditions of poverty constitute an obstacle to women’s right to the enjoyment of all of their human rights and to benefit from the effects of equitable economic development. These conditions lead to social exclusion and are a breach of their right to equality. These breaches are in conflict with the commitments adopted by States at:

- THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (1993);
- THE COPENHAGEN CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1995);
- THE BEIJING CONFERENCE (1995).<sup>9</sup>

States must take responsibility for redistributing the wealth and resources. They must clearly state their political will to put an end to poverty and in particular to end women’s poverty. This is why States must include the promotion and implementation of concrete measures for eliminating women’s poverty, in their political program, and they must guarantee that women can exercise their rights.

This demand of the World March is related to the call for action issued by the UN special rapporteur who recommended the development of national programs to fight poverty that should be normative in nature in the form of a legal framework with provisions for application mechanisms<sup>10</sup>.

## WE ARE MARCHING FOR:

P-1 That all States adopt a legal framework and strategies aimed at eliminating poverty.

A legal framework is an “umbrella” law with a broad scope that provides general guidelines, affirms principles and sets goals. This legal framework must be the basis for other laws that a government would want to put forth on the same subject, specifically the elimination of poverty. The term “legal framework” may vary according to the country. In some Latin American countries, for example, the term “national agenda” is used.

This legal framework must include measures to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of women through the exercise of their rights. It must include provisions for adopting laws, programs, action plans, and national projects specifically to ensure that women suffer no discrimination in their rights, and that they have access to the following:

## BASIC RESOURCES

Safe water

Production and distribution of food to ensure food security for the population

Decent housing

Basic and reproductive health services

Social protection

Life-long income security

## CULTURE

An end to the process of homogenization of cultures

## CITIZENSHIP

Recognition of citizenship through access to relevant documents (identity card)

Equal participation in political decision-making bodies

## NATURAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Ownership of family assets and the equitable distribution of inheritances

Credit

## EDUCATION RESOURCES

Literacy

Vocational training

Scientific and technological knowledge

## EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Pay equity and equality at the national and international levels

A minimum wage

Statutory protection for work in the home and in the informal sectors of the economy

Unionization and freedom of association

Decision-making positions

The respect of labour standards (in all workplaces including free-trade zones) as adopted by the International Labour Office

## EQUALITY IN TASK SHARING

States must develop incentives to promote the sharing of family responsibilities (education and care of children and domestic tasks) and must provide concrete support to families such as daycare adapted to parents' work schedules, community kitchens, programs to assist children with their schoolwork, and so on. States must therefore take all possible steps to end patriarchal values and sensitize the society towards democratization of the family structure.

Women also demand that there be an end to the process of homogenization of culture and the marketing and commercialization of women in the media to suit the needs of the market. They insist that States and international organizations take measures to counter and prevent corruption.

All acts, legislation, regulations and positions taken by governments will be assessed in the light of indicators such as:

- Human Poverty Index (HPI) <sup>11</sup>, put forth in the Human Development Report (1997)
- Human Development Index, put forth by the United Nations Development Programme;
- Gender-related development index (including an indicator on the representation of women in positions of power), proposed in the Human Development Report (1995)
- Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning rights of Indigenous peoples

## NOTES

- 1 To determine who is poor, “poverty levels” are generally used. The absolute poverty levels are defined in relation to a fixed set of goods and services considered necessary to meet one’s essential needs. The monetary cost of these items per country is used to determine the absolute poverty level. International bodies have arbitrarily established this absolute poverty level at less than US\$370 per annum. Anyone earning less than this amount is considered “poor”! However, relative poverty levels are measured in relation to the average standard of living of a country’s population.
- 2 Human Development Report, UNDP, 1998.
- 3 Protectionism is a set of trade policies whose purpose is to protect the prices of certain goods or materials sectors in a given country in order to maintain the local economy and jobs.
- 4 See the appendix for more information on the OECD and the WTO.
- 5 At present, there is much speculation as regards financial transactions, which is the buying and selling currency (money) in order to make a considerable profit in a short period.
- 6 See the appendix for more information on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
- 7 Serge Truffaut. *La démocratie violée*. *Le Devoir*, February 5, 1999.
- 8 The idea for a World Council for Economic and Financial Security was put forth by Ricardo Petrella in his book *Le bien commun: éloge de la solidarité*, Édition Travail, Brussels, 1996. This idea had already been the subject of discussion within politically progressive segments of the European Parliament.
- 9 See the appendix for more information on these three conferences.
- 10 Leandro Despouy. *Final Report on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty*, Human Rights Commission, UNO, June 1996.
- 11 See the appendix for more information on these indicators and indices.
- 12

