



# THE WATCHDOG

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## YOUTH FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS CAUCUS



Look for our red T-shirts and come talk to us!

OUR BODIES      OUR HEALTH      OUR RIGHTS

### Who We Are?

The Youth for Women's Rights Caucus is an independent initiative established to reaffirm, improve and implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing +5 Further Actions. The Caucus brings together more than 40 young people from all over the world who are dedicated to making a positive change in the sexual and reproductive lives of young people.

### Why Young Women?

We are integral in fulfilling the hopes and dreams of generations to come; therefore, it is crucial for governments and societies to improve life conditions and provide us with the means to fully express and develop ourselves - NOW! To achieve this, our participation at all levels of the decision-making process must be put into practice, as well as the right to decide freely over our bodies.

### What Do We Advocate For?

- § Young women's human rights, especially sexual and reproductive rights;
- § The elimination of all forms of discrimination, based on gender, age, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disabilities, immigration status, marital status, or geographical location;
- § The full meaningful participation of young women at all levels of decision-making;
- § Access to information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education;
- § Access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services that are specific to young women's needs, including emergency obstetric services, and respect for our right to confidentiality;
- § The elimination of legal, cultural, religious and socio-economic barriers that hinder our development and empowerment;
- § The right to sexual pleasure and to enjoy our sexuality free of guilt, violence and coercion;
- § The right to be involved in and benefit from the development of new technologies;
- § The legalization and expansion of the right to access safe and affordable abortion services.

### What Do We Want YOU to DO?

It is time to move beyond reaffirmation to implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing + 5 Further Actions.

Be accountable for the commitments you have made and ensure that *our bodies, our health, our rights* are no longer ignored!

<sup>1</sup>Asociacion Panamenia de Planificacion Familiar, Asociacion Venezolana de Planificacion Familiar, ASTRA Youth, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, DAWN, Demographic Costa Rican Association, HELAM, Ipas, Lentswe la Rona, NAPY, Profamilia, REDLAC, REPEM, YMCA, YOUACT, and Youth Coalition

## Beijing +10 Africa

By Wala Nalungwe

It was great to get a chance to participate at the Beijing +10 Africa review meeting in October. I was really excited to finally get a chance to voice out young women's views on at a regional meeting.

The women at the meeting called for implementation of the Beijing platform for action. They expressed their frustration at having to start all over again at these meetings when it would be easier to move forward if the recommendations of the previous meetings were implemented.

Some of the issues that emerged from the meeting were that girls and women are still vulnerable even in their own homes as cases of gender based violence continue to rise and women and girls are even more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection especially during [eriods of conflict and peace keeping.

Some cultural and traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and initiation ceremonies that impede women's rights continue to be practiced. Furthermore, culture and tradition prevent access to sexual and reproductive health information and services as sexuality education is labeled taboo in most African settings. This results in young women not having the necessary information on their sexual and reproductive health rights, that they need to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

The meeting came up with yet another set of recommendations that will hopefully be implemented in the region. Being at the Beijing +10 Africa regional review was a "great" experience for me, however I felt that it would have been greater still if young women were integrated into the women's movement so that they are well groomed to continue the great work that has already been done by the older women in the movement.

I hope to see more young women being groomed by the women's movements and taking up leading roles in the move towards equality between men and women in Africa.

## ASTRA Youth

By Jovana Kusic and Sanja Panjkovic

ASTRA youth is an organization that consists of young leaders from central, eastern, south and Middle Europe. The mission of ASTRA youth is to facilitate cooperation between young people from different countries for the improvement of youth involvement in Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) issues. The young people of the organization found common problems, from the area of SRHR that they want to deal with together.

