

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF ACTION

AN AGENDA FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

We, more than 1,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have gathered in Seoul, Korea on the eve of the new millennium to:

- Continue and build upon the work begun at the United Nations world conferences of the 1990s;
Forge a common vision for the 21st Century;
Organize our collective energy and experience to make this vision a reality.

The work of the conference was organized in 10 plenary sessions and 180 workshops. Our deliberations and dialogue in these meetings provided the foundations for our declaration, Achieving our Vision for the 21st Century and the basis of the Draft Programme of Work that follows. At the outset, we wish to stress that this is a draft, and not a final product. Our intention has been to begin a process. Which, over the next months, will provide an opportunity for further reflection and contributions, before this document is submitted for consideration at the NGO Millennium Forum in May 22-26, 2000. We invite all interested NGOs to submit their comments to:

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The draft plan includes recommendations by the themes that were chosen for the conference, reflecting in large part the major themes of the United Nations conferences of the 1990s. In each case the theme refers to a major concern of these conferences and one for which many extensive interventions have been proposed for actions by the United Nations, by regional entities, by governments, local communities and citizens. Those included in this action plan emphasize actions by NGOs and are actions of such high priority that they merit special attention by an international audience. Through dialogue with NGOs in the coming months, it is hoped that the Final Programme of Action will be a powerful vehicle for focusing attention of NGOs on areas where action is most urgently required. It will also alert United Nations agencies and governments of these priorities may facilitate their cooperation and support.

The plan is organized by themes of the Conference. In the coming months, these themes may be adjusted, as more NGOs respond to this draft and participate in the process.

We are keenly aware, however, that the choice of any theme is an inadequate reflection of the complex and interrelated reality of our world, a world in which almost no activity or issue can be seen in isolation. Who can speak of social and economic development where there is no peace? How can there be lasting peace where there are systematic violations of human rights? And we are learning that definitions of real human rights are far more embracing than mere political rights. The same can be said for gender, sustainable environment, health and education. In the coming months, these interrelationships will need to be considered carefully so that the final plan can be a better reflection of the world in which we all live.

A. PEACE AND SECURITY

The world is emerging from the bloodiest, most war-ridden century in human history. Recent years have seen outbreaks of genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo, brutal attacks against civilians and the spread of horrendous weapons of mass destruction capable of ending life on much or all of the planet. Indigenous populations continue to be denied their rights to self determination. Children are being used cynically as instruments of war. In a great many cases, the world's government have manifestly failed to fulfill their responsibility to prevent conflict, protect civilians, and war, guarantee human rights and create the conditions of permanent peace. The twentieth century has also seen the creation of a set of universal norms which, if implemented, would go a long way towards help us to abolish the institution of war. We have witnessed inspiring and successful experiments with active non-violence in struggles for independence and civil rights by un-armed people's movements including children and Youth. We have witnessed the fall of authoritarian regimes and the growth of democratic governments with an increasing role of civil society in the affairs of governance.

As NGOs we commit ourselves to the following actions:

1. To endorse the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the twenty-first century;
2. To actively participate in the following international campaigns;
 - The ratification and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty to ban landmines;
 - The abolition of nuclear weapons;
 - The Optional Protocol for the Convention on Rights of the Child to raise the minimum age of military recruitment from 15-18 years;
 - The ratification of the Rome Statute for the establishment of an independent International Criminal Court;
 - An end to the trade and traffic in small arms;
 - The Appeal by the Nobel Prize Laureates For the Children- International decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world;
3. To promote active non-violence and respect for the dignity of all people;
4. To create positive Peace Zones in all places now called neutral where people of all ages may engage in activities which promote peace;
5. To call upon member states of the United Nations to establish a standing UN police force;
6. To urge the United Nations to engage in speedy and effective intervention of humanitarian forces, subject to the prescriptions of the United Nation Charter, when civilians are threatened by genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and natural disasters;
7. To promote peace through education programs in schools and universities as well as to engage in an

intergenerational dialogue and awareness raising towards the promotion of a culture of peace;

8. To advocate the creation of an effective mediation/conflict prevention panel in the United Nations General Assembly with the task to promote specific peace initiatives;

B. HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights provide the values, principles and standards essential to safeguard the most precious of all rights – the right to be human, of which the right to be a woman is an essential and integral part. Many world conferences which took place in the 1990s emphasized that human rights are indivisible, universal and interdependent. They are both individual and collective. Across centuries, civilizations, religions and regions, human rights have existed for all human beings and for all peoples. Human rights carry with them four correlative duties for States:

1. The duty to respect, which requires refraining from interfering with the enjoyment of the right;
2. The duty to protect which requires the prevention of violations of such rights by authorities of the State as well as by third parties;
3. The duty to promote which requires the raising public awareness as to the right and procedures for asserting and protecting the right;
4. The duty to fulfil which requires the State to take appropriate measures towards the full realization of the right;

As we enter the new millennium the key challenges we confront are:

The unprecedented increase in poverty; the resurgence of racism, xenophobia, hate crimes and ethnocide; the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of massive and systematic violation of human rights; the resurgence of patriarchy that threatens to erode the gains that women have made in securing the recognition the rights of women; the continued insulation from human rights accountability of non-state actors such as transnational corporations, international financial institutions and extremists and fundamentalist civil society organizations.

The discussion on human rights at the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs reaffirms that:

All human rights are universal, indivisible, inter-dependent and interrelated; women's rights are human rights; special recognition and protection must be given to the rights of children, indigenous peoples, elderly persons, people with different sexual orientations, minorities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, refugees and internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, as well as vulnerable and marginalized groups; the need for universal ratification of all international human rights instruments; the need for universal fulfillment of the human rights commitments and obligations set out in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and in declarations and programmes of action of the UN Global Conferences from Rio to Rome.

1. A number of special situations and considerations were presented, demanding action from the global community of NGOs: North Korean refugees, especially those in China; the people of Taiwan; the human rights to emergency relief and humanitarian assistance; the situation of Comfort women; the situations of Palestinian Arabs in Israel; the people of Kashmir; Dalits in India; the trafficking in women; the trafficking in children; the abuse of migrant workers and their families; the exclusion on the basis of language; selectivity and abuse of power in international human rights policy and practice.

2. The crucial importance of strengthening the existing UN system, regional and national mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights was strongly reiterated. In particular, the need to strengthen:

- The independence and effectiveness of UN special procedures and mechanisms on human rights.
- The effectiveness of the UN human rights treaty bodies.

- Regional mechanisms, where they exist, and accelerate the creation of appropriate mechanisms in regions where they do not exist.
- National incorporation of international human rights standards and effective implementation thereof.
- The independence and effectiveness of NGOs, peoples' organizations, social movements and civil society.

As NGOs we commit ourselves to the following actions :

1. To urge governments to ratify the core Human Rights Conventions without reservations and fulfill their obligations under such conventions;
2. To advocate for the establishment of independent and effective national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, such as Human Rights Commissions and Ombudspersons;
3. To ensure that governments undertake full implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders by safeguarding freedom of association and creating effective monitoring mechanisms regarding restrictions on the work of human rights defenders and violations of their rights;
4. To advocate the acceleration in the process of setting binding international and national human rights standards relating to indigenous peoples, minorities, and internally displaced people;
5. To advocate for the development of international and national mechanisms for holding international institutions of trade, finance and development; corporations, both transnational and national; and other non-state actors fully accountable to universal human rights standards;
6. To propose effective redress and remedies (including preventive remedies) for those facing human rights denials or violations;
7. To urge governments to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, support existing international criminal tribunals, and ensure against all forms of impunity;
8. To ensure that the human rights policy and practices of governments fully comply with the principles of universality and non-selectivity;

As NGOs we undertake to accomplish the following:

1. To mobilize social movements and civil society for the promotion and protection of human rights;
2. To create and strengthen linkages at and between local, national and international levels among all actors and across all sectors;
3. To continue to monitor, document and publicize human rights violations by all actors, both state and non-state;
4. To continue to promote a culture of human rights by raising awareness of human rights and enhancing their promotion and protection;
5. To encourage the efforts of the United Nations to establish a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations;

6. To prepare fully for the United Nation World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in South Africa, in 2001;

C. GENDER EQUALITY

Since the First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, there has been increasingly strong advocacy for political commitment and programmes for women's empowerment. In Vienna, in 1993, the historic declaration that women's rights are human rights was made. In 1995 in Beijing, full commitment of 189 governments was made to 12 critical concerns as the very basis for securing gender equality.

Despite some progress, real effort to operationalize these commitments is seriously inadequate, especially in the areas of leadership and decision-making in the economic, political and administrative spheres. Activities have concentrated on improving the positions of women without changing the underlying structures that perpetuate discrimination. There is consistent denial that gender disparities are political in origin and sustained by systematic gender discrimination embedded in statutory and customary laws and religious and administrative regulations and practices.

