Fourth United Nations International Conference on Women (September 1995, Beijing)

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With a view to the World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), several preparatory meetings were held in order to determine the Union's position. The Union had a twofold interest in taking part in the Conference: it wanted both to identify the concerns and measures taken and to be taken by the Community to advance the situation of women and to look at the measures taken by the developing countries in this area. This document was the Commission's second working document on the Union's participation in the Conference and followed an initial document setting out the Union's position at an initial preparatory meeting (Vienna, October 1994). The working document considered the outcomes of the five preparatory regional meetings as well as the Vienna meeting and took up a number of issues the Union deemed essential. Those issues were to be raised at the final preparatory meeting in New York (March 1995) before the actual Conference and could form the basis of the Union's future position at the Conference. The essential issues in question were as follows. Human rights: women should be able to take part in political, civic and economic life on the same footing as men. In that connection, the Union could undertake to include specific clauses making respect of women's rights an essential element in third country agreements and a prerequisite for the provision of financial support. Women as dynamic players and not victims: the Union wanted to see women completely and effectively involved in the decisions that affect them, be they in the private or public domain. Women and the economy: the Union should support all initiatives designed to encourage women to reconcile work and family responsibilities, to stop them being segregated on the labour market and recognise the value of their economic contribution. Women and decision-taking: the Union should support measures designed to encourage women to take part in decision-taking processes in all public and private fora. Particular attention should be paid to the stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. Violence against women: the Union wanted to see specific measures taken to counter domestic violence against women, sexual harassment at the workplace, the rape of and trafficking in women. Solidarity against exclusion: the Union insisted that specific measures should be taken to stop women being excluded and to ensure that they are given priority in all anti-poverty programmes. Solidarity with the other regions and development cooperation: the Union was concerned about women's contribution to the future development of the developing countries and wanted a future Council resolution to highlight the issues of gender equality in development. Fourth Community framework programme for equality of opportunity: the Union must ensure that this programme was absolutely consistent with the Beijing conclusions. NGOs: the Union should support measures to involve more closely those NGOs that defend women's rights in the world. They should be given a specific seat at the Beijing negotiating table. National strategies: integration of women's concerns should be central to all international and national policies. Monitoring and implementation measures: if the Conference was to have a real impact, appropriate monitoring arrangements must be set in place, including financial assistance. Women's health and the role of women in the environment: those two problem areas should be added to the Conference's action platform.