

National Women’s Summit Declaration
October 20-21, 2009
Quezon City, Philippines

We, 350 participants of the National Women’s Summit, inspired by its theme “Women’s Self Reliant Leadership and Collective Empowerment in Times of Crisis,” gathered at Miriam College, Quezon City, Philippines on 20-21 October 2009 to assess and to reflect on the gains as well as the challenges we still face 15 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) by the women of the world;

Conscious of the destruction and tragedy left behind by the wrath of typhoons “Ondoy” and “Pepeng,” we are determined to confront and overcome the persistent problems that plague our country and people. We are aware that the setbacks we face today such as arrested economic growth, deepening poverty, continuing war and conflict in Mindanao, bad governance, widespread corruption, religious extremism, environmental vulnerability, and violation of human rights, are deeply rooted in structures of inequality and injustice, both national and international, exacerbated by our complacency and lack of love of country which prevent us from confronting these issues with firm resolve and unswerving determination;

As women committed to gender equality, social change and the progress of our beloved country, we must harness resilience, self-reliant leadership, and collective empowerment which Filipino women have demonstrated time and again when faced with unending crisis;

We hereby resolve to:

1. Continually strengthen our commitment to uphold women’s rights in all its dimensions - political, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual; renew our efforts in mainstreaming the value of legal and legislative education and its potential in creating governance and a just political system, particularly in monitoring government compliance with international human rights commitments, such as the BPFA, CEDAW, Convention on Migrant Workers and their Families; persist in the enforcement of domestic laws and regulations for women’s rights and their liberation from poverty, foremost of which is the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710);
2. Popularize more vigorously the value of electoral advocacy for the promotion of women’s rights and social justice and demand the highest levels of accountability in governance by choosing and electing leaders who are honest, transparent, democratic, committed to peaceful social change, who accept women’s rights as human rights and who value partnership with civil society;

3. Strengthen our commitment to confront the economic crisis today by advocating socially-oriented and just economic policies and programs; supporting active trading among small and medium-scale entrepreneurs and investors, majority of whom are women, across different islands of the Philippines; upholding farmers' and workers' rights; encouraging social dialogue among cooperatives and trade unions while ensuring that the voices of women farmers, workers and informal workers are heard;
4. Encourage women to become entrepreneurs, investors and financial managers by offering them financial education and training, providing them with credit and market information and supporting the storage, distribution and standardization of the prices of their products and services;
5. Develop and implement women-empowering programs which tap indigenous/local knowledge of women that respond to the dangers posed by patriarchal backlash, over-all deprivation, non-access to services, and which should include the protection of women against threats to their personhood through-out their life cycle;
6. Engage educational institutions in the design of socially-relevant and gender-fair academic curricula, youth-driven outreach civic engagement programs that can provide the youth, especially girls and young women, the consciousness, wisdom, knowledge, and competencies as agents of transformative leadership;
7. Sustain the monitoring of developmental strategies related to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to ensure a gender responsive approach in policy implementation and practices for achieving MDG goals, especially addressing issues, among others, around maternal mortality, child mortality and HIV AIDS;
8. Systematically utilize all forms of media for awareness-raising, for action and mobilization in order to socialize the values of environmental protection, sustainable development, regenerative lifestyles, and feminist spirituality.

We urge the Philippine government and the private sector to give priority to the following:

1. Build an inclusive and progressive political system, on a sustained basis, through the promotion of a culture of peace and cooperation among Christians, Muslim and Indigenous peoples by encouraging them to work closely in partnership with one another and supporting the co-equal leadership of women and men in their distinctive and diverse cultures;
2. Assist in the re-structuring of community-based organizations of women, simultaneously tapping into front-line government agencies, the private sector and civic organizations that provide protection and resources against violence against women and children and support for women's health and livelihoods needs, including those of women with disabilities and those of indigenous women; find solutions to trafficking and prostitution of women and

children, and respond, through education and training, to threats from disasters and natural calamities;

3. Promote the education, training and career opportunities of women and girls in science and technology, in order to contribute to economic prosperity and a good quality of life; respond to the challenges of climate change and maximize the country's maritime potential, given its archipelagic nature;
4. Implement a national health program and policy through effective legislation, supported by adequate budget, and which demonstrates the government's commitment to uphold standards in international conventions dealing with women's reproductive and sexual health and rights, including other dimensions of gender and health, such as women's wellness, lifestyles and aging to enable women to improve their quality of life as they engage in transformative leadership within their communities;
5. Create the infrastructure for the provision of decent work for women in agriculture, trade and services through correct monetary, fiscal and banking programs and policies;
6. Guarantee adequate protection and support the development of women migrant workers, in particular, temporary workers before, during and after their overseas work, and develop the domestic labour market in order to provide Filipino workers real options of working inside or outside the country.

As Filipino women we must always remember, as we return to our homes and families, that we should never lose hope as life is what we make it to be; the choice is ours to move forward towards prosperity or to stagnate in poverty and want. We should always be vigilant and courageous to demand from Government and the private sector that they meet their responsibilities with timeliness and adequate support. At this National Women's Summit, we all decide to move forward as a nation and as a people, knowing that Filipino women are the best hope of our country.

Filipino women, let us stand up and be counted for women's rights, democracy, self-reliance and empowered leadership!