

The Monrovia Declaration

A Call to Action from the participants of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security

Monrovia, Liberia

International Women's Day, March 8, 2009

We, who came together for the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, have joined together under the inspiring leadership of the co-conveners, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and H.E. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, to celebrate and draw strength from women's leadership at all levels.

We recall the spirit of women's conferences, started in Mexico City and continuing through Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing, and other African regional and global gatherings, and the reaffirmation of women's rights exemplified in the Beijing Platform of Action, African regional instruments and CEDAW. We honor the great strides women have made since then to achieve leadership positions in international arenas and close to home. We note that women in the 21st century hold high-level positions and at the same time do extraordinary work at the community level.

We came together as leaders celebrating our achievements, solidifying our commitment to work together for change, reassessing our efforts, and strategizing to achieve greater success.

We stand in solidarity with our sisters in Darfur, Zimbabwe, and conflict areas around the world. We commit our energies to accelerating the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The aspirations we hold as women and men coming together in Monrovia are not satisfied by the policies and practices we see all around us. We therefore shaped the Colloquium around thematic priorities that, if acted upon, would make a fundamental and sustained improvement in the lives of women and girls and their communities. Having convened this historic event, we now make a collective call for profound changes in the priorities that shape policies and resource allocations from the global to the local level, and demand accountability from the institutions and individuals who must effect these changes.

We recognize that we are living through multiple global crises that are threatening our security at all levels and have a devastating impact on the lives of girls and women all over the world. What is now required is a paradigm shift in our approach to global security and development that puts women at the center of social and economic policies and political change.

It has been demonstrated that women are particularly vulnerable to reductions in exports, foreign direct investment and remittances. As countries put in place their economic stimulus packages for development, we call on governments to target women's economic empowerment. Specifically, we urge leaders of the G20 countries who will be meeting in London on 2 April 2009 to agree on coordinated action aimed at reviving the global economy to:

- Earmark funds for women in all responses to the financial crisis including recovery and stimulus packages; and

- Ensure appropriate delivery mechanisms are in place and functioning to channel trade financing to women.

We call for full implementation of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** for the protection, participation and promotion of women's rights and their involvement in peace processes, and the adoption of **UN Security Council Resolution 1820** that addresses sexual violence as a tactic of war. We call for greater accountability and an end to impunity – only this will accelerate implementation by all stakeholders, principally the UN Member States, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. We call on them to present their plans of action and accomplishments at the 2010 Ministerial Review Conference of UNSCR 1325.

We further encourage countries to collaborate creatively and support each other on the development and implementation of National Action Plans on SCR 1325.

We commit to honor **women's leadership** at all levels of community and public life, and through our actions and decisions to enable women leaders, in particular young women, to take up roles of leadership and responsibility.

We call for greater numbers of women in positions of leadership – we have witnessed that more women results in better decision-making by governments and communities. It has been demonstrated that the discourse changes with their involvement, and we want to see these changes sustained. In this context, we support initiatives to increase women's representation in the European Union to 50 percent of decision-makers.

Liberia and Finland, the co-conveners of the Colloquium, exemplify women's supportive leadership.

We call for greater efforts to enable and **empower women to participate fully and on fair terms in the economic life** of their communities, removing barriers and increasing their capacity in trade and business activity from the local to the global level. Women need better access to information and to improvements in infrastructure and services, particularly for women with disabilities, as well as social protection systems, especially in times of economic crisis and recession. Women and men deserve the right to **decent work** opportunities in the formal and informal economy. Women's rights must be respected in the workplace and within value chains, in companies of all sizes, and no matter how far across the world they reach.

We commit to ensure that women will be present, and their voices heard, in all debates concerning **climate change**, with a particular commitment to women's participation in the global climate change summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

We call for far greater urgency in addressing the mitigation and adaptation aspects of climate change – otherwise we risk undermining all our efforts to date on eradicating poverty and suffering. An acknowledgement of women's roles as powerful agents of change, and their greater vulnerability to climate change impacts in many societies, must be demonstrated through women's greater role in climate change negotiations and incorporation of gender considerations in the new agreement, as well as in international, national, and local strategies and programmes implementing this agreement.

To better protect women and girls who are displaced, to uphold the dignity of **migrants**, and to enhance the social and economic integration of migrant women and men alike, we call for a

gender equality approach to migration management. Policies and programs must integrate the needs of migrant women and support migrant women in diaspora communities to engage in development efforts through their skills, knowledge, and financial resources.

The leadership of **young people**, and especially young women, is critical to advancing development, peace and security. The participation of young people is a prerequisite to the development of communities and nations.

Young people are the inheritors of decisions made today which affect the future. We commit to the inclusion of young women and young men in decision-making processes and leadership and in all processes that work towards the achievement of the MDGs. We therefore call for:

- Urgent investment to support young women and young men in the achievement of the MDGs including women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- The creation of supportive spaces which enable the leadership development of young women.

We further commit to unite and mobilize our collective leadership to end violence against women and especially young women. We call for safe environments for women and girls who have experienced violence and abuse. We commit to work collaboratively with women's organizations and networks.

Lastly, through the launch of the **Angie Brooks International Center on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security** on 8 March 2009, the Colloquium has put in place a mechanism of follow-up action to the Colloquium.

We thank participants for the recommendations that came out of the thematic discussions and working groups which will be passed to the Angie Brooks International Center for implementation. We call on potential collaborators and institutions to partner with us in the programs and activities of the Center.

If these calls are met with action, not empty promises, the future will be brighter for every girl, every woman, every grandmother, and for the men who share their aspirations and their life journeys.