



2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Together for wellbeing and Mother Earth





2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Together for wellbeing and Mother Earth

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Background:

During the **Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995**, the 189 member countries committed to the rights of women across different domains, enshrined in **twelve critical areas of the Platform for Action**, which are as relevant today as they were 25 years ago: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflicts; the economy; power and decision making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; the media; the environment, and girls. **Strategic goals** were defined for each crucial sphere, as well as a **detailed catalogue of related measures** that governments and other **national, regional and international** interested parties should adopt.²

In turn, it represented a **milestone** for the Indigenous Women's movement, since **many Indigenous Women's organisations from different regions around the world** came together in an international setting to **articulate their demands. They drafted their own Declaration, affirming their identity and struggle as Indigenous Women, as well as formulating a clear criticism on hollowed out meaning and concealment of the needs and priorities of Indigenous Women.**

The Indigenous Women's Declaration in Beijing covered the topics of concern for Indigenous Peoples and Women around the globe: self-determination; land and territories; health; education; human rights violations; violence; intellectual property rights; biodiversity, and political participation. It recognised the many types of oppression faced as women and as Indigenous Peoples.

The Beijing Declaration and Action Platform (BDPfA) is also **analysed from a historical and experiential perspective**, since the Platform **does not properly enable the challenges** linked to respecting their rights to be addressed, **but rather avoids the historical, colonial and structural nature of the violations of rights of Indigenous Women and Girls.**





2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Together for wellbeing and Mother Earth

A further criticism of the BDPfA is the mainly monocultural focus of public health and education systems which contribute to the **perpetuation of discriminatory practices** against Indigenous Peoples and Women, as stated in FIMI's Environmental Justice Report regarding the situation of Indigenous Women and Girls within the framework of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.³

The Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women is, therefore, a statement that endorses the **necessity to place their priorities on the international agenda from their specific life experiences and needs**. Thanks to its conviction, the standpoints it takes have continued to be current until today and are a benchmark for political advocacy activities across different local, national, regional and global spaces. The **Commission on the Status of Women** is the main international intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. During the annual two-week session period of the Commission, representatives from UN member states, civil society organisations and UN bodies meet at the New York headquarters to debate the advances and shortcomings in applying the Beijing Declaration and Action Platform from 1995 and the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, held in 2000 (Beijing +5), as well as the emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women.⁴ In this sense, **the CSW has recognised through different resolutions the importance of Indigenous Women in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals**, e.g.

² Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women, NGO Forum, UN Fourth World Conference on Women Huairou, Beijing, People's Republic of China, 7th September 1995

³ International Indigenous Women's Forum, Mirna Cunningham Kain, Eileen Mairena, Environmental Justice: *Perspective of Indigenous Women. Guardians and Custodians of the Traditional Knowledge of Their Peoples*, Guatemala, 2019;

International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), *Inclusion and Equity, Global Study on the Situation of Indigenous Women and Girls in the Framework of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Our Voices and Actions for Our Right after 25 Years of Beijing Platform for Action*, June 2020.





2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Together for wellbeing and Mother Earth

Resolution 49/7: Indigenous women: beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Resolution 56/4: Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication.

Moreover, they were included in the **conclusions of at least four CSW** sessions, recognising the intersectoral nature of discrimination experienced by Indigenous Women and Girls, underscoring the need to protect and promote their rights, including through empowerment, promoting the participation of women in decision-making and political processes, and recognising their contributions to fighting climate change.⁵ In addition to this space, the Beijing Declaration of Indigenous Women also enabled direct impact on discussions surrounding climate change in the Lima Declaration—the Outcome Document of the Indigenous Women Summit in Lima, Peru in 2013, specifically in relation to climate justice and taking up recommendations formulated 18 years earlier.⁶

Along these lines, the Declaration of Indigenous Women has laid the foundations in the struggle to recognise their individual and collective rights and their rights against all forms of violence, identifying themselves with Mother Nature and linking her to their lives and the ability to live; this vindicates the right to self-determination over their lands and as Indigenous Peoples.⁷

Guiding questions:

- What programmes or legal frameworks have changed in your countries since the BDPfA?
- At your community level, have changes in terms of the protection and promotion of the rights of Girls, Youths and Adults been observed?
- What best practices do you see as faltering in this process?
- What challenges remain for the rights of Indigenous Women to be fully exercised in your community?