Effective strategies must be based on a realistic recognition of the current situation and obstacles, not unrealistically optimistic situations. We encourage women to remain committed and engaged, particularly in addressing gaps between gender legislation and the implementation of that legislation. It is only the full engagement of women in all regions that will allow us to address the challenges that lie ahead. We also intend our commitment to be inclusive of all women, irrespective of sexual orientation.

As NGOs we commit ourselves to the following actions:

1. To monitor government implementation of their commitments at the world conferences through mobilizing women and other groups to submit alternative reports regarding government progress and that of other actors, such as development agencies and civil society;
2. To urge governments and the United Nations to make special efforts to recruit and include women in peace and conflict resolution process;
3. To urge United Nations agencies to commit themselves to gender balance as a fundamental principle of their work;
4. To urge governments, NGOs and UN agencies to allocate increased resources for building capacity of women running for, and serving in elected offices;
5. To mobilize communities and urge governments to recognize and take concrete measures to address and further prevent the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS infections among women and girls, as well as lessen the enormous impact on families, especially women and girls who become heads of households;
6. To ensure that women's access to resources include factors relating to the control over those resources;
7. To ensure that our activities are based on the issues identified by women and men in grassroots communities;
8. To ensure that women within NGOs play an equal role in decision making and leadership;
9. To create opportunities for building inter-regional coalitions around common critical gender issues, such as violence, trafficking adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS;

10. Ensure that communications technology is equally controlled by women and men;

D. ◆ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The devastating social and economic impact of the global financial crisis which marks the end of this century is only the latest in a long series of onslaughts that current patterns of economic globalization have inflicted on the basic human rights of people around the world. Gross violations of economic and social human rights have also been manifest through the debt crisis and the draconian structural adjustment programmes imposed by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Our government representatives have negotiated and solemnly agreed on ambitious global agendas for social progress, particularly the 1995 Social Summit commitments and the Beijing Platform for Action. These politically binding agendas, which include commitments to poverty eradication, full employment, a more stable and equitable international economic and financial system, women's empowerment, gender-sensitive policy and programme formulation and implementation, have been negotiated in the United Nations with our active participation. In parallel, however, our same governments have been implementing economic liberalization and deregulation policies, and signing on to international trade and investment agreements, which have achieved precisely the reverse.

These economic policies have led to the shrinking of social services ranging from health to education. They have indiscriminately liberalised international capital movements -- which makes it virtually impossible to establish equitable (let alone progressive) fiscal redistribution, and was a perfectly predictable recipe for the phenomenal increase in financial speculation, instability and crises that we have witnessed in recent years. They have created a global trading regime under the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is unequivocally skewed against the interests of the developing countries. They have concomitantly put in place a trade dispute settlement system at the WTO which poor countries cannot afford to use, and which almost invariably subordinates widely held social and environmental objectives to narrow commercial interests. Through unbridled deregulation and privatization, they have enabled transnational corporations to grow ever more powerful and dominant, politically and economically. As has been documented in numerous UN reports, we have also witnessed alarming increases in income inequalities within and between nations and widespread persistence of extreme poverty despite dramatic increases in global wealth; and we have seen women and children to be the most adversely affected by economic austerity.

All these ◆parallel◆ policies and rules have been developed under the purview of global and regional economic institutions such as the IMF, the WTO and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that are in practice not accountable to the United Nations and even less so to the populations whose future economic and social prospects they determine. They have been developed without the participation of civil society -- and typically without the knowledge and informed consent of our parliaments and our ministries dealing with social affairs. It is clear that this other agenda is the result of dominant commercial and financial interests in the G-7 rich country club and among the narrow elites of developing countries. In view of this, when we engage with the UN's social and economic development agenda, we must understand poverty and social exclusion in terms of power relations and speak the language of social and economic justice. In other words, to give teeth to our collective campaigns and to what our governments have committed themselves to do through the UN World Conferences, we must vigorously turn to the legally-binding human rights treaty obligations that our governments have entered into, and bring economic, social and cultural rights on a par with those concerning civil and political. We believe globalization has many facets, and carries with it the promise of greater prosperity and justice for all. The ◆globalization◆ of people's awareness of their inherent human rights can and must be the first liberating and empowering factor. On the basis of our common human rights platform, we shall, within our respective areas of specialization and through strategic synergies between us, campaign for the following objectives:

1. To ensure that global and regional economic institutions are held accountable to international human rights principles and standards, in conformity with UN treaty obligations; our governments (particularly those

who claim to be champions of human rights) cannot, even in the realm of economic decision-making, condone or advocate policies contrary to human rights without violating their human rights obligations;

2. To make such institutions more democratic and transparent by opening them up to NGO scrutiny and by ensuring that full public and parliamentary debates are conducted at the national level and comprehensive social, economic and environmental impact assessments are carried out before any major decision is taken; and by ensuring that alternative analyses and policy recommendations by UN bodies, such as UNCTAD, UNDP, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR) and UNICEF, are fully and transparently integrated into the decision-making process; this also means that our finance ministries and other centres of national economic decision-making are made equally transparent, democratic and accountable to human rights prerogatives;

3. To support the growing number of NGOs that are calling for a moratorium on future WTO negotiations pending a comprehensive impact assessment of existing WTO rules and arrangements in the areas of food security, the right to development, environmental sustainability, biosafety and other human rights;

4. To support similar calls by NGOs and many developing countries that investment and related financial issues should not be negotiated at, or governed by, the WTO;

5. To ensure that governments and regional arrangements take measures to control, prevent and counter speculative capital movements and attacks on our currencies, through Tobin-type taxes, capital controls, and prudential and transparency measures imposed on large financial players, particularly hedge funds; this means also supporting NGO campaigns to halt current reform attempts at the IMF to include capital account convertibility as part of its Articles of Agreement;

6. To support the international Jubilee 2000 campaign on unconditional cancellation of developing country debt;

7. To develop new taxation arrangements and structures at national, regional and international levels to ensure that governments can administer equitable taxation on rich individuals, corporations, financial markets and other large capital holders without facing capital flight; this also means revoking bilateral and other investment agreements which de facto impose ceilings on corporate taxes and, instead, develop tax structures which favour long-term job-creating investment, and foreign direct investment that genuinely supports domestic economic capabilities consonant with the right to development, and which provides incentives for the transfer of environmentally-sound technologies to developing countries;

8. To inculcate a human rights culture of social responsibility among corporate leaders, while simultaneously working with those parts of the UN system and governments that are developing regulatory frameworks to ensure compatibility between human rights and the activities of TNCs;

9. To ensure that our national governments fulfill their international obligations to guarantee workers' rights, particularly the core labour conventions they have agreed to at the ILO;

10. To make progress in the development of an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which would provide formal mechanisms for individual and group complaints related to economic and social rights violations;

11. To ensure the equal right to work and pay for women, including the provision of child care and other support services, and making visible the extent of women's invisible contributions to national economies through un-remunerated and domestic work;

12. To promote the organizational capacity and rights of the rural poor, particularly through enhancing their access to, and control over, natural resources and agricultural services within the local, national and global processes and structures which affect to their livelihoods;

13. To reduce military spending, the production and trade of arms, and expose corrupt government and corporate practices in both developed and developing countries which promote militarisation and the diversion of public revenue away from social spending;

14. To ensure that these issues are brought before governments conducting the reviews of the World Summit for Social Development(Copenhagen) and the Fourth World Conference on Women(Beijing) in 2000;

We look forward to developing and consolidating partnerships with the United Nations around this collective NGO and civil society agenda. In turn, we expect the United Nations to show courage and leadership in confronting the realities of power which underpin growing social and economic injustice in today's world.



E. YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Much progress has been made for children in the last decade. Most importantly, the world has recognized that children are subjects and holders of rights. And never before in history have youth been recognized this strongly as independent actors and equal partners in the shaping of policies on matters of their concern. Yet many children continue to suffer from denial of their most basic needs such as health care, adequate nutrition, education, shelter, etc. Adverse social and economic conditions in many parts of the world perpetuate poverty and adversely affect their well-being. Intolerable forms of abuse take place in all regions of the world, such as sexual exploitation, trafficking of children, child labor, the use of child soldiers. Adolescents are particularly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. The situation is not likely to improve, unless all actors in development collaborate effectively to address these issues.

We commit ourselves to the following actions:

.To put pressure on governments to implement their commitments to children stemming from their ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), through national legislation and policies as well as child-friendly institutional structures and procedures.

To promote local understanding and ownership of the CRC. This includes translation into local languages, addressing resistance to child rights with open dialogue and to support local participatory action that includes children and youth.