## **ERADICATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **THE REALITY OF VIOLENCE**

Violence against women is a universal reality that is a consequence of the historically unequal power relations between women and men. Violence is no more an inevitable part of life than is poverty. Violence arises from the patriarchal system, which since time immemorial has exerted control over women’s lives.

Violence affects all women and girls. Those who are particularly vulnerable are women who live in extremely precarious conditions or who are discriminated against on the basis of race, language, ethnic group, culture, age, opinion, social condition, religion, sexual orientation, handicap, or membership in a minority group. Indigenous women and women who are displaced, migrants, refugees or living under foreign occupation are also vulnerable.

Violence can come in many forms and affects both the physical and psychological integrity of women. Its form may be subtle. While often imperceptible from without, violence has no less devastating effects within. The term “violence against women” means “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms”<sup>1</sup>.

Physical, sexual and psychological violence against women within a couple and in the family consists of battery, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women and girls, marital rape, dowry-related violence, incest, non-spousal violence, for example, a son’s violence against his mother and violence related to exploitation or the deprivation of freedoms.

Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community includes battery, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, forced treatments and abusive medication, the exploitation and the commercialization of women’s bodies. This commercialization of women’s bodies is related to their increased poverty that is mainly a result of unbridled economic liberalism. Violence against women also includes contraception imposed by constraint or force, forced sterilization or abortions, selective abortion of female fetuses and female infanticide.

Physical, sexual and psychological violence is too often perpetrated or tolerated by States that prioritize custom or tradition over the respect of fundamental freedoms. The rise of religious fundamentalism is extremely disturbing as regards women's rights to their economic autonomy and their freedom of choice. In some countries, the social exclusion of women is so great that it constitutes a new form of apartheid. Women are considered second-class beings, of lesser value, deprived of their fundamental rights.

Violence against women is also exercised as a weapon of war in situations of armed conflict. Its many forms include murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery, hostage-taking, and forced pregnancy.

The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Violence against Women has cited additional violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade, forced prostitution, rape, sexual abuse and sex tourism that have become a focus of international organized crime. She has also stated that additional measures should be taken to abolish all forms of forced labour, commercialization of sex, and forced marriage. Women and girls are at an increased risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection, including infection with HIV/AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

## COMBATING STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

The causes of violence against women go beyond the economic system in which we live. Violence is not caused by the weakness or frailness of women. Attempts to explain violence based only on individual aberrant behaviours are inadequate when it comes to understanding a phenomenon as universal and systemic as violence against women. The scope, frequency and various dimensions of this violence are a result of the inequality between the sexes that is inherent in the very structure of our societies.

This inequality is demonstrated and perpetuated through education, culture, language and religion and may even be amplified by other forms of social and economic inequalities. Combating causes of violence means fighting all individual and collective manifestations of sexism as well as the myths and falsehoods that maintain and perpetuate them.

## THE NEED FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Women are aware of the kind of action that is needed to end violence against women: women's rights education, access to services, legal reform encompassing the harmonization of national laws with international laws, criminalization of acts of violence against women, court reform, training of legal and judicial personnel as well as other public services professionals. Women also need States to establish complaint mechanisms and to allocate of adequate funding within the government budget for actions related to the elimination of violence against women, public education, and media awareness.

Women condemn the inaction, inefficiency and the silence of States, which are the very structures that must provide the means to fight violence against women, namely through the criminalization of the perpetrators of violent crimes, mandatory compensation and the implementation of awareness and education campaigns on violence against women. Moreover, States must include systemic violence against women in the criteria for granting refugee status. Lastly, as stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, fundamental rights must take precedence over customs, traditions or religions.