The Goals of ASTRA Youth are:

1. Have sex education in school curriculum
  - Support for local advocacy campaigns and lobbying
  - Exchange of experience and information
  - Training for teachers
2. Men's Involvement
  - Use the Internet as a tool for discussion on advocacy campaigns
  - Programs and campaigns addressed to young men
3. Improved accessibility on SRHR
  - Establish peer education groups
  - Training centres for peer educators
  - Advocacy
4. Address the needs of the VMSE population
5. Youth friendly services
6. Active meaningful participation of youth in the SRHR field

**WE WERE NOT IN BEIJING, BUT.....**  
**Overview of NGO Consultation: From Mexico City to Beijing & Beyond: Realizing the Vision**

Maiden Manzanal, Youth Coalition & Thirza Bronner, CHOICE

Yesterday a group from the Youth for Women's Rights Caucus attended the NGO consultation meeting. It was inspiring to see some of the important predecessors of Beijing in panel discussions and hear about the regional overviews of Beijing implementation.

Young women were several times addressed at this meeting. It is true that we were not present in Beijing and we are indebted to the generation of feminists in Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing for the pioneering work they did. It is because of them that our human rights are recognized; that we have the right to participate equally in political processes at the national, regional and international levels; and that the quality of our lives is greatly improved. We are the ones who will carry this forward and beyond. We may not have experienced a women's conference as impressive as our predecessors, but we will be devising new, creative and strategic ways to address women's issue in the context of evolving realities; particularly now when women's human rights and empowerment are being threatened and are under attack.

As we are here for the ten-year review of the Beijing PfA, we also have the chance to look beyond. Judging by all the issues popping up during the working group and caucus discussions now is the time to do it! And as we do so, we need to pay more attention to young women's rights and potential.

**UNECE; some progressive language on sexual rights**

Thirza Bronner, CHOICE

During the UNECE meeting on Beijing+10 which was held in Geneva in December 2004, the ECE countries, including the United States of America reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The NGO meeting that took place before the official meeting was dynamic. Youth for Women's Rights were active within the emerging issues and the trafficking in the context of migratory movements. On sexual and reproductive rights, consensus was reached on one of the most progressive agendas ever. For example, topics like access for all women to safe and legal abortion and the right to sexual pleasure and sexual autonomy were included.

There was a big debate on the issue of 'trafficking in the context of migratory movements', as some NGO-representatives wanted to use this topic to open up a debate on prostitution. After agreeing to keep the discussion on areas where all NGOs could agree, slowly the discussions made progress and solid recommendations were made.

The overall Chairperson's Conclusions on the official meeting were pretty decent. Some progressive language on sexual rights was included, and emphasis was given to the fact that that more and more women are becoming affected by HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the conclusions included a nasty link between trafficking and prostitution, and did not differentiate between forced and free prostitution.

After all UNECE member states reaffirmed the Platform for Action, The United States read a statement during which they elaborated on their view on abstinence-only sex education programmes and their opposition towards safe and legal abortions. They were completely booed at, which was quite interesting, as we all know that it is not usual to make any noise during plenaries.

The EU also read a statement. Their view was as it should be: with a focus on making progress. They received a long and warm applaud.

Reaffirmation was a good start. One thing that seems to keep on slipping through the mazes of international agreements are the rights of YOUNG women. These rights are not adequately covered in the BPoA and the BFA and again the regional meeting was another missed chance for member states to have them better addressed. Make sure that the global review does not miss the train again!

## Tributo a las feministas

By Adriana Maroto Vargas y Lurys Marin

Las personas jóvenes que estamos presentes en la 49<sup>th</sup> Sesión de la Comisión Sobre el Estatus de la Mujer de las Naciones Unidas, somos parte de una generación que nació y creció en un mundo alternativo construido por mujeres que no quisieron seguir siendo sujetas invisibilizadas y pasivas.

La Primera Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer, celebrada en 1975, dio inicio a la Década para las Mujeres en las Naciones Unidas.

Desde entonces, han pasado 30 años, en que mujeres de diversas culturas, razas, religiones, posiciones políticas, orientaciones sexuales y condiciones sociales y económicas, han trabajado para alcanzar condiciones óptimas en su calidad de vida, incluyendo la equidad y la igualdad, así como el derecho de decidir sobre su cuerpo y su vida.

