

WE, THE WOMEN
DEMAND TO LIVE IN A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY AND ALL FORMS
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—NOW!

Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations:

First, we want to thank you for agreeing to meet with us. We see your action as an indication of the importance you attribute to women's movements around the world and the interest you take in the problems confronting women, as well as your commitment to hear our demands and convey them to the international community.

Our mobilization coincides with the major UN meetings of Beijing +5, Copenhagen +5 and the Millennium Summit, where numerous commitments for peace, justice and sustainable human development were renewed, reformulated or reaffirmed in the name of “we, the peoples.” We want to take this opportunity to speak in the name of millions of grass-roots women who are actively involved in the World March of Women in the Year 2000.

We, the women. . .

We, the women of the World March, are marching into the third millenium denouncing poverty and all forms of violence against women because these two scourges disfigure and weaken humanity and prevent it from attaining its full development.

We, the women of the World March, are descendants of women around the globe who, for decades and even centuries, have struggled for access to education; for the right to vote; against rape, sexual assault and wife battering; for control of our bodies and sexuality; for equal pay and pay equity, equal political participation, access to water and land, the recognition of our fundamental rights, etc. We want to build on these struggles because, as women, we can never take our gains for granted. We refuse to let new generations of women be sacrificed to the ideological, economic, cultural and religious forces and trends that continue to threaten women's human rights. During the Beijing +5 meeting, many of us feared the worst as fundamentalist forces determinedly manoeuvred to undermine our basic gains. We were also numerous in demonstrating our anger at the refusal to take into account the negative impact on women of neoliberalism.

We, the women of the World March, affirm that for humankind there is no possible future unless women's physical and psychological integrity is respected, unless there is equality between women and men, and the collective wealth is distributed equitably. Reaching this goal is an urgent task that will not afford any delay.

We, the women of the World March, have chosen the UN—the political forum at the international level—as the culminating point of our action and as the body to whom we address our demands, because the entire process of our mobilization has been based on reaffirming the unquestionable priority of political over economic interests. We are calling for the renewal and democratization of the international economic order, at a moment in

history when the financial markets, operating without laws or citizen accountability, are transforming the world into a gigantic supermarket catering exclusively to the rich, and are virtually waging war against humanity, with the resulting wounded, excluded, refugees and dead. So through you, Mr. Secretary-General, we address the men—the majority—and ?? women—still a minority—who hold the political reins.

We, the women of the World March, are aware that the UN has committed itself many times before, in words and solemn proclamations, to eliminating poverty and violence against women. The feebleness of its political will, however, and the lack of concrete actions and strategies, outrages us. Together with many social movements, non-governmental organizations, labour unions and associations, we are determined to make these promises, commitments and UN declarations a reality—now! We want to make the 21st century a time where fundamental human rights are fully exercised: civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; and rights specific to women (also fundamental human rights). We want this also to be a time where humanity's collective wealth is shared.

We, the women of the World March, are deeply convinced that even if the UN is an institution that should be criticized and reformed, it represents hope, above all—hope that we must cultivate for the 21st century. We will keep in mind the final declaration of the Millennium Summit where heads of State committed themselves to making “the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing all of these priorities: the fight for development for all the peoples of the world, the fight against poverty, ignorance and disease; the fight against injustice; the fight against violence, terror and crime; and the fight against the degradation and destruction of our common home.” It is because we take this commitment seriously that we are presenting our concerns, criticisms and proposals to you, the Secretary-General of the UN.

We, the women of the World March, affirm that none of these struggles may be won in the absence of equality between women and men. Equality is at once an end and a means to achieving our continuing goals of peace, justice and development. The UN should lead the way in this respect. Millions of people around the world, women above all, know that only a strong, determined and unified international community will succeed in ending poverty and violence against women.

Who are we?

The World March of Women was initiated by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, but it very quickly became the collective “property” of millions of women around the globe. Since March 8, 2000, women on the five continents have been taking to the roads of their villages, neighbourhoods regions, and countries to put a stop to poverty and all forms of violence against women once and for all.

Mr. Annan, see for yourself the strength of this mobilization!¹ In **Morocco**, 500,000 people marched in Rabat chanting “We share the Earth, let's share the wealth.” In **India**, women chose light as a symbol of women's struggles against poverty and violence and in Gujarat,

¹ This section will be updated with more recent, but equally significant and symbolic examples.

women marched across a bridge holding candles to symbolize women's role as builders of bridges in their often polarized and fractured society. In **Haiti**, the petition in support of our March demands was symbolically made out of a cardboard panel—the material actually used in the shantytowns to construct housing. It is also used as beds by the poor in the cities and rural areas. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, March 8 was decreed a “day without women” and commemorated as a day of mourning and contemplation. Women remained at home to mourn sisters, brothers, husbands and children killed during the conflicts, and the trampling of their rights. In **Geneva**, European women from the East and West are marching together in front of the WTO (OMC, in French), renamed by them, the *Organisation Mondiale Criminelle*. In **Mozambique**, in spite of the flooding, over 3000 women participated in a variety of actions to launch the March. In **Brazil**, women demonstrated with lilac-coloured banners and balloons and beat on pots and pans before the Sao Paulo Stock Exchange to denounce inequality and exclusion generated by the current development model. **Indigenous women from the Americas** met in Panama and adopted a declaration so that their particular demands would be heard. In the **United States**, women demonstrated in front of the office of a senator who opposes ratification of the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In **Australia**, a couple of dozen launches were held around the country.

