

# Beijing+25: End of 2020 Update

The year 2020 was due to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) – arguably the most progressive global blueprint for delivering women’s rights and gender equality. The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was to be commemorated by a series of processes, starting from national-level reviews to gauge progress and challenges in the implementation of the BPfA, all the way to a high-level meeting at the UN General Assembly.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many of the main global convenings planned in 2020 as part of the Beijing+25 review process; namely the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UN-multi-stakeholder hearing, the Generation Equality Forum as well as the UN General Assembly. While some of these events have been postponed to 2021, others have still gone ahead virtually or in a scaled-back, in-person format.

This update will cover the following:

1. The UN multi-stakeholder hearing
2. The Generation Equality Forums and the announcement of its Action Coalitions
3. The UN General Assembly
4. CSW65

You can find out how CSW64 unfolded earlier this year in this GADN [update](#).

## 1. UN multi-stakeholder hearing

Ahead of the High-Level Meeting at the UN General Assembly (see section 3 below), UN Women organised a [multi-stakeholder hearing](#) in July to take stock of all the recommendations and outcomes of all the various Beijing+25 review processes that had taken place over the last year. The hearing sought to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders ranging from government officials, civil society, academia, the private sector as well as specialised agencies. In addition to hearing from a range of government officials about tackling challenges and sharing good practice examples, there was also an opportunity for leading members of civil society to speak on select thematic issues and communicate ongoing concerns with the decision-makers present. However, there were also criticisms that this hearing was little more than a ‘talking shop’ with limited accountability.

## 2. Generation Equality Forum

The Generation Equality Forum, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, was scheduled to be the centrepiece of the Beijing+25 review process with large, public events planned in both Mexico and France in May and July 2020 respectively. However, the public health concerns due to COVID-19 meant that the Forum has been postponed to March 2021 when it will kickstart in Mexico, with the second event scheduled for June 2021 in France. Since the start of the pandemic, UN Women has continued to organise virtual engagements in an effort to maintain the interest and momentum of the Forum’s work.

## Action Coalitions

The core part of the Generation Equality Forum is the 'Action Coalitions'. These are partnerships across civil society, member states and the private sector that aim to accelerate action and make large-scale commitments, between 2020 – 2025, on specific thematic areas outlined within the BPfA. The intention is for these commitments to be realised by 2030 – in line with the conclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals. The six Action Coalitions, announced in January, are:

1. Gender-Based Violence
2. Economic justice and rights
3. Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
4. Feminist action for climate justice
5. Technology and innovation for gender equality
6. Feminist movements and leadership

In July, UN Women announced the Global Leaders of the Action Coalitions. You can find the full list [here](#), including those from civil society, philanthropic organisations and member states. In addition to these six Action Coalitions, the Generation Equality Forum has decided to develop a new Compact for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. Although not a formal Action Coalition, it is intended to complement the existing six and further details about the Compact can be found [here](#).

The UK government has been selected to co-lead the Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition.

Since the Global Leaders were announced, each Action Coalition has met to start developing separate blueprints to help map out their way forward. This includes agreeing on a concrete set of actions that are intended to speed up progress on their thematic issue and which will help deliver change. These blueprints are also expected to include some financial analysis about the estimated global costs for delivering the actions identified by the Action Coalitions.

## 3. UN General Assembly

The High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly took place on 1 October under the theme of: "[Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls](#)". This was to be the culmination of the Beijing+25 review process, where governments would present concrete new actions and commitments for accelerating gender equality by 2030.

During this high-level meeting, over 100 countries briefly reported on their progress as well as challenges in achieving gender equality and addressed their intentions moving forward – especially in the context of COVID-19. However, there was no space provided to members of civil society to counter, critique or ask questions of their governments.

The high-level meeting concluded without a dedicated discussion about the funding mechanisms for resourcing the bold ambitions set out by the governments and officials present. Instead, the focus remained on individual country efforts for achieving gender equality. It is anticipated that the Generation Equality Forum in 2021 may provide a space for this critical discussion.

You can watch the full high-level meeting [here](#).

## 4. CSW65

CSW65 is scheduled to take place between 15-26 March 2021. The priority theme is: “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. Furthermore, “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development” will be the review theme. In October, UN Women convened a virtual expert group meeting on the priority theme to discuss challenges as well as recommendations on this issue. You can find more information about the expert group meeting [here](#).

The continued challenges with COVID-19 means that CSW65 will be a virtual convening, including all side events and parallel events. However, critics fear that by being a virtual event, it will further close civic space – especially for women from the Global South. There are further concerns that the virtual nature of the proceedings will make it difficult for civil society to access decision-makers and negotiators informally and that they will have a limited ability to influence the Agreed Conclusions.

In addition, while there were hopes that CSW65 might be an opportunity to properly review Beijing+25 – given that CSW64 had to be scaled back considerably at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic – the Bureau of the Commission has confirmed that this will not be the case.

If your organisation has ECOSOC status, you will be invited to register for CSW65 via the United Nations Indico platform which will be open from 28 December 2020 until 22 February 2021. Applications for virtual parallel events are now open until 28 December 2020. You can find out more information and apply [here](#).