1. To coordinate and take follow-up action on child and youth-related issues addressed in Platforms and Agendas for Action, such as Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing, Stockholm, Oslo, Istanbul. We will reconcile language and the concepts of the conferences strategies and actions with the realities of local communities through innovative partnerships with community organizations, farmers associations, cooperatives, traditional media, religious leaders etc.;

2. We NGOs have a highly important and influential role in raising awareness and mobilizing support to combat the worst types of child rights abuses and violations. We must collaborate with governments and UN agencies to promote collaborative action towards the prevention of all child abuse, whether by promoting social and economic justice and respect for human values, fighting poverty, and promoting life-skill education, etc. In particular, we commit ourselves to

- Support ratification and proper implementation of ILO Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor;
- Support the campaign to adopt the Optional Protocol on the CRC in relation to child soldiers that calls for raising the age of military recruitment from 15 to 18;
- Disseminate and support Security Council Resolution 1261 that deals with specific incorporation of children's issues in all negotiated peace agreements. (specific language to come.);

3. Central to a child rights agenda for NGOs must be a continued focus on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against girls, who continue to be the most vulnerable in many parts of the world. In particular, we will collaborate on the implementation of Section L of the Beijing Platform for Action which calls for the elimination of all discrimination against the girl child;



4. To ensure that in all inter-governmental discussions on liberalization of trade and economic deregulation, etc. careful attention is given to the impacts on children and youth of such policies and procedures. Increasing globalization holds enormous promises, but it also threatens to have negative impacts on the lives of the poor, in particular children and women, and marginalized populations. We must keep a watchful eye on the evolution of the global economy;

5. To strongly encourage UN agencies to be more outspoken on the worst forms of child rights violations with their government partners;

6. To widely support the ◆Appeal by the Nobel Peace Prize For the Children ◆ International decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world.◆;

7. To make space for youth beyond tokenism by facilitating an active role in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs that affect their lives. Peace movements, anti-aids activities and other relevant campaigns should be supported;

8. To urge the United Nations to sponsor youth conferences in countries where freedom of speech is not a right thereby creating ◆peace zones◆ where such freedom is available to all;

9. To support the presence of active youth representation in all United Nations for a◆ and youth presence from every member state, including conflict areas;

10. To support the Youth Action Plan and Declaration from the Braga (Portugal) Youth Conference in 1999;

F. PUBLIC, REPRODUCTIVE, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Health gains have been recognized as one of the biggest social transformations of our time.◆ Primary health care, as key to attain Health for All, is based on practical, scientifically sound, socially acceptable and affordable methods of health care delivery. It has vastly improved the lives of millions of people.

Yet as we approach the new millennium, more than one billion have been left behind, due to the lack of political will. With globalization, the feminization of poverty is increasing, and the gap between rich and poor is widening.◆ Those who lack access to essential health information suffer from information poverty, one of the most serious inequities in resources. National financial crises have led many countries to decrease their public health spending, leaving no health care coverage for women and men in poverty.

Old and new health threats challenge current systems. The pandemic of HIV/AIDS, accompanied by tuberculosis, will enter the 21st century in full force. AIDS is one of the leading causes of death in Africa, and is on the rise in Asia and in Eastern Europe. AIDS causes huge social and economic setbacks because it takes the lives of those in their most productive years. In Africa alone, the AIDS epidemic has left 10 million orphans in its wake. Malnutrition, diarrhea, dehydration, malaria, and other infectious diseases are still major killers.

Women's health has been neglected in research and practice. Gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, armed conflict and war, domestic violence, and other traumatic experiences contribute to chronic physical and mental disorders. Women in the developing world have 200 times greater risk of dying during pregnancy and childbirth than women in richer countries.

Discrimination against the girl child, including son preference, prenatal sex selection, and other harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, profoundly affect the lives and health of many girls and women. To improve the health and quality of life of older women, who are living longer than ever before, the life cycle approach to health is most productive. Discrimination is cumulative and affects the quality of the entire life span and influences the next generation.

