



Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange Congregational Stance
on Gender Justice
July 1995

**A Call for Commitment to the Agenda for Equality
at the Fourth World Conference on Women and Beyond**

To achieve full equality, citizenship, and human rights for women and sustainable development in the world, governments and the United Nations must not only adopt the Platform For Action, an Agenda for Equality, but commit to implement and enforce their agreements.

The Fourth World Conference on Women comes at a time when Women's Leadership is urgently needed in the face of challenges to our collective survival. Over the past decade, women have demonstrated that gender is central to all contemporary and cross-cutting debates on global issues, such as development, human rights, democracy, population, peace and the environment. They have shown that the empowerment and equal participation women in decision-making are necessary to the advancement of solutions to the world's crisis.

At Nairobi women outlined a comprehensive plan of Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. At Rio women were recognized as managers of natural resources and the moving force for sustainable development. At Vienna women's rights were acknowledged as universal, inalienable and indivisible human rights. At Cairo women's health, empowerment and reproductive rights were placed at the center of population-related development policies. At Copenhagen the political, economic and social empowerment of women were recognized as key to eradicating poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. **But too many of these promises remain unfulfilled.**

The success of the Agenda for Equality, adopted in Beijing, rests therefore, not on words, but on **resources, implementation, enforcement, integration, and accountability.** Today women call for:

strong institutions and adequate resources for the enforcement of the agreements;

firm commitments to the integration of women and of gender concerns into all international, regional, and national bodies and policy-making processes; and

effective mechanisms of accountability to the world's women in whose name these promises have been made.

It is time to make good the commitments and turn the principles into practice.

We call on **governments** to pledge to:

MEET WITH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS before the end of 1995 to determine national plans, mechanisms, and resources needed to implement the Agenda for Equality, and ensure political and legal freedom for women to organize.

COMMIT TO WOMEN'S PROGRAMMES 50% OF ALL RESOURCES AND FUNDS needed to eradicate



poverty, illiteracy, disease, and ensure women's rights to education, health care, and bodily integrity.

INTEGRATE GENDER perspectives into all policy-making and assure gender balance in all governmental bodies, including elected and appointed positions.

SHARE EQUALITY decision-making positions, reaching, by the year 2000, gender balance in all governmental bodies, elective and appointive positions, including in the United Nations.

REDUCE MILITARY SPENDING by 5% immediately and incrementally thereafter, transferring these funds to social programs especially those that work to decrease poverty and violence in society and empower women to become full citizens and to exercise their human rights.

INCLUDE WOMEN in peace-making and provide gender sensitive training in all military and police forces.

RATIFY AND REMOVE RESERVATIONS TO THE WOMEN'S CEDAW CONVENTION and bring substandard national laws into line with its provisions.

We call on the UN to pledge to:

HONOR ITS CHARTERS' COMMITMENT to equal rights for men and women and work to integrate gender perspectives into all programs and to achieve gender balance in professional posts.

STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONS SPECIFICALLY MANDATED TO EMPOWER WOMEN and expand the scope and resources of the CSW, DAW, UNIFEM and INSTRAW. Adopt an optional protocol to CEDAW. Create a post of Under Secretary-General to oversee UN implementation of the Agenda for Equality.

MONITOR UN PROGRESS in achieving gender equality in programs and structures and report annually to the General Assembly on the status of women in the UN and in member states.

DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY from international financial institutions and transnational cooperations for the impact of their policies on women and require compliance with International Codes of Conducts, ILO and human rights standards.

In return organizations of **civil society** pledge to:

MAKE CERTAIN that our respective governments and the United Nations honor these commitments and act promptly to transform promises into reality.

INFORM AND MOBILIZE women from the community to the national, regional and international levels about their basic rights and these governmental agreements.

HOLD governments and the United Nations accountable through periodic reviews of their actions and submission of progress reports to appropriate bodies.

The Agenda for Equality must become a reality for every woman for the new millennium.