Women demand that respect be accorded to their bodies and their person. They expect significant action and a concrete investment in the elimination of all forms of violence perpetrated against them. They want a society where States take seriously their responsibility to assure the safety and well-being of the whole population.

They want a society where all men (husbands, spouses, sons, fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins and neighbours) commit to ending definitively all forms of violence against women. They want a society where men themselves strongly denounce, without complacency, all wrongs committed against women, and seek to develop relations with women that are based on equality and respect. Women continue to collectively strive for an end to violence.

The World March of Women in the Year 2000 wants to eliminate violence against women by:

- demanding the efficient application of commitments made through international instruments as regards women without exception;
- promoting the International Criminal Court;
- promoting peace-building;
- favouring the right to asylum for reasons of discrimination on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation;
- urging States to establish a national plan to counter violence against women.

#### Application of conventions and covenants without reserves

The world has made many commitments since the turn of the century, specifically since 1975, the International Women's Year as regards women's living conditions. International meetings have been held, and the UN General Assembly has adopted declarations, conventions, covenants and even protocols.

A few countries have not ratified certain agreements, or have not yet decided to be part of the control process established by the UN. More specifically, states have not submitted an implementation plan for the Beijing Platform for Action. Reserves often render entire plans inoperative for various treaties by allowing countries to opt out of obligations. These reserves are incompatible with the very goals and purposes of a convention.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

V-4 That the United Nations bring extraordinary pressure to bear on member states to ratify without reservation and implement the conventions and covenants relating to the rights of women and children, in particular,

- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>3</sup>;
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers.

V-4 b) That States harmonize their national laws with:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>4</sup>;
- the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women;
- the Cairo and Vienna Declarations;
- the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

#### Suppressing the traffic in human beings

In 1949, the UN brought together a series of elements contained in four other documents that the international community had adopted since the turn of the century, and created the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

Since then, these issues have been discussed.

In Mexico City, 1975 at the International Women's Year World Conferences delegates highlighted that prostitution constitutes one of the most serious breaches of the dignity of women and demanded that strong measures be taken to put an end to forced prostitution and the traffic in women. In 1978, the Commission on the Status of Women requested a report on the application of the 1949 Convention. In 1980, in Copenhagen, the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women demanded that the UN table the report and urged governments to ratify the Convention and to submit their reports. In force as of 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women stipulates in Article 6 that: "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women". In 1982, the UN named a special rapporteur whose report inspired the Economic and Social Council<sup>5</sup> in 1983 to define the necessary conditions for policies to counter this scourge. In Beijing, in 1995, women repeated the need and urgency to eliminate the traffic in women and to help women who are victims of the violence engendered by prostitution and trafficking. In 1996, the UN General Assembly adopted two resolutions encouraging member States to take active

measures to document this phenomenon, prevent it, criminalize it and provide assistance to women who are its victims.

Two additional studies will be tabled in the near future: one is on the sale of children and the other is on the legal and social problems of sexual minorities including male prostitutes. These studies will be submitted to the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Also, the Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will be tabling a report soon on the traffic in persons.

Nonetheless, as embark upon a new millenium, we must sadly admit that little has changed in this area.

**WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:**

- V-6 That mechanisms be established to implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, taking into account recent relevant documents such as the two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (1996) concerning trafficking in women and girls and violence against migrant women.

**The rights of lesbians**

With the exception of one law <sup>6</sup>, international human rights laws do not afford protection for lesbians as regards their human rights and freedoms. Nearly half of the countries in the world criminalize homosexuality. No country in the world offers equality of rights for lesbians. This brings about numerous types of violations of rights that are recognized for everyone: right to life, security and integrity of one's person; to freedom of expression and association; the right not to be subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and all other forms of violence and discrimination; right to live one's sexual orientation and not be subjected to forced marriage.

All women must have the right to life, respect and the dignity of their person. All women must have the right not to be discriminated against or abused.

**WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:**

- V- 10 That, based on the principle of equality of all persons, the United Nations and States of the international community recognize formally that a person's sexual orientation should not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in the following international instruments:
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
  - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
  - the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
  - the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**Complaint and control mechanisms**

The application and implementation of multilateral commitments requires that the international community provide monitoring mechanisms. Provisions have already been made for controls and means to measure results. Protocols provide the possibility of making a complaint.

**WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:**

- V-5 That, as soon as possible, protocols be adopted (and implementation mechanisms be established):
- to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
  - to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court will allow us to take great steps forward in the struggle against impunity and will pressure States to adopt more transparent external affairs policies in accordance with the respect of the many international treaties concerning human rights. It will facilitate the defense of the rights of victims in order that they may know the truth, and that they may have recourse to a justice system that is impartial and independent of all political power.

#### Rape as a war crime

The Beijing Platform for Action repeats that rape is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Rape is now considered an act of genocide in certain circumstances, which is a new element in the United Nations documents.

In this vein, this Court could allow the recognition of violations of the fundamental rights of women and allow the rapes and sexual assaults to be judged by a court capable of truly executing its investigative power, while respecting the rights of witnesses.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

- V-7            That States recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and conform in particular to the provisions, especially those that define rape and sexual abuse as war crimes and crimes against
- That States support its rapid implementation.
  - That its funding be independent, that it may act quickly so that time is not a factor allowing perpetrators to remain unpunished because witnesses are no longer living to tell the truth!

#### Peace-building

Women, or at least most women, are in profound disagreement with the use of violence among peoples and within the same people. They favour negotiation over confrontation. They have shown their deep desire for peace on several occasions through their participation in interethnic marches or by joining world peace movements.

Women denounce arms merchants and countries that go into debt to purchase military supplies rather than investing in health or education.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

- V-8            That all States adopt and implement disarmament policies with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons.
- That all countries ratify the Convention Against Land Mines.
- That the United Nations end all forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation, assure the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and bring pressure to bear on governments to enforce the observance of human rights and to resolve conflicts.
- P-6            That the embargoes and blockades — principally affecting women and children — imposed by the major powers on many countries, be lifted.

#### The right to asylum

For a great many feminist jurists, the right to asylum for women who are victims of discrimination, sexist persecutions and sexual violence is already recognized by the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

This convention includes provisions for the right to asylum for women who are victims of discrimination, sexist persecutions and sexual violence. This means that the signatory States cannot in any way expel or return a refugee to the border of territories where his or her life or freedom would be threatened on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group or for political opinions.

The terms “social group” and “political opinions” were broadened to include discrimination against women, including discrimination based on sexual orientation. Women represent a social group and can be persecuted for their opinion on issues such as genital mutilation or forced sterilization become refugees for political reasons.

Nevertheless, the following demands should be promoted in order to guarantee the exercise of the right to asylum for these reasons.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

- V-9 That the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and sexual violence be adopted as soon possible.
- V-11 That the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation be adopted as soon as possible.

#### NATIONAL PLANS TO FIGHT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Like the Beijing Platform for Action, the World March is also demanding these plans to fight violence. Some new elements have been added: the obligation of States to legislate against violence, to prosecute and punish perpetrators of acts of violence and to train in particular social workers, medical staff and persons who are in charge of refugees so that they may recognize violence based on sex and react with sensitivity. We are asking international human rights tribunals to adopt an attitude based on differences between the sexes in their work. The text of the demand renews in clear terms the mandate of the special rapporteur on violence against women.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

- V-3 That States implement action plans, effective policies and programs equipped with adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women.

These action plans must include the following elements in particular:

- prevention, public education, non-sexist education, training programs for judges and police
- research and statistics on all forms of violence against women
- campaigns against pornography, procuring, and sexual assault, including child rape
- easier access to the criminal justice system, legal action, “treatment” for attackers, assistance to and protection of victims

The protection of women’s integrity

Several States attempt to argue that customs, traditions or religious may explain discriminatory practices against women. This is how they justify excision, veiling, prohibitions on divorce, forced marriage, inequalities in pay, and

so on. Feminists around the world refute this argument and plead rather for complete equality between women and men as women must, as human beings, benefit equally from the same individual and collective rights.

