

Human Rights of Women



Federal Ministry
for Foreign Affairs
of Austria



“The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be in isolation as a women’s issue.”

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 1995.

- ▶ The **principle of equality** implies that human rights belong to everybody without any distinction because of the sex of a person.
- ▶ Special attention needed in the fact that *de iure* equality often results in *de facto* discrimination: differentiation between **formal and substantive equality**.
- ▶ The **concept of “gender”** helps to understand different responsibilities, roles and positions in society of women and men alike.

History: Institutions for the advancement of women rights

- ▶ The French Revolution: **Declaration of the Rights of the Woman and Female Citizen**, 1789, written by Olympe des Gouges.
- ▶ Great Britain: The “motherland of feminism” where the battle for women rights started in the 1830s.
- ▶ 1888: **International Council of Women**, Paris
- ▶ 1928: **Inter-American Commission on Women** (CIM), for the Latin-American Region.
- ▶ 1946: **Commission for the Status of Women** (CSW) within the framework of the United Nations.

- ▶ **Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** adopted in 1979, in force since 1981.
- ▶ **Optional Protocol to CEDAW:** adopted in 1999, in force since 2000 features an individual complaints procedure and an inquiry procedure and recognises the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

- ▶ **UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976 to 1985).**
- ▶ **World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993): Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.**
- ▶ **Four World Conferences on Women: Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995) → Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:**
 - **Beijing+5 in 2000.**
 - **Beijing+10 in 2005.**
 - **Beijing+15 in 2010.**
 - **Beijing+20 in 2015.**

The Beijing Platform for Action

- ▶ Outcome of the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 is the most complete programme on human rights of women.
- ▶ Identifies 12 critical areas of concern:
 - Poverty. Education. Environment.
 - Violence. Armed conflict. Human rights.
 - Media. Economy. Decision making.
 - Health. Girl child. Institutional mechanisms.

- ▶ UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women since 1994. **The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was lastly renewed in 2013 by resolution 23/25.**
- ▶ Full implementation requires different steps:
 - Human rights education.
 - Encouraging women to monitor state performance.
 - Lobbying for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW.
 - Training of female advocates in the use of human rights mechanisms.

- ▶ Interpreting Human Rights from a Gender Perspective: *General Comment No. 28*.
- ▶ Training for Women's Rights: *The People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE)*.
- ▶ Digital Media to support Women's and Girls' Rights: *World Youth Award*.

- 1789 Declaration of the Rights of the Woman and the Female Citizen.
- 1888 Foundation of the International Council of Women.
- 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and amending Protocol.
- 1950 Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
- 1953 Convention on the Political Rights of Women.
- 1957 Convention on the Nationality of Married Women.

- 1962 Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages.
- 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- 1975 First UN World Conference on Women, Mexico City.
- 1976 UN Decade on Women: Equality, Peace and Development.
- 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- 1980 Second UN World Conference on Women, Copenhagen.
- 1985 Third UN World Conference on Women, Nairobi.

- 1994 Establishment of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.
- 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women of Belém do Pará.
- 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women, Beijing.
- 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- 1999 Optional Protocol to CEDAW.
- 2000 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security.
- 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

- 2000 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly on “Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century.
- 2003 Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People’s Rights on Rights of Women in Africa.
- 2005 “Beijing+10”: Ten-year Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly.
- 2008 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1820 (2008) on Women and Peace and Security.
- 2009 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1888 (2009) on Women and Peace and Security.

- 2009 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1889 (2009) on Women and Peace and Security.
- 2009 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1894 (2009) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts.
- 2010 UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1620 (2010) on Women and Peace and Security.
- 2010 Foundation of UN Women.
- 2011 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/132 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

2013 “Beijing+20”: Review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The review (Beijing+20) will also include the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, the first five-year assessment conducted after the adoption of the Platform for Action, which highlighted further actions and initiatives.