We could go on forever enumerating the initiatives generated by the World March of Women, actions characterized by their creativity, their awareness-raising and educational content, and their power to mobilize.

We are grass-roots women, of all origins, nationalities, religions, beliefs and orientations (political, cultural, sexual, etc.), living in all kinds of conditions. We are a pluralistic movement, composed of women with varying sensibilities, experiences and approaches, but we are unified around a common project. We are the World March of Women in the Year 2000, an autonomous women's movement comprised of women's groups, unions and social movements working independently of government control. As we speak, over 5500 groups in 157 countries and territories are taking part in this action, in their own countries and regions, and at the international level. The millions of signatures we have delivered to this building testify to the solid support women have gathered for the March demands.

This response proves that the problems experienced by women transcend geographical, cultural, political and economic barriers. Poverty knows no borders and violence against women is not confined to any social class. Poverty and violence exist in the North, South, East and West. For this reason, women from Africa, Latin America, Asia, North America, Europe—East and West—the Middle East, Arab countries, and Oceania have recognized themselves in other women's demands, forming a chain of mobilization encircling our small planet.

2000 good reasons to march—when we see the world through the eyes of women and girls!

Many people wonder why women continue to march! Have we not won considerable gains? Did the Beijing +5 meeting not confirm the commitments of the UN and member States concerning women and even extend them?

It is true that much has been accomplished by numerous women's NGOs, feminist groups and associations since the first international conference in Mexico in 1975. Certain States were forced to bow to the pressure and have undertaken actions with a view to eliminating discrimination against women. Certainly women are among the UN's most important allies. Decades of work have resulted in major advances, particularly concerning respect for women's fundamental rights.

It must also be acknowledged that during the 20th century women staged a revolution—without resorting to a bloodbath! We have transformed family life, work, and relations between women and men; we have questioned the power structure and reproductive roles and gained more control over our bodies and sexuality, etc.

But, as you know Mr. Secretary-General, the conditions of women's live remain very difficult. We ask that you never stop looking at the world through the eyes of women and especially girls. Here is what we see:²

Poverty: One person in five in the world lives on less than \$1 per day and one in seven people suffer from chronic hunger: the vast majority of poor people are women and children. Women have less means than men to avoid or climb out of poverty.

Distribution of wealth: Girls and women own less than 1% of the planet's wealth; we furnish 70% of the work hours and earn only 10% of the income.

Work: There are officially 110 million girls in the world between the age of 4 and 14 who work, and this number does not take into account domestic labour. Working conditions are almost always worse for women than for men (informal, atypical, casual, on-call, underpaid work) and systemic wage inequity persists (women workers earn roughly 25% less than men, with huge disparities between countries).

Political representation: Except for a few rare cases, the political representation of women is not proportionate to our numbers in the population. We observed this at the Millennium Summit, where there were only nine female heads of state! The United Nations estimates that it will take 500 years before women and men are equally represented in the highest ranks of economic power.

Prostitution: One million children around the world, mainly girls, are recruited into the sex industry each year.

² Joni Seager, *Atlas des femmes dans le monde* (Paris: Edition Autrement, 1998), and Martine Turenne, "La planète des femmes ne tourne pas rond," *Châtelaine* (Quebec, June 1999). Based on the report by Naomi Neft and Ann D. Levine, *Where Women Stand, An International Report on the Status of Women in 140 Countries*. See also, *Of Hopscotch and Little Girls*, a film by Marquise Lepage, produced by Monique Simard, Québec, 1999.

Rape: At the global level, one woman in four has been or will be raped during her lifetime, often by a man she knows; rape has been systematically used as a weapon of war in all armed conflicts during the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century.

Violence against women: The World Bank considers that violence against women equals cancer as a cause of death and incapacitation in women of childbearing age, and causes more ill health than road accidents and malaria combined!³

Discrimination based on sexual orientation: An Amnesty International report⁴ has revealed the scale of repression (imprisonment, torture, stoning, assassination, total lack of respect for fundamental rights, etc.) exerted against individuals, including women, because of their sexual orientation. These abuses constitute violations of fundamental human rights.

Education: Two thirds of all children who do not attend school are girls.

