



Joint Statement on the Proposed BRICS Gender and Women's Forum

We, the undersigned civil society and health sector organisations from South Africa and India, recognise the unique opportunity presented by the 10th BRICS Summit and commend this year's Chair – South Africa – for proposing the creation of a Gender and Women's Forum. This initiative will go a long way in acknowledging the discrimination that women continue to face and in underlining the urgent need to address it to ensure women's empowerment and participation as equal partners to men.

We reassert that women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights – which includes the right to life; the right to equality; the right to liberty and security of person; the right to equal protection under the law; the right to be free from all forms of discrimination; **the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**; the right to just and favourable conditions of work; the right not to be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment – and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field.

We also reaffirm the commitments that reiterate these freedoms in relevant international declarations, notably the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its review conferences, the global call-to-action of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We appreciate the BRICS leaders' commitment to the recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and call upon them to ensure their expeditious implementation.

We recognise the structural barriers to women's empowerment such as various forms of discrimination in the public and private spheres, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours. We also reiterate the importance of setting concrete qualitative and quantitative targets to eliminate these barriers, and welcome outcomes related to gender equity from a timely realization of these targets.

We underline and reassert the importance of ensuring a woman's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health which can enable her to lead a happy and healthy life and become an equal partner in the advancement of her country.

We urge the BRICS leaders to acknowledge that today, more than twenty years after the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, full enjoyment of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights remains but an aspiration for millions of women and girls.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), each day, around 800 women die giving life; more than 225 million women want to delay or avoid childbearing but are not using modern contraception; and 1 in 3 girls in developing countries is married before the age of 18.

We call upon the BRICS leaders to ensure that the proposed BRICS Gender and Women's Forum acknowledges that ensuring women's and girls' good health is key to bringing about gender equality and creating an environment that allows them to realise their true potential. We also urge them to ensure that future deliberations of this Forum focus on the health and well-being of women and young girls, along with other issues that affect them.

We underline our own commitment to making all necessary efforts to help BRICS governments meet any qualitative and quantitative targets as set out by the Forum, with a view to bring necessary shifts in mindsets, policies and cultures that are necessary to close existing gender gaps, eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and girls and achieve gender equality in our countries.

CO-SIGNING ORGANISATIONS

South Africa: Amnesty International South Africa, Ipas South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice

India: Family Planning Association of India, Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India, Ipas Development Foundation, Pratigya Campaign