

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Statement on Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace

Fourth World Conference on Women
Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995

Note: This Declaration, while written in 1995, is still very relevant today. It is hoped that you will support it by signing the accompanying [form](#).

On the eve of the twenty-first century, a dynamic movement towards a culture of peace derives inspiration and hope from women's visions and actions.

It is important to draw strength from cultural diversity and redefine the concept of security so that it encompasses ecological, economic, social, cultural and personal security. To replace unequal gender relations with authentic and practical equality between women and men is imperative in order to allow for true participatory democracies.

Ours is still an armed and warring planet. In the first half of this decade alone, more than 90 conflagrations of various kinds have taken a vast toll of human life, impeded social and economic development and depleted the world's resources. Women continue to experience systematic violations of their human rights and to be largely excluded from decision-making. In situations of war and military occupation, women are to an alarming degree the victims and targets of atrocities and aggression.

To combat war as the ultimate expression of the culture of violence, we must address issues such as violence against women in the home, acts and reflexes of aggression and intolerance in everyday life, the banalization of violence in the media, the implicit glorification of war in the teaching of history, trafficking in arms and in drugs, recourse to terrorism and the denial of fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms.

A culture of peace requires that we confront the violence of economic and social deprivation. Poverty and social injustices such as exclusion and discrimination weigh particularly heavily on women. Redressing the flagrant asymmetries of wealth and opportunity within and between countries is indispensable to addressing the root causes of violence in the world.

Equality, development and peace are inextricably linked. There can be no lasting peace without development, and no sustainable development without full equality between men and women.

The new millennium must mark a new beginning. We must dedicate ourselves to averting violence at all levels, to exploring alternatives to violent conflict and to forging attitudes of tolerance and active concern towards others. Human society has the capacity to manage conflict so that it becomes part of a dynamic of positive change. Always provided it involves the full participation of women, action to remedy a pervasive culture of violence is not beyond the capacity of the people and governments of the world.

Efforts to move towards a culture of peace must be founded in education; as stated in UNESCO's Constitution: since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Girls and women constitute a large majority of the world's educationally excluded and unreached. Ensuring equality of educational access and opportunity between the sexes is a prerequisite for achieving the changes of attitudes and mind-sets on which a culture of peace depends.

Equality in education is the key to meeting other requirements for a culture of peace. These include: full respect for the human rights of women; the release and utilisation of women's creative potential in all aspects of life; power sharing and equal participation in decision-making by women and men; the reorientation of social and economic policies to equalise opportunities and new and more equitable patterns of gender relations - presupposing a radical reform of social structures and processes.

Women's capacity for leadership must be utilised to the full and to the benefit of all in order to progress towards a culture of peace. Their historically limited participation in governance has led to a distortion of concepts and a narrowing of processes. In such areas as conflict prevention, the promotion of cross-cultural dialogue and the redressing of socio-economic injustice, women can be the source of innovative and much needed approaches to peace-building.

Women bring to the cause of peace among people and nations distinctive experiences, competence, and perspectives. Women's role in giving and sustaining life has provided them with skills and insights essential to peaceful human relations and social development. Women subscribe less readily than men to the myth of the efficacy of violence, and they can bring a new breadth, quality and balance of vision to a joint effort of moving from a culture of war towards a culture of peace.

To this end, we the undersigned, commit ourselves to:

- support national and international efforts to ensure equal access to all forms of learning opportunities, with a view to women's empowerment and access to decision-making;
- promote relevant quality education that imparts knowledge of the human rights of men and women, skills of non-violent conflict resolution, respect for the natural environment, intercultural understanding and awareness of global interdependence, which are essential constituents of a culture of peace;
- encourage new approaches to development that take account of women's priorities and perspectives;
- oppose the misuse of religion, cultural and traditional practices for discriminatory purposes;
- seek to reduce the direct and indirect impact of the culture of war on women - in the form of physical and sexual violence or the neglect of social services for excessive military expenditure;
- increase women's freedom of expression and involvement in the media as well as the use of gender-sensitive language and images;
- promote knowledge and respect for international normative instruments concerning the human rights of girls and women and ensure widespread dissemination in order to further the well-being of all, men and women, including the most vulnerable groups of societies;
- support governmental and intergovernmental structures as well as women's associations and NGOs committed to the development of a culture of peace based on equality between women and men.
- We, the signatories, appeal to women and men of goodwill and of diverse cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnic and social origins to join us in a global endeavour to build, in solidarity and compassion, a culture of peace in the domestic realm and in the public sphere.
- Only together, women and men in parity and partnership, can we overcome obstacles and inertia, silence and frustration and ensure the insight, political will, creative thinking and concrete actions needed for a global transition from the culture of violence to a culture of peace.