

Seeking Development Alternatives in Meeting Challenges of Global Economic Crisis

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Dear Sisters and Brothers

Good afternoon!

15 years ago, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women was convened in Beijing. Over 30,000 women gathered in Huairou and called for equality, development and peace in one united voice. The Beijing Platform for Action was unanimously adopted and we cheered and celebrated it with so much joy and hopefulness. These memories are still like yesterday and very much alive on our minds, in our hearts.

As a Chinese woman, I deeply thank the UN and the international women's movement for giving this historical opportunity to China. This is blessed luck for China. It helped the most populous country in the world make equality between men and women a basic state policy, it also helped millions of Chinese women understand why we need gender mainstreaming, and how to protect and promote women's rights, social justice and sustainable development, without which, we may not be here in this room today. A Chinese saying goes "never forget those who dig the well (so that we have the water)", so I would like to sincerely thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

15 years ago when we drew the blueprint of BPFA in Beijing, we did not think that the world would be like this today; at Beijing+5, we discussed that globalization is a double-edged sword and may have both positive and negative sides, however we did not know that the world would be like this today; at Beijing+10, the Asia Pacific women's movement analyzed that "globalization is the globalization of neo-liberalism, new conservatism, militarism and religious fundamentalisms". Unfortunately, what we said then increasingly became the realities we face today, the global financial and economic crisis swept across the world and women are among those the most widely and deeply affected.

The Chinese government has adopted proactive and effective policies and measures to manage the economic crisis. Firstly, securing economic growth through developing domestic markets; secondly, securing employment through creating jobs and proactive employment policies for full employment of both men and women, and

thirdly, securing people's livelihood through improving public services and social securities to maintain people's living standards.

The All-China Women's Federation launched three new initiatives against this background: firstly, it successfully lobbied the government to pay from government finance for the interests of micro credit for women, so as to encourage and help women, in particular rural women and laid-off women workers, to start and pursue income generation activities. Secondly, the federation promotes rural women's participation in village governance and strives for higher representation of women in village committees so as to advance the status of rural women. Thirdly, it lobbies the government to provide free cervical and breast cancer screening for rural women to ensure public services reach the poor and the disadvantaged women of China. Meanwhile, other women's NGOs in China all worked very hard to provide effective assistance to its service groups, and made legislative and policy recommendations on how to better respond to the crisis.

These measures have paid off. China's social and economic development keeps steady growth in spite of the global financial crisis, and the national GDP for the first three quarters of this year increased by 7.7 percent. Millions of Chinese people and Chinese women benefit from the overall economic and social development.

However, on the other hand, we also see serious gaps in China's policies and measures to counter economic crisis. One example is that the Chinese government invested 4000 billion Yuan for the development of ten industries and creation of 40 million jobs. When we look at these ten industries closely(steel, automobile, shipping, petrol chemical, textile, light industry, nonferrous metal, equipment manufacturing, electronics and IT), we can see that most of them are male-dominated industries. What the investment brings is full employment for men but lack of employment opportunities and underemployment for women. This illustrates that the government's macro-economic policies still lack gender awareness.

We can also find through further analysis that gender segregation in the labor market is closely related to stereotypes in education and training. Although the percentage of female university students rose to 49.86 percent in 2008, girl students still predominantly study social sciences while boy students study engineering and technologies. These choices by the boys and girls are closed linked to cultural stereotypes, gender blindness in the education system, gaps in public services and family polices, and lack of public participation in decision-making at the macro-level.

So we learned from the experiences and gaps in China's measures against the financial crisis that the development alternatives for harmonious development of the Chinese society in the post-financial-crisis era should be: to holistically integrate gender equality and social justice into China's economic system, political system, social undertakings, environment policies, reform and development of traditional culture as well as innovation of institutions and systems. This is an important task

for China to achieve sustainable development.

In globalization, each country not only needs to do its own things well, but also shoulder its international obligations responsibly and participate in international cooperation. To mainstream gender equality and social justice in China's foreign policy and international cooperation is also an important field for China's foreign policy and cooperation reform in the post financial crisis era.

China was a very poor country and is still not rich today. We have received assistance from many countries. China's development cannot be separated from the assistance by the international society. In this process, we learned and digested the wisdom and experiences of other countries and turned them into a valuable asset for us. At the same time, we also firmly rejected the practices by some donors of forcing their ideologies and economic systems on us, and insisted on reform and innovation based on the realities of our own country.

The same goes with China's international cooperation and assistance. While we implement the UN Development Assistance Framework and try to achieve the mission and vision of the international women's movement, we should stick to equality and mutual benefits and respect for national ownership, and should not force our experience and model upon the others. We should believe in the choices, agency and creativity of people and women in our partner countries or the assisted countries, and achieve just, democratic and harmonious development together.

From the three days of this forum, we have learned many things and have been moved and inspired all the time. Gender equality and social justice is a daunting and arduous task. We, your Chinese sisters and brothers, stand ready to work with you, to continue our efforts, and march forward.

Thank you all.