



STATEMENT

Beijing +30: Upholding Commitments in Section J on “Women and the Media”

March 3, 2025. Communication rights – particularly those of women and marginalized groups – are under severe threat world wide.

This year, 2025, marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Section J of this landmark gender policy blueprint enshrined commitments to increase women’s participation in media decision-making, promote balanced and non-stereotypical portrayals of women, and ensure women’s access to and use of communication technologies.

Commitments made in Beijing are under attack. One driver is the rise of far-right governments and conservative movements across the globe, offline and online. A second is the increasing hostility towards gender equality evident in statements and actions by the current political administration in the United States of America. Nation states, the private sector and other entities are backpedaling on promises to advance and uphold women’s rights and gender equality. Action to address the escalating threats is urgently required.

There is clear evidence of a systematic erasure of the right to freedom of expression of many groups, including women and critical media and civil society leaders. Fear of funding cuts and attacks by emboldened hate groups are forcing many into self-censorship. Organisational communication and websites are being sanitized of language on equality and human rights, among other social justice concerns. Misogyny is gaining traction as progress on equality and inclusion is rolled back. Abrupt cuts in development funding have dire consequences for women’s rights programs around the world, including initiatives to advance communication rights.

The inclusion of gender equality in media policies, self-regulation and legislation remains weak across most countries despite the commitments made in Beijing three decades ago. In view of recent political developments across the world, including and especially in the USA, media in many places are now expected to abandon gender equity language and goals. This may well mean making the challenge of uprooting sexist stereotypes in media portrayal of women even more difficult than it is at present. It may mean less coverage of violations of women's rights and gender equality. Barriers to success in implementing the Beijing commitments relevant to media are numerous, including a growing gender digital divide within and across countries, the unchecked spread of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, male dominance in media ownership and leadership, as well as gender biases in the constantly evolving communication technologies, with Artificial Intelligence being the latest in the series.

If the current status quo is left unchallenged, the likely outcomes are clear: 30 years after Beijing, progress towards gender equality will be reversed. The clock will turn back on advancement towards fair and balanced media representation free of sexist stereotypes, equality in media decision-making, freedom of expression and equitable participation in



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information and communication technologies, as well as a guaranteed life free of violence for women in the digital space.

It is therefore important to urgently reaffirm and underline the importance of Section J, and to defend the principles enshrined in it.

We call on individuals, organizations, and governments to:

- i. Ensure that women-led civil society organizations have the resources and support they need to continue their work.
- ii. Resist the erasure of diversity, equity, and inclusion language from public discourse and hold media accountable for perpetuating harmful stereotypes.
- iii. Defend media freedom and the rights of journalists, particularly women, to work without fear of retaliation.
- iv. Speak out against policies and decisions that threaten women's rights and freedom of expression everywhere and across all media.

Signed

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