En este espacio, reconocemos y enaltecemos el trabajo que cada mujer ha hecho por brindarnos a las nuevas generaciones un mundo alternativo y por el cual debemos seguir luchando, ya que tenemos plena seguridad que el futuro que soñamos debe parecerse al presente que construimos.

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## Tribute to the Feminists

Young people attending the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, belong to a generation where women believe that they do not have to be subjugated, invisible or passive any more.

The First World Conference on Women took place in 1975. It began the United Nations Decade for Women.

Since then, 30 years have passed, in which women of different cultures, races, religions, political positions, sexual orientations, and social and economic conditions, have worked to achieve the best quality of life, including equality, equity, and the right to make decisions about their body and their lives.

We recognize and applaud the work of every single women that has fought to let the new generations live in an alternative world, a world that we will keep fighting for. We strongly believe that our dream future should look like the present that we built.

## YouAct



YouAct is a recently established youth network of young people in Europe who are active in the field of sexual and reproductive rights. It was launched in May 2004. YouAct has 28 members from 17 European countries. All members are under the age of 28.

YouAct is working for sexual and reproductive rights of young people. We do this through advocacy, awareness-raising and information sharing. In other words, we strive for the acknowledgement of young people's rights on a political as well as on a grassroots level. We write articles and conduct workshops to raise the awareness about the needs and rights of young people and we actively work together with other youth and adults. Not only do we advocate young people's rights, but we also empower young people to stand up for their own rights through training and collaboration. We believe young people have the right to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and their voices should be heard.

Over the last few months, YouAct has actively participated in several governmental meetings at the EU and UN level addressing sexual and reproductive rights of young people. (UNECE Beijing+10 regional review, Global Round Table Meeting Countdown 2015, High Level Meeting on SRR during Dutch EU Presidency, Roundtable on Supplies (PAI), EuroNGO annual meeting). YouAct has also conducted a training on advocacy for young people in the Central and Eastern European region, in collaboration with the Youth Coalition and Youth of Jazas and participated in a Youth Summit with Asian youth in Sri Lanka, organized by UNFPA RHIYA project (Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia).

## RED LATINO-AMERICANA Y CARIBEÑA DE JÓVENES POR LOS DERECHOS SEXUALES Y REPRODUCTIVOS (REDLAC)



**REDLAC** es una articulación de 17 organizaciones juveniles que se encuentran en 19 países de América Latina y del Caribe. Su misión es promover la participación y empoderamiento juvenil para la defensa de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de las y los jóvenes, desde una perspectiva feminista y de derechos humanos. Por lo que impulsa diversas actividades de difusión y promoción de los ddssyddrr en los ámbitos nacional, regional e internacional, sustentadas en los principios de igualdad autonomía, diversidad, no discriminación, libertad, participación, democracia y ciudadanía.

En relación a la revisión de la Plataforma de Acción de Beijing y del cumplimiento de los 30 años de la Primera Conferencia Internacional de la Mujer REDLAC participó en la IX Conferencia de la CEPAL, la cual tuvo como resultado el *Consenso de México*, en donde se plasmó la postura de la región sobre la revisión de la Plataforma de Acción de la Mujer. Resultado de esta participación organizaciones y redes feministas de la región integraron el *Comité de Seguimiento Regional a Beijing +10*, del cual la REDLAC forma parte y estará participando a través de éste para fortalecer y promover la participación de las mujeres jóvenes en este proceso.

### **Coordinadora Política Juvenil por la Equidad de Género-Ecuador**

La Coordinadora Política Juvenil (CPJ) es una organización conformada por jóvenes de las distintas regiones de Ecuador. La CPJ es un espacio de formación, expresión y gestión social, que pretende generar propuestas y acciones que respondan a necesidades e intereses de las/os jóvenes desde una perspectiva de género. Busca fortalecer la participación ciudadana política y el protagonismo juvenil para incidir en la construcción de relaciones equitativas entre hombres y mujeres, a un cambio imaginarios y construcciones sociales; sus ejes de trabajo son género, juventud y derechos.