Domestic work: Beginning at the age of five, girls in developing countries work from 4 to 16 hours a day doing domestic tasks. Throughout their lives, women assume virtually the sole responsibility for the care of children and older people.

Agricultural production: Women represent 40% of the world's agricultural labour force, while owning only 1% of the planet's land.

Slavery: Some 250,000 girls under 15 work as domestic slaves in Haiti: they are called "restaveks."

Genital mutilation: Despite efforts and legislation, two million little girls are mutilated each year.

These situations are a blight on women's lives right now. As for young girls, the women of tomorrow, this discrimination casts a shadow over their future, is an obstacle to their full development, and deprives society of their potential. You are aware of this, Mr. Annan. So why are generations of women still being sacrificed? Why is the UN not doing more, acting faster, and with greater determination? Why do we hear speeches, but when it comes time to act, we see compliance with violence and discrimination against women? Why are people so resistant to recognizing that what distinguishes violence against women from violence in general is that it is committed solely because the victim is a woman? Why must we wait until 2015 to eliminate absolute poverty (the 1.3-1.5 billion people who live on US\$1 per day) when we have the financial and technical means at our disposal right now? Simply applying the Tobin tax or investing 0.7% of industrialized countries' GNP in official development assistance would end it today! As for the 3 billion poor people who are surviving on barely US\$2 per day, when will their turn come?

³ Noeleen Heyzer, *Ending the Epidemic of Violence Against Women* (Third World Network Features, IGC Internet, 2000).

⁴ Amnesty International, *Breaking the Silence: Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation* (AI United States, 1994).

It was because they wanted to reinforce the work already being done at the local, national, regional and international levels that millions of women decided to speak out—and march! We know that without a strong power base our victories will quickly drop to the bottom of the list of States' priorities. Without women's mobilization, the promises that have been made to us simply become a new source of disappointment. At the moment we speak, every broken promise translates as an obstacle to women's development, a violation of fundamental rights and the death of thousands of women around the globe.

Mr. Annan, we have to come to tell you that, beginning now, the 21st century should be the time when all the commitments, promises and declarations concerning women become a reality.

No more structural adjustments; we want structural change

Mr. Annan, the World March is not a women's parade! It is a political action, an act of citizenship on the part of millions of women all over the planet. More than enumerating the consequences of poverty and violence against women, we want to address the structural causes. The March clearly identifies neo-liberal capitalism and the patriarchal system as fostering and reinforcing one another. These dominant systems conspire to keep the vast majority of women in a position of cultural inferiority, social devaluation, economic marginalization, invisibility of our existence and our work, and commodification of our bodies. And we are not unaware of the extent to which fundamentalism and conservatism of all kinds play a part in this state of affairs.

We should not be afraid of calling the dominant economic system by its name: neo-liberal capitalism. It is a system with an inhuman face; a system ruled by absolute competition and based on privatization, liberalization, deregulation; a system bowing only to the tenet that the market reigns supreme; a system where the full exercise of fundamental human rights is subordinate to economic freedom; a system that produces intolerable social exclusion for large segments of the population, threatening world peace and the planet's future.

Far from being a 20th century phenomenon, the patriarchal system has existed for thousands of years in varying degrees and in different cultures. It is predicated on the claim that women are naturally inferior human beings and on the hierarchization of women's and men's roles in society. Patriarchy is manifested in all aspects of life by stereotypes that condition or mark relations between women and men. At the dawn of the third millennium, we continue to live in a world dominated by this system that enshrines male power and generates violence and exclusion.

The two forces have shaped the structure of contemporary globalization. For women globalization is not only capitalist and neo-liberal but also sexist. It affects women differently than it does men. Otherwise, why does the immense majority of the planet's poor consist of women? Why has women's access to the labour market changed nothing in terms of the gender division of labour or the sharing of child-rearing responsibilities and household chores? Why does "growth" continue to rely largely on the invisible, unrecognized, unpaid work of women? Why has the trade in women from poor countries to rich ones increased?

Why is prostitution part of the “development” strategies and channels for earning hard currency of a number of governments?

You yourself acknowledged this in the Millennium Summit Declaration: “We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed.”

The benefits are unevenly shared because the world economic system is not aimed at redistributing wealth but at concentrating it in fewer and fewer hands. It is not enough to rearrange the rules of the game while keeping the system intact. New rules must be created, based in part on experiences and alternatives put forward by women and social movements at the local, national and international levels.

You will appreciate our concern and anger over witnessing you as the Secretary-General of the United Nations advocate a Global Pact with private enterprise and endorse the belief that, left to its own devices, the market will be a source of equality and progress for the people of the world! You will appreciate our frustration on seeing the UN at the Copenhagen + 5 Summit co-sign a report with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development asserting trust in free trade and globalization everywhere to reduce extreme poverty by half between now and 2015! You will understand our scepticism when, on the one hand, the Millennium Assembly firmly resolves to “develop strong partnerships with the private sector... in pursuit of development and poverty eradication,” and, on the other, timidly “encourages the pharmaceutical industry to make essential drugs more widely available and affordable by all who need them in developing countries.”

