

WIDE STATEMENT TO THE 54th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN New York ,1-12 March 2010

Fifteen years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action structural inequalities based on gender differences, exclusion, discrimination and violence against women are still present worldwide.

In the present context of multiple global crises (economic, financial, food, energy, climate and care), WIDE is concerned that gender equality and enforcement of women's human rights are losing ground worldwide. Over the last five years the EU and Member States have adopted a number of crucial documents on this issue.¹ These political initiatives are important but they are not enough. Evidence still shows that there is still a huge gap between discourse and action.

Thus, it is essential that European governments comply with their agreed commitments and the coherence of policies vis-à-vis the promotion of gender equality and women's rights and the fight against poverty. Some key moments along 2010, where WIDE wants to see this happening will be the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, the approval of the Gender Action Plan and the EU strategy planning for the next HLF on Aid Effectiveness in Seoul 2011.

1. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS: A SIGN OF THE FAILURE OF THE SYSTEM

We are facing the most severe crisis in capitalism since the 1930s that is threatening the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of women and men, girls and boys worldwide. **It is a systemic crisis** that marks the end of three decades of neoliberal policies fostered by an economic model built upon unleashed competition between countries and increasing structures of inequality and inequity. This interlocking crisis signals **the failure of the mainstream neoliberal** capitalist economic system **that has favoured large capital interests at the expense of people's lives, sustainable livelihoods and social justice and it is built upon the structural subordination of women.**

In the context of increasing inequalities in all societies, **WIDE** considers the current multiple and interlocking crisis as an **opportunity to call for a change of the unsustainable, gender-blind economic and development model** promoted among others by European Union. Along with crucial threats, the context of crisis has opened a window of opportunities to rethink the economic, political and social model, to look for alternatives and make proposals for change.

There is a need to put back women's rights to the agenda and for this reason WIDE calls for the EU and Member States to:

- Engage in a fundamental, critical rethinking of the dominant, growth-oriented concept of development and create a humane economic system focused on strengthening the economy of care as well as ecologically sustainable economic activity, including implementation of food sovereignty.
- Include gender sensitive strategies in the stimulus packages to reduce the effects of the economic crisis on women and girls.

¹ Eg. 2005 EU Consensus on Development; 2007 EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation.

2. EU POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

WIDE considers that the advancement of the EU's goal to promote gender equality in development is still hindered by the absence of Policy Coherence with other EU policies such as trade policies and other macroeconomic measures in the area of external relations as well as with EU's international women's rights commitments. In the area of EU trade policy the non-integration of gender equality obligations in current policy proposals such as the ongoing bilateral or multilateral free trade agreement negotiations is obvious.

- **The EU Policy Coherence for Development approach must address the interrelationship between gender equality, development and trade, peace and security and respond to women's rights commitments, such as established in Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW within its external and internal policies.** It must also link development policies to other systemic issues and the responses to the crisis to the financing for development process.
- In this sense, the new **EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) on Development must encompass all EU external policies, including trade policies.** It must go beyond the current framework approach to aid effectiveness largely stimulated by donor governments' concerns, and promote a more balanced understanding of aid effectiveness that is clearly linked to the overarching objective of development effectiveness which has gender equality at the centre. The GAP must be linked to the EU gender strategy and **be a binding document with a specific budget and specific accountability mechanisms.**
- **WIDE** believes that **migration patterns**, women's in particular, are linked to European Union economic and trade policies. **The EU commitments to gender equality and women's rights must be also applied to migrant women living in Europe.** The complex process of women's migration in Europe has to be seen within a development and rights-context. This requires **to address migration from the perspective of the human rights of migrant women themselves, including their labour rights** and the economic and social consequences of their migrating, including the impacts on their respective families in the country of origin

3. NO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS WITHOUT GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The so-called new International Aid Architecture **has put so far more emphasis in monitoring aid delivery than in demonstrating any real ability to change donor's behaviour** or to link the aid effectiveness agenda to sustainable development results. It has not been developed **with a gender perspective and it's reproducing the same patriarchal schemes and structural inequalities.** **Women's rights** have been pushed to the background and priority has been given to other concerns.

Taking into account women's contribution and its **relevance in all these processes, WIDE urges EU institutions and member states to:**

- **Put the gender perspective and women's rights at the center of the European Development Agenda** by including the Beijing commitments in the New International Aid Architecture and funding for development and intensifying compliance with the MDGs from a gender perspective.

- Certify **compliance with certain such international commitments** as the CEDAW, the ICPD, and the UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security and Sexual Violence, respectively.
- **Fulfill their ODA commitments including addressing the negative** effects of the economic and financial crisis in developing countries, particularly on gender equality and women's empowerment. **They must commit to an increase of resources to reach at least 20% of total ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment by 2015.**
- Establish the new **UN women entity** led by an Under-Secretary General which will ensure the representation of women's rights and gender equality issues at top UN decision making level that should be soon appointed through a transparent process. The new entity should have a strong mandate, include civil society participation at all levels, especially at national level, have a strong operational capacity and be funded for ambitiously (target 1 billion dollar).

4. MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

Accountability of governments's performance in relation to aid and development assistance is essential for development effectiveness. Current accountability mechanisms in development aid planning and management at both national and EU level are blind to the goals of gender equality and women's rights and lack timely, reliable, comparable data.

To strengthen accountability mechanisms in measuring gender equality and women's rights in EU development goals the EU and Member States must:

- **Apply Beijing Platform for Action indicators approved at EU level** in the implementation of their external policies of development, trade and security.
- **Employ gender-sensitive budgets as one of the key tools for the** effective implementation and follow-up of operations and the scope of the commitments to promote the rights of women and girls.
- **Ensure that the MDGs draw on the Beijing PfA as integral to all MDG goals.** The assessment of performance of the European and national development policies for the advancement of gender equality **and women's rights must not be reduced only to measuring achievement of MDG 3**, that presents a narrow and minimalist focus for measuring the advancement of gender equality and women's rights, as all MDGs ignore the structural nature of poverty as well as the structural nature of gender inequality.
- **Implement external independent monitoring of international business enterprises** that are active in countries of the global South, with respect to how they comply with and protect the rights **of women and internationally recognised social and ecological standards** and establish adequate forms of sanctions in case on non-compliance.

5. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: KEY ACTORS WORLDWIDE

The value and importance of civil society and especially women's organisations' contributions to policy formulation, **monitoring and implementation as well as the provision of essential services** must be recognised and supported by the EU **through appropriate funding, initiatives and actions.** These include increased, substantial, predictable and multi-year core funding and the creation of political spaces for true policy dialogue for women's organisations.