We, as NGOs, call upon the NGO Community:

1. To adopt a rights-based approach to health as a basic human right;
2. To advocate for universal ratification and full implementation of all UN human rights instruments as they relate to health worldwide, including, but not limited to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention for the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
3. To monitor and hold governments accountable for commitments made at world conferences, including, but not limited to the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women;
4. To advocate for vastly increased resources and research into public health and preventive approaches to the most common physical and mental health conditions worldwide;
5. To recommend that women's health remain a designated area within WHO, health ministries, and other institutions, while recognizing the contribution of gender mainstreaming in health;
6. To advocate for the right to responsible, holistic, sexual and reproductive health information, services, and life skills programs for young women and men;
7. To use and promote effective approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention and care, including the empowerment of women to have more say in sexual decision-making and more control over their exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases;
8. To provide models of the most effective policies, strategies, and technologies, known as best practices. This is especially necessary for controversial approaches requiring broad social mobilization;
9. To develop strategic alliances and strengthen cooperation between NGOs at the local community, national and international levels;
10. To support the process of creating a global network and database to monitor and hold governments accountable

to improve the rates of mental and physical illnesses, and decrease violence against women and boys and girls;

11. To disseminate information to policy makers, health care professionals, and the general public regarding health promotion and disease prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation;

12. To advocate for the adoption of national and international legislation that ensures the protection of human rights in the best interest of public health;

To come full circle, this is a rights-based approach. It empowers NGOs to have the greatest influence and effectiveness in improving health in the years to come.

G. EDUCATION FOR ALL

The 20th century has seen enormous progress in education and literacy. Yet, millions of adults are illiterate, and 130 million children of school age are not in school.

Great importance has been attributed to the area of education in such UN Conferences as the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand; the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark; the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing; and the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education in the 21st Century in Paris. In light of this, and discussions held at the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs, we as NGOs make a commitment to revitalize our efforts to assure educational opportunities for all people, and to form partnerships when appropriate among NGOs and with governments, international agencies, donors, and international financial institutions.

We as NGOs commit ourselves to the following actions.

1. To promote a concept of education and learning that goes beyond reading, writing and numeracy to include media, electronic literacy, global citizenship, human rights, life skills and moral education, and to advance a clearer understanding of the critical need for strategic integration of education into the pursuit of development, full employment and peace;
2. To accelerate our work to strengthen educational opportunities for, and respect for the diversity of, all marginalized groups, including racial, ethnic and religious minorities, girls and women, migrants, the internally displaced, immigrants, and refugees;
3. To ensure that primary school education shifts from a focus on enrolment to learning, completion, and relevancy with special attention to working children, girls, indigenous children, children with disabilities and other excluded populations of children;
4. To establish a workable framework for international alliances of NGOs to strengthen their individual and collective voices;
5. To undertake advocacy with institutions of government and governance at the national, local and international levels to develop innovative programs, curricula and model projects, implement public education activities, and promote intensive inter-sectoral collaboration;
6. To ensure that all national strategies include significant roles for stakeholders, including NGOs, educators,

parents, and students, as a pre-condition for international support; to define and agree on appropriate and diverse stakeholder roles, and the facilitation of their responsibilities;

7. To fully incorporate adult and continuing education, and the inclusion of educational opportunities for marginalized groups;

8. To advocate aggressively with multi-lateral financial institutions to facilitate the elimination of the debt burden in developing countries, coupled with dedication of resources to education and other social service sectors;

8. To give priority attention to funding of programs relating to gender equality and equity with a focus on gender-sensitive teachers, curricula, and textbooks, and to include marginalized males or economically and socially excluded groups;

H. PRODUCTIVE AGING

The world is facing unprecedented demographic change. In the next thirty years the world's population of older persons is expected to triple, with much of this increase, taking place in developing countries. Older persons are the repositories of tradition, culture, knowledge and skills. The vast majority of older persons make vital contributions to their societies, families and communities as workers, caregiver, volunteer, mentors and as active citizens. Many older persons throughout the world lack access to the essentials of life and have their rights violated as a result of discrimination on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, race, gender or religion, or because of employment practices and legislative barriers. Women, as majority of the aging population, suffer disproportionately from poverty, poor health and isolation.