### **ELIGE Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos – México**

ELIGE es una organización de mujeres y hombres jóvenes que trabajan con las/os jóvenes organizados en la defensa de sus derechos sexuales y reproductivos, a través de la incidencia en políticas públicas y en la construcción de herramientas de documentación sobre situaciones violatorias a los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de las y los jóvenes. Entre sus acciones está el impulso de la Campaña Nacional *Hagamos un hecho nuestros derechos*, la cual promueve con instituciones públicas de derechos humanos una cartilla por los derechos sexuales de las y los jóvenes.

## **The Youth Coalition**



The Youth Coalition is an international network of like-minded young advocates (aged 15-29) who are promoting sexual and reproductive rights of young people internationally. We are students, researchers, volunteers, educators, NGO (non-governmental organization) workers, and activists. The YC was formed during a meeting on the 5-year review of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+5). Our activities are focused around three main areas: awareness raising, training, and information. Since our formation, the Youth Coalition has participated in many regional and international decision-making processes as advocates for adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights, including the 5 year review of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+5), the 5 year review of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing+5), the 10 year review of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (WSC+10), and regional processes of the 10 year review process of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+10).

## CHOICE



**CHOICE** is a youth organisation based in the Netherlands that promotes **sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people** as well as **meaningful youth participation**, both on national and international level.

We fight for all the rights that are connected to sexuality and reproduction. “Sexual and reproductive rights and health” include **all means, services, care and information** that young people need to make **free** and **responsible** decisions about their sexuality and the number and spacing of their children.

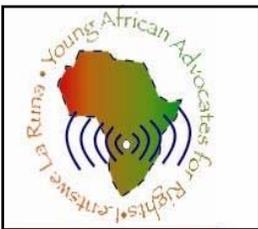
For instance, young people have the right to receive comprehensive education on **safe sex**, so they know how they can **protect** themselves against sexual transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. Young people should be free to **choose** their own partner. Young people must have access to **contraceptives** and must be able to use them if they want to. Young people must have access to safe and legal **abortions**.

We **advocate** for these rights by providing workshops and training on these topics to young people and policy makers, we **participate** in international conferences and we **support** the rise of new organisations in this field.



Lieke, Gemma, Rose & Thirza advocating at the ECE Beijing@10 review

## Lentswe La Rona



Africa continues to struggle through distressing political, economic and social factors that have been perpetuated by war, gender inequality, harmful traditional practices, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The challenges brought by these factors gave rise to the need for cross-cutting and innovative solutions that take into account the role and importance of young people as valued citizens, partners and leaders both of today and the future.

Lentswe La Rona which means “our Voice” is a network of Young African Advocates for Rights that envisions a society where African Youth are able to access and exercise their rights and participate actively at all policy and decision making levels regarding issues that affect their rights, in particular their Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

Our presence at the CSW meeting is to network and collaborate with other NGOs to show our strong support for Beijing platform for action and also to ensure that young women’s rights are recognized and taken seriously as a basis for moving forward. Young African women as well as their counterpart all over the world faces daily violations of their human rights and Lentswe La Rona is actively working to ensure that young women’s rights are respected, promoted and defended.



Asia-Pacific young people comprise the majority of the world's youth population. *Network of Asia Pacific Youth – NAPY* share a lot of similarities with sisters from the other regions of the world but experience them differently because of the context of our region; which includes marked poverty in most countries, pervading patriarchy and cultural and religious barriers to respecting and advancing the rights of women, particularly young women. While some level of progress in the SRHR of Asia Pacific young women has been achieved 10 years after Beijing, a lot still needs to be done. Key findings of an eight-country monitoring study in the Asia Pacific reveal that:

- Women across the life cycle continue to die unnecessarily from sexual and reproductive health problems. In the past decade, an estimated two million women died from causes related to maternal mortality with more than a fifth of them dying from unsafe abortions and related complications;
- For young people, SRHR information, education and services remain lacking. Even when these information, education and services are available, discriminations on the basis of marital status, parental or spousal consent, age, or sex still cause access problems;
- Health sector reforms have resulted in a deterioration in the provision of primary and reproductive health services.