Capitalist markets and multinational corporations have proven for a long time, Mr. Annan, that they are fully capable of generating inequality in the world and totally incapable of reducing poverty, particularly among women. The world economy has suffered from a “democracy deficit” for a long time. We do not think the UN should develop an equal partnership with private enterprise. The UN’s first partnership is with the peoples, whose interests it must champion. We believe the UN should develop the means to assert its political authority and to demand respect for values and practices associated with fundamental human rights and with civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. To act in any other way is to damage the UN’s seriousness, credibility and legitimacy.

Our demands or the world we want to build

The March is bringing together the force of millions of women who are mobilizing for the immediate application of demands⁵ that would make a considerable change in the situation and status of women throughout the world. The importance of the demands is that they are based on the action of governments. Indeed we believe that States that are sovereign, free of corruption, open to pluralism and immigration, democratic and participatory should take on the responsibility of elaborating on and implementing the demands and then answer for them to their citizens. Although non-governmental organizations are called upon to play a

⁵ See the Appendix for the complete text of the demands.

major watchdog role vis-à-vis governments—among other institutions—it is not up to what many call civil society (which is a loose, catch-all concept) to take the place of States in ensuring the exercise of basic human rights. The same applies to the international community of UN member States. Many of our demands follow on and strengthen the decisions made at the recent events of Beijing +5 and Copenhagen +5.

Eradicating violence against women

Constitutional States observant of international law

We were gladdened by your initiative of having core treaties signed at the Millennium Summit. We were gladdened by the very recent coming into force of the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We also think the world must operate within an international legal framework. That is why we insist on demanding that existing conventions and protocols be signed and ratified; that new protocols be drawn up, since only they can ensure that States will do what they say they will do; and particularly that these international instruments be applied in actual practice, day in, day out:

- the unconditional ratification and application of treaties concerning women's and children's rights, and the harmonization of national laws with these international instruments;
- the unconditional ratification of the Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. You are aware of course that this convention is among those eliciting the largest number of reservations, many of which can be considered incompatible with the object and general goals of the convention. CEDAW and the resulting reservations show that, while the international community is ready to acknowledge formally the many problems of inequality that women experience, individual governments are unwilling to do so and are not bound to change their practices that subordinate women;⁶
- strengthening of the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others through a mechanism that would take into account UN resolutions on the traffic of women and children and on migrant women workers;
- recognition by all States of the International Criminal Court and their willingness to submit to its jurisdiction.
- a protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

States proactive in fighting violence against women

⁶ C. Benninger-Budel and A-L. Lacroix, *Violence against Women: A Report*. (Geneva: World Organization Against Torture, 1999) 44.

Everywhere on the planet, women participating in the World March have called on our governments to take a true leadership role in fighting violence against women. We are asking you as the Secretary-General to support, encourage and ensure constant vigilance among UN member States by reminding them that they must:

- condemn any public, religious, economic or cultural authority that controls the lives of women and girls, and denounce regimes that do not respect women's and girls' fundamental rights;
- introduce in their statutes and actions the principle that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, culture or the political powers that be. Governments must recognize a woman's right to determine her own destiny and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function;
- implement action plans, effective policies and programs having adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women;
- grant the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and/or sexual violence.

States determined to counter the denial of rights due to sexual orientation

A recent report from Amnesty International⁷ reveals the extent of the repression exercised against homosexuals: the criminalization of homosexuality in half the countries of the world with punishments such as imprisonment, torture, whipping, stoning and death; and systematic violations of fundamental human rights. Except for the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, no international convention includes the recognition and protection of their fundamental human rights. No major UN conference—including Beijing +5—has ever managed to overcome the taboos and systematic opposition of certain States with respect to this issue. Women who experience discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation are victims of a twofold discrimination: as women and as lesbians. Since the extent of repression often makes the defence of these women very difficult and even dangerous, the World March asks that the UN and its member States:

- recognize that a person's sexual orientation must not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in international instruments;
- grant the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation.⁸

⁷ Amnesty International (UK), *Breaking the Silence: Human Rights Violations on the Basis of Sexual Orientation*, July 1997.

⁸ The Web site of the World March of Women contains a list of the groups, countries and national coordinating bodies that have given their specific support to these demands.

States capable of ensuring peace through disarmament policies (with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons) and a **UN** capable of ending all forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation.