We NGOs will undertake the following actions:

1. To call upon governments and international entities to include older persons in poverty reduction strategies/programs and will collaborate in the development of appropriate indicators to measure progress;

2. To urge all development agents--including governments, civil society and multi-national institutions--to include older persons in the development process at all levels including research and decision-making and will offer models of good practice to demonstrate how this can be accomplished;

3. To call for actions to ensure the entitlement of older persons to personal security and freedom from abuse at all times and to special protection in times of conflict;

4. To advocate for equal access to scientific and technological advances for older persons;

5. To promote substantive and meaningful dialogue and partnerships on issues affecting older persons among civil society, governments, financial institutions and transnational corporations;

6. To call upon the United Nations to encourage and enable a legal and enforceable charter of rights for older persons; and, include aging issues as a priority throughout the UN system and its specialized agencies. These issues should be included on all agendas, such as the Human Rights Agenda;

7. To advocate for the creation of a position of Special Rapporteurs on aging by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and study the question of ageing in the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities;

9. To cooperate closely with the United Nations and its specialized agencies to ensure that the multi-generational relationships of society are taken into account in policy and program development;

I. ETHICS AND VALUES

As the millennium approaches, the concept of ethics and human values is struggling to remain alive. Fifty years ago the nations of the world proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, wars fueled by racial and religious hatred are widespread; human rights violations and atrocities continue unabated in most parts of the world. Violence and crime result in huge social, economic and human costs. Our criminal and justice system has failed to find effective and humane ways to deal with offenders. We see pervasive family conflict and violence, children raised in poverty by single parents, an alarming rate of suicide among the young, widespread drug use, the presence of children and young people as perpetrators as well as the most vulnerable victims of violence. There is often a wide imbalance between science and technology and human values and in many places materialism and consumerism have replaced true family and community values.

Universal rights and peaceful co-existence cannot come about until hatred and intolerance are eradicated and a feeling of belonging develops among all people, irrespective of differences of race, religion, or ethnic background. Laws alone cannot be fully effective in achieving a peaceful just society. A fundamental shift in attitudes and values is required. Violence will only cease when there is an authentic understanding of how precious every life is. Hatred will only cease when we feel a sense of real community. Peace on the planet and universal rights cannot come about without restoring and nurturing human justice.

The importance of the issue is noted by the prevalence of concern for ethics and values has been its presence in all the United Nations conferences of the 1990s. One of the prominent themes raised in the 1999 Seoul Conference of NGOs was the necessity of a unifying vision of a peaceful, prosperous world society, and the oneness of humanity that produces a sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well being of the entire human family.

As NGOs we commit ourselves to the following actions:

1. To make ethics and values a part of every agenda, and to be accountable to our own code of ethics in our programmes, operations, governance, human resources, financial management and fundraising.;
2. To play the role as vehicles of discovery and teaching of human values and ethical standards; Improvement in human relationships, love, sense of justice and personal responsibility, respect for rights and diversity of others, solidarity, serving the common good with honesty, fairness, respect, trust, integrity should be an integral part of our mission.;
3. To promote forums and conferences to ease the process of dialogue, mutual learning and understanding in order to bring the ethical issue to the forefront of our work.;
4. To assume a special responsibility to support and promote human value in all sectors of society.;
5. To promote and support education as the most effective way to shape values, attitudes, and behaviours that will equip children and adults to act in the long-term interest of humanity;
6. To restore a balance between rationalistic science and technology on the one hand and indigenous, local, age-old wisdom and philosophy on the other;
7. To develop and implement national and international Ethics and Human Values Awards in different

sectors, Ethics and Human Values education centers and curricula for professionals, and to create Ethics and Human Values Parliaments in school, colleges and universities.

J. ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENT

Environmental sustainability requires both the strong grassroots activism and effective national and international campaigns. It is often the most disproportionate burden of the impact of environmental degradation falls on the most marginalized groups. Issues of class and race are extremely relevant because it is near working-class and indigenous communities that most toxic and nuclear dumps are planned and where factory fumes are the greatest. Environmental and social justice are two sides of the same coin; both need to be addressed. The planet earth is in trouble, but this trouble is neither inevitable or irreversible. As a recent UNEP report says, the present course is unsustainable and postponing action is not longer an option.

But NGOs should not only criticize; they should develop viable and persuasive alternatives. In the area of human settlement it is necessary to support networking and a process of sharing experience among community-based development organizations. Grassroots shelter movements should directly work in partnership with civil society to improve the quality of life of socially excluded and marginalized. NGOs may follow the South African slogan, homeless and landless, but not hopeless. Fight against forced eviction and for the right of women to own and inherit land, the right to a healthy and clean environment for all should engage the attention of NGOs. A staggering increase in the number of homeless people has been the result of a market economy and Strategic Adjustment Programmes of the International Financial Institutions.

The lack of interest among many about environment is a matter of deep concern. And in most cases NGOs and governments work separately, like islands. It was agreed at the Seoul Conference that the international effort to restore and preserve the damaged ozone shield is the most effective accomplishment among all that has been achieved since the UNCED Conferences and treaties related to the environment so far. Ten years of negotiations have produced an international environmental regime.