Network of Asia Pacific Youth strongly reaffirms the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and their +5 review outcome documents. We therefore urge governments to stand firm and not roll back their commitments to these international agreements. We specifically call on all governments to:

First, uphold, promote and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all women regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, education, language, disability, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, caste, marital status, HIV status, refugee status, occupation and physical appearance;

Second, respect and protect the right of young women to choose if, when and whom to marry, if and when to have children and how many, and the right to end marriage;

Third, actively address the issue of abortion, including making abortion accessible and safe;

Fourth, recognize, respect and protect young women's sexual rights, including the right to express one's sexuality and sexual orientation without fear. We urge governments to ensure mechanisms to support diverse forms of families including common-law, same sex marriages and partnerships, and single-parent families;

Fifth, prioritize resource allocation for comprehensive health services, with SRHR services, especially for marginalized women including poor and young women;

And last, create mechanisms to promote and support women's, especially young women's, participation at all levels of decision-making.

We applaud, support and are one with governments who completely affirm and fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the ICPD Programme of Action and their +5 Review Outcome Documents—instruments fundamental to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Courtesy, sources and contribution from ARROW, Rathi Ramanathan, Rodlyn Marte, Eriko Tanno, Sonali Mohapatra. You can reach us through [napy\\_coordinators@yahoo.com](mailto:napy_coordinators@yahoo.com)

## Asia-Pacific countries reaffirmed Beijing Platform for Action

By Med Manzanal, Youth Coalition

Forty-four members and associate members of the ESCAP, including United Nations' bodies and Non-Governmental Organizations, met at the UN ESCAP High Level Inter-Governmental Meeting to review and appraise regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly held in September 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand.

All governments in the region re-affirmed the BPA and the Beijing+5 outcome document and committed themselves to its full and effective implementation. Notable gains and achievements were reported across the twelve critical areas of concern identified in the platform, namely: poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanism, human rights, media, environment and the girl-child. Marked changes in the situation of women can be gleaned from some of the areas of concern while status quo remained in other areas.

Ten years after the historic BPA was produced at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, governments agreed that much more work needs to be done to achieve gender equality, equity and women's empowerment. These persisting and emerging issues are cited as challenges for governments, civil society, development organizations, donors and other important sectors, of which greater partnerships and collaboration are needed to be addressed. Among the emerging issues highlighted in the meeting are the rising fundamentalism among governments and societies, feminization of poverty, high rate of HIV/AIDS among women, persistence of violence against women, militarism and terrorism, the negative impact of economic globalization, the deplorable situation of women's reproductive health, problems in trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children, among others.

The presence of regional NGOs, and the young people promoting sexual and reproductive rights of youth in the region, have provided significant input into the meeting by advocating not only for the reaffirmation by governments, but for the full and accelerated implementation of the BPA and the Cairo Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). With a rather weak stance of the United States in this particular meeting, it did not require a strong resistance from the progressive actors. In general, the Meeting capsulized the highest call of governments and NGOs to continue to press on toward the work to be done to realize the Beijing Platform for Action, resist reversals or threats of reversals, and strategically link the BPA with the commitments to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Security Council 1325 on women, peace, and security, Cairo Programme of Action of ICPD, and most especially the Millennium Declaration and its agreed development goals.

A declaration called the Bangkok Communiqué was produced as a summary of the positions, recommendations and expressions of strong commitment of governments toward the BPA.

## Los derechos sexuales y reproductivos desde la perspectiva de líderes religiosos

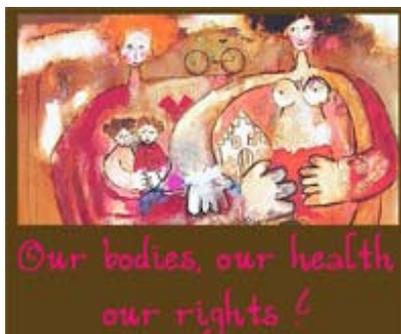
Este domingo, se realizó un evento denominado “Religión, derechos humanos y salud sexual y reproductiva: nuevas ideas y estrategias”, organizado por la IPPF/WHR.