To do away with poverty

Immediate implementation of the “new” old proposals

Mr. Annan, the World March is thoroughly convinced that urgent measures can be taken to eliminate extreme poverty immediately. Some of the measures are:

- elimination of Third World countries' debt;
- an end to structural adjustment programs;
- introduction of the Tobin tax;
- investment of 0.7% of the industrialized countries' GNP in official development assistance;
- implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and recipients of international aid

These proposals have been bandied about in international meetings for a while now. The new slant would be to implement them and to do so with particular emphasis on women since women are the poorest of the poor.

Legislating against poverty

If governments are serious in their commitment to “making the right to development a reality for everyone [including women], and to freeing the entire human race from want,” one thing they could do is adopt a legal framework and national strategies aimed at eliminating poverty (see the Appendix for details). These are strategies that should be backed, rather than directed from abroad following a hard and fast neo-liberal model dictated by international financial institutions.

Explore the idea of setting up a world council for economic and financial security to redefine the rules for a new world economic system (see the Appendix for details). The World March has put forth this proposal, among others, to stop the international political community from leaving everything to the market forces and waiting—in vain—for globalization to be profitable for all and for humanity's wealth to be shared in solidarity. Such a council could ensure that the political take precedence over the economic.

Increase the UN's proactive role vis-à-vis the World Bank, IMF and WTO

During the meeting of the World March with leaders of the World Bank and IMF, the women reiterated that these financial institutions have at least “2000 reasons to change course!” The same is true for the WTO. We are asking the UN, and you in your position as Secretary-General, to demand from these institutions who shape globalization today that they put respect for fundamental human rights first and subordinate profits and competition

to the values adopted by the Millennium Assembly: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility for managing economic and social development. These values are incompatible with projects such as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and its clones.

It would not be hopelessly utopian or naïve for the UN and its Secretary-General—backed by the women’s movement, social movements as a whole, NGOs, trade unions, associations, international aid organizations and others who share these ideas—to dedicate their energy, resources and financial means to such an endeavour.

An exemplary role for the UN

What if the UN constituted a model for all women of the world to emulate and a source of inspiration for our governments? We think, and we are repeating ourselves, that the UN must play an exemplary role in its resolve to combat poverty and all forms of violence against women—and it must do so in deed not only in declarations. It could start by being uncompromising in the face of abuses by its own personnel, its own troops during peacekeeping operations. To be raped by a soldier—even if he is a blue beret—is a crime, and no member of UN personnel may be exempt from respecting basic human rights.⁹

It is true that major progress has been made by the UN and its main agencies, under your leadership in particular, but the road still to be travelled is long indeed. What prevents you as Secretary-General from submitting all UN bodies to the principle of total equality between women and men? What prevents the UN from introducing pay equity and practising 50-50 gender representation in leadership positions and throughout the UN system? Why doesn’t the UN show humanity that it is possible to achieve equality between men and women right now?

What is stopping the UN from being not only vigilant but also adamant about decisions made? Step-by-step objectives and deadlines may well exist, but if the action is not carried out, how is it possible to prevent people from losing trust in the UN? How can people continue to believe in governments’ political will to have commitments respected? How can agencies as vital for women as UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNDP carry out their missions properly without a substantial injection of human and financial resources? How can the UN continue tolerating the failure of the United States in particular to meet its financial obligations, thereby weakening the international organization?

Conclusion

Mr. Annan, we are also addressing you as a man. As long as political leaders—who in the vast majority are men—and opinion makers—also a vast majority of men—refrain from using all their influence to distance themselves from discrimination against women, such

⁹ See for example, Anna Lithander, *Engendering the Peace Process: a Gender Approach to Dayton and Beyond* (Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation, Sweden, 2000); Cris Corren, *Gender Audit of Reconstruction Programs in South East Europe* (Urgent Action Fund and the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, New York and San Francisco, 2000).

discrimination will continue to be a “women’s problem,” whereas in fact it is a men’s and women’s problem, a societal problem. We are asking you as a man to intervene every time you possibly can and to use all forums to convince public opinion that violence against women is intolerable.

We are asking you to intervene regularly before the international community to remind heads of State that women are demanding equality now, not in 500 years’ time. This is the legacy we want to leave our daughters.

We are asking you to work tirelessly with “the women without voice or rights who in many parts of the world are forced to live in mute acceptance; the women who are the objects of multiple forms of discrimination and violence and who have been robbed of their liberty; the women who resist and who have for a long time been building a new world, free of violence and poverty.”¹⁰

Mr. Annan, the UN must be a beacon for “the little girls who have just been born and who are yet to be born; they are the inheritors of our struggles and dreams.”

You can be sure that women will continue to march.

¹⁰ World March of Women in the Year 2000, *Changing the World Step by Step: Mosaic in Tribute to Women’s Struggles Worldwide* (2000).