As the human race thinks most about developing the economy at the start of the 21st century we have no choice but to shift our attention to the preservation of resources. In the future, nature will be the basis of human life and only nature guarantees.

Deep concerns were expressed over continued release of greenhouse gases. At the 1992 UN Environment Conference in Rio, world leaders promised to work for bio-diversity and the preservation of species. In the next 50 years, 50% of the creatures on earth will become extinct and 14 million hectares of forest will disappear from the tropical regions, if changes are not made. But international efforts failed because of individual nations self interest.

We, as ngos, commit ourselves to the following actions:

1. To take up programmes for strong grassroots activism and effective national and international environmental campaigns;
2. To organise pressure groups to launch campaigns in their respective countries;
3. To fight against forced eviction and for the right of women to own and inherit land;
4. To advocate for and demand a healthy and clean environment as a fundamental human right in the form of environmental justice.

5. ❖❖ To protect the poor and excluded populations who suffer most from environmental degradation.

K. EMPOWERING/STRENGTHENING NGOS

The last few decades have witnessed enormous growth in the number and variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide, ❖ and we fully expect this trend to ❖ continue into the next century. Through their policy advocacy work, the implementation of projects and programmes in a wide range of fields, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, NGOs have developed significantly their stature and influence. Their role in global diplomacy reached new heights in successful international campaigns for the Ottawa Convention to ban landmines, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, ❖ the stalling of negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the Jubilee 2000 Campaign to cancel debt.

In addressing issues related to the equitable distribution of resources, the resolution of conflicts, the achievement of full human rights and responding to acute human needs, NGOs have a vital role to play as catalysts that motivate other parts of civil society and ❖ bind together the different groups whose participation is vital if progress is to be made. With growing influence and power, comes greater responsibility and public scrutiny. It is essential that NGOs maintain the highest standards of conduct.

As NGOs, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

1. To strengthen our strategies for securing access to ❖ all areas ❖ of work of the United Nations including the General Assembly and the Security Council;
2. To act as catalysts for the empowerment of the constituencies on whose behalf we act and to facilitate their direct and ❖ participation in advocacy, policy dialogue as well as the implementation of projects and programmes;
3. To act according to the principles we espouse and demand in others, such as democracy, gender equality, transparency and accountability;
4. To be vigilant about establishing and maintaining our autonomy and independence from governments, UN agencies, ❖ the corporate sector, donor institutions and other actors while working in constructive partnership with them;
5. To develop a clear ❖ mission and holistic vision that is ❖ consistent with the interconnectedness of the issues we work on and to reflect periodically on these for the purposes of our ❖ renewal and empowerment;
6. To explore ❖ holistic rights-based frameworks in working for peace, gender equality and economic and social development in order to develop a unified approach and achieve greater impact;
7. To explore appropriate forms of networking at the local, national, regional and global levels with a view to building alliances and partnerships with a broad range of civil society organizations and to uniting the local with the global and vice versa;
8. To develop policies and strategies for working with the media in order to ensure accurate and balanced coverage of local, national and global problems;

9. To convince governments to fully respect the role of NGOs as legitimate partners of effective governance and representatives of the public interest;
10. To influence governments to assure NGO participation in policy-setting, legislation and evaluation of governmental performance; to create and/or strengthen an enabling environment for the growth and development of the NGO sector including appropriate supportive legal frameworks which should include appropriate tax arrangements and other subsidies;
11. To strengthen strategies to persuade governments to enter into partnership agreements with NGOs and guarantee all forms of civil rights as the basis of NGO activities including, freedom of association and speech and freedom of fundraising; governments should make institutional provisions for NGOs to have access to information in particular policy documents pertinent to NGO concerns;
12. To develop genuine partnerships between Southern NGOs and NGOs based in the North to support the development of institutional capacity for policy advocacy for the implementation of long-term sustainable development programmes and in order to ensure effective delivery of humanitarian assistance;
13. To avoid being driven by donor priorities and to ensure that programmes and policies of NGOs are based on the wisdom and aspirations of our constituencies;
14. In view of the complexity of many of the issues and problems, we should strive to develop closer complementarity and synergy between our own work at the local, regional and global levels;
15. NGOs that choose to work with the private sector should make a special effort to ensure that our moral and ethical integrity are not compromised; in working with large multilateral corporations, we should always insist on corporate accountability and transparency;