La actividad estuvo dividida en tres paneles, cada uno de ellos referentes a una temática: aborto, separación de la Iglesia y el Estado y educación integral en sexualidad. En el evento participaron como panelistas líderes progresistas de diversas manifestaciones religiosas.

Algunos de los ejes generales que se presentaron en la discusión fueron:

- Los grupos progresistas deben construir un discurso que identifique claramente sus propios valores morales. Éste debe presentarse como una alternativa con la que las personas se sientan identificadas.
- La libertad de consciencia es lo más importante para que las personas puedan tomar sus propias decisiones.
- Las doctrinas de la Iglesia Católica no son dogmáticas, lo cual implica que pueden cambiar. Además, esto da a las personas la posibilidad de actuar según su libertad de consciencia.
- El Código Canónico establece que si una mujer recurre a un aborto por miedo, necesidad o por evitar un mal mayor, no se aplica la pena de la excomunión.

El evento evidenció que organizaciones que trabajan en derechos sexuales y reproductivos, organizaciones de mujeres, el movimiento feminista y organizaciones de jóvenes pueden trazar estrategias conjuntas con los sectores progresistas de diversas religiones.



### Sexual and reproductive rights: the perspective of religious leaders

On Sunday morning an event took place named “Religion, human rights and sexual and reproductive health: new ideas and strategies”, organized by IPPF/WHR.

The activity was divided in three panels, each of them related to an issue: abortion; separation of Church and State; and comprehensive sexuality education. Progressive leaders from various religions participated as panelists.

Some of the general arguments which were discussed on the panel are as follows:

- The progressive movement should build a discourse that clearly identifies its own moral values and should be introduced as an alternative which people can identify with.
- Freedom of conscience is the most important aspect to consider when people are making their decisions.
- The Catholic Church doctrines are not dogmatic, which means that they can change. Besides, it gives people the opportunity to act according their freedom of conscience.
- The Catholic Canon dictates that if a woman obtains an abortion because of fear, need, or to avoid greater damage then she should not be excommunicated.

This event showed that sexual and reproductive rights organizations, women organizations, the feminist movement and youth organizations can work together with progressive leaders from diverse religions to reach a common goal.

## ESCWA Beijing Ten Year Review

By Afamia Kaddour

The Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace was convened in July 2004 in the ESCWA headquarters in Beirut, with the main aim to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the different Member States. The call for peace was chosen as the cross-cutting theme in the conference to emphasize the instability in the Arab region due to the prevailing conflicts, occupation, war and economic hardship that have detrimental effects on development in general and the advancement of women in particular. The conference also addressed the role of women in four domains of public life: Arab parliaments, executive and decision-making positions, civil society and the media, through four panels. The conference brought together around 400 representatives from 12 ESCWA member States (Saudi Arabia was not represented), intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, Academicians, researchers, media figures and artists.

Overall, the conference was quite disappointing as the inclusion of many themes did not allow for an in-depth and critical discussion, despite the well-articulation of these themes. Besides, the main theme, the call for peace, was barely mentioned throughout. Important themes such as reproductive and sexual rights were absent from the conference though they constitute a corner stone for the advancement of women.

The large number of participants and the lack of good structure in the conference created a chaotic atmosphere which limited the potential to carefully examine the challenges facing the implementation of the Beijing PoA and reaching useful and accurate recommendations. Youth were completely absent from the conference and their needs and issues were not raised at all, though they constitute a large proportion of the population in most if not all Arab countries.

The final declaration surprisingly did not reflect the actual events of the conference and again reproductive and sexual health were ignored. The participation of youth was also overlooked. No concrete mechanisms to follow-up on the declaration itself, despite its many pitfalls, were identified.

Thus, the advancement of women in the Arab World lies at the mercy of politicians and policy makers that function in autocratic and corrupt states, which are ironically the first to be threatened by the mobilization of women.



*Articles in The Watchdog express the views of the individual authors and not of the Youth Coalition.*