The section “Women and Health” in the Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that “the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”

The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) affirmed that women’s reproductive rights are fundamental rights for couples and individuals. It reaffirmed women’s rights in regards to prenatal and postnatal health services and their right to rapid access to information services as regards sexual and reproductive health. Quite often, violence takes the form of controlling women’s bodies, especially their reproductive function.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

V-2 That States recognize, in their statutes and actions, that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, cultural practice or political power.

Therefore, all states must recognize a woman’s right to determine her own destiny, and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function.

Several governments purport to defend human rights yet show a certain reticence in recognizing wrongs committed on their own territory. The commercial or geopolitical interests of these governments take precedence over the need for strong intervention in States that systematically deny fundamental human rights, including women’s rights.

#### WE ARE MARCHING TO DEMAND:

V-1 That governments claiming to be defenders of human rights condemn any authority-political, religious, economic or cultural-that controls women and girls, and denounce any regime that violates their fundamental rights.

#### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEMANDS OF THE WORLD MARCH AND THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION ADOPTED BEIJING (SEPTEMBER 1995)**

Many connections can be made between the demands against poverty and violence against women brought forth by the World March of Women and the platform for action adopted by consensus by the 189 States that participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. Among the 12 themes that are discussed in this platform, the following can be noted in regards to the World March: poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, decision-making, and human rights of women and girls. Since the platform for action is a document that is negotiated among many States with very different viewpoints on these issues, the analysis that is presented often bears witness to the process of concession and compromise. In all negotiations, non-governmental organizations at times succeed in asserting their viewpoint to certain States, which will submit the idea to other States as part of their discussions.

Many strategic objectives targeted by the platform propose measures that are in line with the demands brought forth by the World March, although the World March’s demands go much further. Yet since the platform is not a legal international document, it does not have the force of law and a State cannot be compelled to align with it. On the other hand, its content can be used to interpret more favourably to women the various international conventions and covenants that are at issue in this Advocacy Guide. Moreover, under the effect of pressure exercised by women’s movements worldwide as is the case with this World March of Women in the Year 2000, States may decide to adopt the policies that we are demanding and to respect at last the commitments they have made by agreeing to platforms for action such as the platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women. As part of “Beijing +5”, we must remind governments of their duties.

Here is an outline of the analyses and the strategic objectives, called “critical areas of concern” contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, particularly as pertains to the demands of the World March.

#### CRITICAL AREAS

A. Women and Poverty (as pertains to demands P-1, P-3 and P-2d of the World March)

- A.1. Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.
- A.2. Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women’s equal rights and access to economic resources.

B. Education and Training of Women (as pertains to the demand P-1 of the World March)

- B.1. Ensure equal access to education.

C. Women and Health (as pertains to demands P-1, V-2 and V-10 of the World March)

In this section, it is recognized that “The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence” (paragraph 96).

- C.1. Increase women’s access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.

D. Violence against Women (as pertains to demands V-2, V-3 and V-6 of the World March)

- D.1. Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.
- D.2. Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- D.3. Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

E. Women and Armed Conflict (as pertains to demands V-7, V-9 and V-11 of the World March)

A paragraph of analysis recalls that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, states that “violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law” (paragraph 132).

- E2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments. Paragraph 143 refers to implementing disarmament policies.
- E.3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.
- E.4. Promote women’s contribution to fostering a culture of peace.
- E.5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.

F. Women and the Economy (as pertains to the demand P-1 of the World March)

The analysis of the globalization of the economy, as found in the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing, is not very critical. This analysis reflects the adherence of the States to neo-liberal theses. The platform does, however, note the following critical areas of concern:

- F.1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.
- F.2. Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.
- F.3. Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.
- F.4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks
- F.5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.
- F.6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.
- G. Women in Power and Decision-making (as pertains to the demand P-1 of the World March)
  - G.1. Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.
  - G.2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.
- I. Human Rights of Women (as pertains to demands V-4 and V-5 of the World March)
  - I.1. Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
  - I.2. Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.
- J. Women and the Media (as pertains to the demand V-3 of the World March)
  - J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis proposed by the platform for action makes no direct criticism of neo-liberal capitalism and the patriarchal system. However, several of the measures proposed to governments could have the effect, if they were applied efficiently, of limiting the subordination of political and social life to market dictates. Moreover, several of these measures are aimed at enforcing women's fundamental rights, particularly the right to exercise control over their life and their body as well as their reproductive function.