***DEMANDS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN IN
THE YEAR 2000***

(Summary)

TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

P-1 That all States adopt a legal framework and strategies aimed at eliminating poverty. A legal framework is an “umbrella” law with a broad scope that provides general guidelines, affirms principles and sets goals. This legal framework must be the basis for other laws that a government would want to put forth on the same subject, specifically the elimination of poverty. The term “legal framework” may vary according to the country. In some Latin American countries, for example, the term “national agenda” is used.

This legal framework must include measures to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of women through the exercise of their rights. It must include provisions for adopting laws, programs, action plans, and national projects specifically to ensure that women suffer no discrimination in their rights, and that they have access to the following:

BASIC RESOURCES

Safe water
Production and distribution of food to ensure food security for the population
Decent housing
Basic and reproductive health services
Social protection
Life-long income security

CULTURE

An end to the process of homogenization of cultures

CITIZENSHIP

Recognition of citizenship through access to relevant documents (identity card)
Equal participation in political decision-making bodies

NATURAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Ownership of family assets and the equitable distribution of inheritances
Credit

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Literacy
Vocational training
Scientific and technological knowledge

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Pay equity and equality at the national and international levels

A minimum wage

Statutory protection for work in the home and in the informal sectors of the economy

Unionization and freedom of association

Decision-making positions

The respect of labour standards (in all workplaces including free-trade zones) as adopted by the International Labour Office

EQUALITY IN TASK SHARING

States must develop incentives to promote the sharing of family responsibilities (education and care of children and domestic tasks) and must provide concrete support to families such as daycare adapted to parents' work schedules, community kitchens, programs to assist children with their schoolwork, and so on. States must therefore take all possible steps to end patriarchal values and sensitize the society towards democratization of the family structure.

Women also demand that there be an end to the process of homogenization of culture and the marketing and commercialization of women in the media to suit the needs of the market. They insist that States and international organizations take measures to counter and prevent corruption.

All acts, legislation, regulations and positions taken by governments will be assessed in the light of indicators such as:

- Human Poverty Index (HPI), put forth in the Human Development Report (1997)
- Human Development Index, put forth by the United Nations Development Programme;
- Gender-related development index (including an indicator on the representation of women in positions of power), proposed in the Human Development Report (1995)
- Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning rights of Indigenous peoples

P-2 The urgent implementation of measures such as:

- **The Tobin Tax**; revenue from the tax would be paid into a special fund:
 - earmarked for social development;
 - managed democratically by the international community as a whole;
 - according to criteria respecting fundamental human rights and democracy;
 - with equal representation of women and men;
 - to which women (who represent 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty) would have preferred access.

The investment of 0.7% of the rich countries' gross national product (GNP) in aid for developing countries;

The adequate financing and democratization of United Nations programs that are essential to defend women's and children's fundamental rights, UNIFEM (UN Women's Programme), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (UN children's fund);

An end to structural adjustment programs;

An end to cutbacks in social budgets and public services;

The rejection of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

P-3 Cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries, taking into account the principles of responsibility, transparency of information and accountability.

We demand the immediate cancellation of the debt of the 53 poorest countries on the planet, in support of the objectives of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

In the longer term, we demand the cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor the debt write-off, ensuring that this money is employed to eliminate poverty and to further the well-being of people most affected by structural adjustment programs, the majority of whom are women and girls.

P-4 The implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and the recipients of international aid.

In this scheme, 20% of the sum contributed by the donor country must be allocated to social development and 20% of the receiving government's spending must be used for social programs.

P-5 A non-monolithic world political organization, with authority over the economy and egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth (ensuring parity between poor countries and rich countries) and equal representation of women and men.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The World March expects to contribute to setting up a world economic system that is fair, participatory and socially cohesive. It puts forth a more structural demand for a **Council for Economic and Financial Security** to take charge of:

- redefining the rules of a new world financial system geared toward a fair and equitable sharing of the planet's wealth, toward social justice and the improved well-being of the world population, specifically for women who make up more than half of this population;
- exercising political control over financial markets;
- "disarming" markets, preventing them from damaging societies and systematically creating instability, insecurity and inequality;
- ensuring diligent regulation and monitoring of economic, financial and commercial organizations;
- exercising democratic control over commercial trade or, in other terms, applying "zero tolerance" on the criminal tendencies of the economy.

The Council's membership is not yet defined and must be debated at the international level. We do, however, put forth a few general guidelines in the Council's makeup that are part of the strict minimum: the Council's membership must include representatives from civil society (NGOs, unions, etc.), ensure parity between men and women and reflect parity between countries from the North and South.

Among the conditions for achieving this goal, the World March's demands for the immediate future are:

- the **elimination of all tax havens** (there are about forty havens including Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, etc.) whose very existence constitutes a form of legalized theft by allowing financiers, companies, political leaders, etc. to hide “their” money and to avoid paying taxes and obeying the laws and regulations of States;
- **the end of banking secrecy**, an anti-democratic practice that constitutes another form of legalized theft;
- **the redistribution of wealth** currently monopolized by the seven richest industrialized countries.

