

World Conference on Women

October 19, 2020

The vulnerability of women has increased during Covid pandemic and post recovery phase. In this context, the 25th anniversary commemoration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020 is a rallying point to insist on finally achieving the human rights of all women and girls.

In news: UNGA celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women.

Placing it in syllabus: United Nations

Static dimensions

1. History of the previous 3 conferences
2. 4th World conference on women, Beijing +5 and Beijing +10

Current dimensions

1. In news
2. Outcome of the conference

Content:

In news:

- The year 2020 marks the **25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**, which remains the most visionary and comprehensive roadmap for advancing women's rights globally.
- The UNGA's High-Level meeting was held under the **theme "Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"**.
- Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti

Irani was among over 150 leaders from different countries who addressed a high-level meeting held at UNGA and highlighted India's achievements in gender equality.

- She spoke about a **shift in India “from a paradigm of women's development to women-led development”**.
- She noted that legislations pertaining to sexual harassment of women at workplace, protection of women from domestic violence, protection of children from sexual offences, and other criminal laws' amendments, have been strong enablers of women empowerment and protection of children, especially girls.
- The reservation for women in local bodies such as the panchayat, the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme and the linking “over 200 million women” with the formal banking system have been efforts to ensure gender equality.
- One Stop Centres providing medical, psychological, legal, police and shelter facilities under a common roof were a series of measures taken for ensuring safety, security and well-being of women during the COVID pandemic.

Outcome of the conference:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored society's reliance on women both on the front lines of the response, and at home, while the pandemic's impact is putting at risk the hard-won gains for women's rights.
- Women and girls are facing disproportionate impacts with far-reaching consequences across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection.
- **Due to the pandemic, it is estimated that in 2021, 47 million women and girls will be pushed into extreme poverty**, bringing the total to 435 million.
- Hence the **conference is an opportunity for Member States to demonstrate political will and leadership for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration** on the

principles of gender equality.

- It gave ideas of how to remove the systemic barriers that hold women back from equal participation in all areas of life, whether in public or in private.
- It highlighted achievements, best practices, gaps and challenges.
- It was noted that over 131 countries have passed laws to support women's equality, including to increase access to health care and good quality education, and to promote women's political participation and representation.
- It was agreed that more countries have reached gender parity in educational enrolment and fewer women are dying in childbirth.
- But not a single country has achieved gender equality.

It was emphasized that throughout 2020, UN Women would build on other galvanizing moments in the 21st century women's rights movement:

- **20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security**
- **10th anniversary of UN Women's establishment** as the global champion for the empowerment of women and girls
- **5th anniversary of the global SDGs**

4th World conference on women, Beijing +5 and Beijing +10:

The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995** is the most visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls, everywhere. It was **developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China**, known as the largest-ever gathering of gender equality advocates. It was **adopted by 189 governments** committed to taking strategic, bold action in **12 critical areas of concern**: *poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media,*

environment, and the girl child. A parallel NGO Forum was held in Huairou near Beijing which drew around 30,000 participants.

Beijing +5:

- It was the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the UNGA entitled **“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**, held in June 2000.
- The commitment to the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action was reaffirmed.
- It reaffirmed the commitment to **accelerate the achievement of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.**
- It recognized the role and **contribution of civil society, NGOs and women’s organizations** in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and encouraged their participation in further implementation and assessment processes.
- It reaffirmed the commitment to overcoming obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Action Plan and the **Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women** and to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and promoting full participation and empowerment of women.

Beijing+10:

- In 2005, Member States of the United Nations carried out a **ten-year review of progress** in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and **Platform for Action at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.**
- A questionnaire to Member States on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at national level provided the main basis for the Secretary-General’s

report.

- The **report: “Beijing at Ten and Beyond”** was prepared as an electronic publication only and was presented under the 12 Critical Areas of Concern.
- The report **focused on achievements, gaps and challenges and further actions required for full implementation.**
- As the outcome of the ten-year review, the Commission adopted a Declaration which stressed that full and effective implementation is essential for achieving the internationally-agreed development goals.

History of the previous 3 conferences:

Before Beijing's 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women three conferences were held.

1975: The Commission on the Status of Women called for the organization of the **first world conference on women to coincide with International Women's Year.** It was **held in Mexico City** where 133 governments participated. Around 6,000 NGO representatives attended a **parallel forum, the International Women's Year Tribune.** The **conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year,** which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985.

1980: 145 Member States gathered for the mid-decade World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in **Copenhagen.** It aimed to review progress in implementing the goals of the first world conference, focusing on employment, health and education. A Programme of Action called for **stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property,** as well as improvements in protecting women's rights to inheritance, child custody and nationality.

1985: The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women took place in **Nairobi.**

The conference's mandate was to establish concrete measures to overcome obstacles to achieving the Decade's goals. Participants included 1,900 delegates from 157 Member States; a parallel NGO Forum attracted around 12,000 participants. **Governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women**, which outlined measures for achieving gender equality at the national level and for promoting women's participation in peace and development efforts.

Mould your thought:

1. What is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action? Explain the significance of the 25th Anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women which was recently held.

Approach to the answer:

- Write about 4th World Conference on women and its outcome
- Write about the recent conference and its outcome
- Brief about India's stand in the conference
- Conclusion