The World March wants to go one step further in identifying neo-liberal capitalism and patriarchy as structural causes of poverty and forms of violence against all women. The World March therefore proposes concrete measures to combat poverty and incidents of violence against women. Moreover, the World March wishes to serve as a reminder that poverty is a violation of economic and social rights, just as the forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights.

## APPENDIX

### THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

General Assembly

185 MEMBER STATES, 1 STATE = 1 VOTE

The General Assembly meets once a year from mid-September to mid-December. Its decisions are non-binding on member States.

## Security Council

5 PERMANENT MEMBER STATES: UNITED STATES, FRANCE, ENGLAND, CHINA, RUSSIA

10 MEMBERS ELECTED FOR A TWO-YEAR TERM

This Council makes decisions on peace-keeping.

## Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

54 MEMBERS ELECTED FOR THREE-YEAR TERMS

ECOSOC coordinates economic and social activities and makes or initiates studies on health, educational, economic, and social matters.

It set up commissions and committees.

Commissions and committees report to ECOSOC. Their role consists in carrying out studies and issuing reports so that the Economic and Social Council may make recommendations to the UN General Assembly.

- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

## Rapporteurs

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights established the mechanism of “special rapporteurs”. The rapporteurs listed below deal with the issues brought forth by the World March of Women.

Poverty: two rapporteurs have tabled their reports recently, one on human rights and extreme poverty (1996), and another on economic, social and cultural rights and on the redistribution of income (1997).

Violence: two rapporteurs were mandated to undertake a series of reports on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

The statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted by the Rome Convention in July 1998. The Court’s statute will enter into force when sixty (60) States have ratified this convention. One hundred and twenty (120) countries sent delegates to Rome Convention. The United States, Libya, Iraq, Israel and China have refused to sign the convention, whereas the other countries have committed to the ratification process.

The Court’s jurisdiction is limited to crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of genocide, regardless of the place or time that the crimes were committed. The ICC operates independently of all political powers, and its power to investigate is not subordinated to any mechanism of agreement or consent by the various States.

However, it can only prosecute individuals over whom the State has agreed that the Court has authority or who have committed crimes in a signatory State.

It can be seized by a signatory state, the Security Council of the United Nations or the prosecutor in charge of gathering testimonies and information.

It will only intervene when national courts are unable or unwilling to prosecute their own citizens. For a transitional period, the States may choose not to recognize the Court’s authority for a period of seven years.

The causes of the resistance to the ICC run deep; some nation-states do not want an external power to have the possibility to intervene over their jurisdiction. Some say that such a Court may hinder diplomatic interventions and delay cease-fires. However, contrary to the notion of countries who do not want to be involved, the impunity of war criminals helps feed vengeance and in fact postpones conflict resolution, as demonstrated by the two most recent international tribunals: the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (as of February 1993) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (as of 1994).

Indeed, this Court will allow us to take great steps forward in the struggle against impunity and will pressure States to adopt more transparent external affairs policies in accordance with the rule of law and many international treaties

concerning human rights. It will facilitate the defense of the rights of victims in order that they may know the truth, and that they may have recourse to a justice system that is independent of all political power.

In this perspective, this Court will help acknowledge the violations of the fundamental rights of women so that the rapes and sexual assaults may be judged by a court capable of truly executing its investigative power, while respecting the rights of witnesses.

## THE THREE PILLARS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BILL OF HUMAN RIGHTS (1948)

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the first source of a universal definition of human rights. It proclaims equal rights and dignity for men and women, as well as the right to dignity, life, liberty and security of person, prohibition of torture, and so on. However, in actual usage, its articles are never invoked to defend women's rights. There is no trace, for example, of women's struggle for the right to life (see article 3).