LEGAL ISSUES

The World March considers that the elimination of poverty is not merely a goal to reach but a right that must be implemented immediately. This is the source of our demand for a **protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**.

P-6 That the embargoes and blockades-principally affecting women and children-imposed by the major powers on many countries, be lifted.

We reaffirm our commitment to peace and to the protection of the democratic and autonomous operation of nation-states.

TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

V-1 That governments claiming to be defenders of human rights condemn any authority political, religious, economic or cultural that controls women and girls, and denounce any regime that violates their fundamental rights.

V-2 That States recognize, in their statutes and actions, that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, cultural practice or political power. Therefore, all states must recognize a woman's right to determine her own destiny, and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function.

V-3 That States implement action plans, effective policies and programs equipped with adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women.

These action plans must include the following elements in particular: prevention; public education; prosecution; "treatment" for attackers; research and statistics on all forms of violence against women; assistance and protection for victims; campaigns against pornography, procuring, and sexual assault, including child rape; non-sexist education; easier access to the criminal justice system; and training programs for judges and police.

V-4 That the United Nations bring extraordinary pressure to bear on member States to ratify without reservation and implement the conventions and covenants relating to the rights of women and children, in particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.

That States harmonize their national laws with these international human rights instruments as well as with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Cairo and Vienna Declarations, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

V-5 That, as soon as possible, protocols be adopted (and implementation mechanisms be established) for:

- the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These protocols will enable individuals and groups to bring complaints against a State. These protocols are a means to exercise international pressure on governments to implement the rights set out in these covenants and conventions. Provisions must be made for effective sanctions against non-compliant States.

V-6 That mechanisms be established to implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, taking into account recent relevant documents such as the two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (1996) concerning trafficking in women and girls and violence against migrant women.

V-7 That States recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and conform in particular to the provisions, especially those that define rape and sexual abuse as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

V-8 That all States adopt and implement disarmament policies with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons.

That all countries ratify the Convention Against Land Mines.

That the United Nations end all forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation, assure the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and bring pressure to bear on governments to enforce the observance of human rights and to resolve conflicts.

V-9 That the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and sexual violence be adopted as soon possible.

The next two demands were supported by the majority of women present at the International Preparatory meeting on the condition of a country-by-country adoption process. Some delegates were not in a position to be able to commit to publicly defending these demands in their respective countries. They remain an integral part of the World March of Women in the Year 2000. Over the next few months, the names of adopting countries will be added.

V- 10 That, based on the principle of equality of all persons, the United Nations and States of the international community recognize formally that a person's sexual orientation shall not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in the following international instruments: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

V-11 That the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation be adopted as soon as possible.

DEMANDS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN IN THE YEAR 2000

(Summary)

TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

P-1 That all States adopt a legal framework and strategies aimed at eliminating poverty. A legal framework is an “umbrella” law with a broad scope that provides general guidelines, affirms principles and sets goals. This legal framework must be the basis for other laws that a government would want to put forth on the same subject, specifically the elimination of poverty. The term “legal framework” may vary according to the country. In some Latin American countries, for example, the term “national agenda” is used.

This legal framework must include measures to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of women through the exercise of their rights. It must include provisions for adopting laws, programs, action plans, and national projects specifically to ensure that women suffer no discrimination in their rights, and that they have access to the following:

BASIC RESOURCES

- Safe water
- Production and distribution of food to ensure food security for the population
- Decent housing
- Basic and reproductive health services
- Social protection
- Life-long income security

CULTURE

- An end to the process of homogenization of cultures

CITIZENSHIP

- Recognition of citizenship through access to relevant documents (identity card)
- Equal participation in political decision-making bodies

NATURAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- Ownership of family assets and the equitable distribution of inheritances
- Credit

EDUCATION RESOURCES

- Literacy

Vocational training
Scientific and technological knowledge

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Pay equity and equality at the national and international levels

A minimum wage

Statutory protection for work in the home and in the informal sectors of the economy

Unionization and freedom of association

Decision-making positions

The respect of labour standards (in all workplaces including free-trade zones) as adopted by the International Labour Office

EQUALITY IN TASK SHARING

States must develop incentives to promote the sharing of family responsibilities (education and care of children and domestic tasks) and must provide concrete support to families such as daycare adapted to parents' work schedules, community kitchens, programs to assist children with their schoolwork, and so on. States must therefore take all possible steps to end patriarchal values and sensitize the society towards democratization of the family structure.

Women also demand that there be an end to the process of homogenization of culture and the marketing and commercialization of women in the media to suit the needs of the market. They insist that States and international organizations take measures to counter and prevent corruption.