Rights must produce effects. The rights expressed in the Declaration are detailed or explained in other instruments such as:

#### The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Adopted in 1966, effective in 1976, ratified by 140 countries.

It prohibits:

- discrimination,
- cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,
- forced marriages, etc.

It is accompanied by an optional protocol intended for individuals only.

#### The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Adopted in 1966, effective in 1976, ratified by 137 countries.

It affirms:

- general rights to work, a sufficient standard of living, social security, health and education;
- the freedom of association.

The adoption of an optional protocol is currently under study.

## INSTRUMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

International instruments represent a means to exert pressure on States for the recognition of women's rights. In order to have legal status, an international instrument must have been adopted by a majority vote (50 + 1) of the UN General Assembly. It must also have been ratified by a number of states as determined in the convention, and have an effective date after ratification.

### Declarations

A declaration affirms and recognizes principles and rights. It does not have an executive nature. Declarations are not treaties; they are not ratified.

### Covenants and Conventions

Covenants and conventions have an executive nature; they are treaties. By ratifying these conventions, a State commits to adopting laws and measures to implement the rights that are stated in the convention. A committee is the monitoring body and is mandated to gather reports from States as to the application. Generally, a protocol accompanies the covenant or the convention.

## Protocols

A protocol lets a State, a group or a person file a complaint. Protocols constitute a means to exercise pressure at an international level to oblige States to implement the rights that are stated in these covenants and conventions. The content of the protocols may vary according to the groups that are targeted by the complaint process. Each State must individually sign the protocol. Therefore, the term optional protocol is used.

## Reserves

Reserves are procedures through which a State may opt out of a commitment contained within a treaty that it has ratified.

Two important conventions for the World March of Women

### Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

This convention was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1981, with the ratification of 160 States.

Currently, there is a movement to obtain ratification by 100% of States in the year 2000. This is the primary international instrument whose objective is the equality of women. The Convention's main points are:

- the right to a sufficient standard of living
- women's right to participate fully in development
- access to justice
- the right to work
- women's right to property
- access to credit
- the recognition of women's unpaid work
- the elimination of the prostitution of and traffic in women

A draft optional protocol is currently under study and has been adopted by the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

This convention was adopted in 1989, and came into force in 1990, with the ratification of 190 States. It promotes:

- the right to a standard of living that is sufficient to ensure the development of the child;
- the elimination of violence;
- the elimination of the sexual and economic exploitation of children (no specific reference to girls).

Two draft optional protocols are being studied: one is focussed on the sale of children and child prostitution and pornography; the other targets the participation of children in armed conflicts.

## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICES

The indices make it possible to measure certain quality of life parameters. The Human Development Report (1995) introduces the gender-related development index which uses the same variables as for the human development index, while taking into account the social inequalities between women and men. It includes an index for the representation of women in positions of power.

## INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

International meetings are strategic moments where commitments are made. The following list, in inverse chronological order, shows the meetings whose primary themes related to the demands of the World March. The list includes NGO conferences that were held in parallel to these meetings.

#### 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing

Twelve critical areas were identified, some of which pertain to the demands of the World March.

Critical Areas of the Beijing Platform for Action:

- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training of Women
- Women and Health
- Violence against Women
- Women and Armed Conflict
- Women and the Economy
- Women in Power and Decision-making
- Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women
- Human Rights of Women
- Women and the Media
- Women and the Environment
- The Girl-child

The signatory States committed to presenting national action programs to the UN. As of August 1997, only 54 programs had been tabled. In June 2000, the UN General Assembly will take stock of the progress of the Beijing Platform for Action since 1995.

In 1995, the NGO Forum on Women drew attendance from 30,000 women around the world. In June 2000, the women's NGOs intend to submit their own reports in parallel with governments.

#### 1995 World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen

The main themes were social security, redistribution of resources, collective organizations and solidarity. The States committed to greatly reducing general poverty and to eradicate absolute poverty (extreme) as quickly as possible. At the very least, people must be able to meet their fundamental needs, such as food, shelter, primary education, basic health care, safe water, sanitation, work and personal freedom. Following this Summit, the UN General Assembly declared the "First Decade for the Eradication of Poverty" which began in 1997.

A parallel NGO Forum was also held and proposed the cancellation the debt, the respect of the rich countries' decision to invest 0.7% of their GNP for public development aid, and the creation of an international fund for social development.

The Alternative Declaration of NGOs presented to the World Summit for Social Development emphasized the necessity to consider the structural causes of poverty: market forces, market liberalization, social and environmental disintegration. Women demanded that civil society participate fully in the objectives of social development.

#### 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo

This conference was the follow-up to the first UN Conference on Population held in Bucharest in 1974. The theme was equity and equality between the sexes, access to reproductive health services and to family planning. This conference recognized that the rights of women in reproductive matters are fundamental rights for couples and individuals. It reaffirmed women's rights to prenatal and postnatal health services and to rapid information services in the area of sexual and reproductive health. The elimination of social, cultural, political and economic discrimination against women was defined as a prerequisite to the elimination of poverty.

#### 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna

This conference stated that women's rights are human rights and thus are inseparable from other human rights (economic, social, cultural, civil, and political). States committed to ratifying certain key conventions for ensuring the enjoyment of rights, particularly women's rights. The conference recalled that the analysis of the relationships between the sexes must be integrated at all levels. Violence against women must be eliminated, as it is incompatible with human dignity and the recognition of human rights. This conference examined in depth the role of international mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

A parallel North-South Women's Conference on violence against women was held.

1992 Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro

This summit attempted to reconcile economic activities and the protection of the planet with a view toward ensuring sustainable development for all. Agenda 21 and an environmental plan of action for the year 2000 were adopted.

A Global NGO Forum was held, calling for the full participation of women and for commitments to undertake efforts for a more transparent, democratic and accountable world economy.

1985 World Conference on Women, Nairobi

This World conference was called to examine and to evaluate the results of the UN Decade for Women.

It emphasized the necessity for women to participate as equal partners with men in all domains and that they have access to education and to vocational training.

States adopted the "Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women for the Period up to the Year 2000".

An NGO Forum was held, and is known as the cradle of world feminism.

1980 World Conference of the UN Decade for Women, Copenhagen

This conference emphasized education, employment and women's participation in the development process. An NGO Forum was also held.

1975 International Women's Year Conference, Mexico City

The period from 1975 to 1985 was declared the United Nations Decade for Women: equality, development and peace. These three themes evolved throughout the international meetings that took place during these ten years. The Conference focussed on political, social, economic and cultural obstacles to the promotion of women.

## BRETTON WOODS ACCORDS

In July 1944, in Bretton Woods, a small village in New Hampshire in the United States, accords were signed between representatives of 50 countries to attempt to institute an international monetary and financial system. The countries that lost the Second World War (Germany, Italy and Japan) were not part of this group. These accords set up the current economic system by creating the international financial institutions described in the following paragraphs.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

182 MEMBER STATES

Voting power is a function of the contribution, or investment, paid to the Fund. The richer the country, the more money is paid to the Fund and therefore the greater the country's power.

Voting takes place mostly to set the Fund's policies and to approve credit.

Mission: to ensure the stability of the international monetary system and to promote international trade.

## World Bank (WB)

182 MEMBER STATES.

Only members of the IMF may be members of the World Bank. Voting rights are proportional to the contribution paid.

Mission: to promote economic development and the reconstruction of emerging countries (Africa, Asia and Latin America) or countries destroyed by war (in Europe).

## General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

Mission: to regularize commercial tariff policies among Member States through a progressive implementation of international free trade.

The GATT has been replaced since January 1995 by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

## World Trade Organization (WTO)

Mission: to guide the next steps toward the liberalization of world trade and to supervise international conflict resolution.

## Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)

27 MEMBER STATES

Created: 1960, in the context of the Cold War.

Mission: to organize cooperation in the economic and social sectors and to recommend macro-economic policies (e.g. MAI). The OECD is where links can be made between economic, commercial, monetary, technological, nuclear and environmental issues.

## Bank of International Settlements (BIS)

29 MEMBER STATES

This is a central bank for the central banks of rich member countries.

The executive committee, or "Committee in Basle", sets monetary policies of these countries.