All acts, legislation, regulations and positions taken by governments will be assessed in the light of indicators such as:

- Human Poverty Index (HPI), put forth in the Human Development Report (1997)
- Human Development Index, put forth by the United Nations Development Programme;
- Gender-related development index (including an indicator on the representation of women in positions of power), proposed in the Human Development Report (1995)
- Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning rights of Indigenous peoples

P-2 The urgent implementation of measures such as:

- **The Tobin Tax;** revenue from the tax would be paid into a special fund:
 - earmarked for social development;
 - managed democratically by the international community as a whole;
 - according to criteria respecting fundamental human rights and democracy;
 - with equal representation of women and men;
 - to which women (who represent 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty) would have preferred access.

The investment of 0.7% of the rich countries' gross national product (GNP) in aid for developing countries;

The adequate financing and democratization of United Nations programs that are essential to defend women's and children's fundamental rights, UNIFEM (UN Women's Programme), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (UN children's fund);

An end to structural adjustment programs;

An end to cutbacks in social budgets and public services;
The rejection of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

P-3 Cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries, taking into account the principles of responsibility, transparency of information and accountability.

We demand the immediate cancellation of the debt of the 53 poorest countries on the planet, in support of the objectives of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

In the longer term, we demand the cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor the debt write-off, ensuring that this money is employed to eliminate poverty and to further the well-being of people most affected by structural adjustment programs, the majority of whom are women and girls.

P-4 The implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and the recipients of international aid.

In this scheme, 20% of the sum contributed by the donor country must be allocated to social development and 20% of the receiving government's spending must be used for social programs.

P-5 A non-monolithic world political organization, with authority over the economy and egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth (ensuring parity between poor countries and rich countries) and equal representation of women and men.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The World March expects to contribute to setting up a world economic system that is fair, participatory and socially cohesive. It puts forth a more structural demand for a **Council for Economic and Financial Security** to take charge of:

- redefining the rules of a new world financial system geared toward a fair and equitable sharing of the planet's wealth, toward social justice and the improved well-being of the world population, specifically for women who make up more than half of this population;
- exercising political control over financial markets;
- "disarming" markets, preventing them from damaging societies and systematically creating instability, insecurity and inequality;
- ensuring diligent regulation and monitoring of economic, financial and commercial organizations;
- exercising democratic control over commercial trade or, in other terms, applying "zero tolerance" on the criminal tendencies of the economy.

The Council's membership is not yet defined and must be debated at the international level. We do, however, put forth a few general guidelines in the Council's makeup that are part of the strict minimum: the Council's membership must include representatives from civil society (NGOs, unions, etc.), ensure parity between men and women and reflect parity between countries from the North and South.

Among the conditions for achieving this goal, the World March's demands for the immediate future are:

- the **elimination of all tax havens** (there are about forty havens including Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, etc.) whose very existence constitutes a form of legalized theft by allowing financiers, companies, political leaders, etc. to hide "their" money and to avoid paying taxes and obeying the laws and regulations of States;
- **the end of banking secrecy**, an anti-democratic practice that constitutes another form of legalized theft;
- **the redistribution of wealth** currently monopolized by the seven richest industrialized countries.

LEGAL ISSUES

The World March considers that the elimination of poverty is not merely a goal to reach but a right that must be implemented immediately. This is the source of our demand for a **protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**.

P-6 That the embargoes and blockades-principally affecting women and children-imposed by the major powers on many countries, be lifted.

We reaffirm our commitment to peace and to the protection of the democratic and autonomous operation of nation-states.

TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

V-1 That governments claiming to be defenders of human rights condemn any authority political, religious, economic or cultural that controls women and girls, and denounce any regime that violates their fundamental rights.

V-2 That States recognize, in their statutes and actions, that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, cultural practice or political power. Therefore, all states must recognize a woman's right to determine her own destiny, and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function.

V-3 That States implement action plans, effective policies and programs equipped with adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women.

These action plans must include the following elements in particular: prevention; public education; prosecution; "treatment" for attackers; research and statistics on all forms of violence against women; assistance and protection for victims; campaigns against pornography, procuring, and sexual assault, including child rape; non-sexist education; easier access to the criminal justice system; and training programs for judges and police.

V-4 That the United Nations bring extraordinary pressure to bear on member States to ratify without reservation and implement the conventions and covenants relating to the rights of women and children, in particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.

That States harmonize their national laws with these international human rights instruments as well as with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Cairo and Vienna Declarations, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

V-5 That, as soon as possible, protocols be adopted (and implementation mechanisms be established) for:

- the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These protocols will enable individuals and groups to bring complaints against a State. These protocols are a means to exercise international pressure on governments to implement the rights

set out in these covenants and conventions. Provisions must be made for effective sanctions against non-compliant States.

V-6 That mechanisms be established to implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, taking into account recent relevant documents such as the two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (1996) concerning trafficking in women and girls and violence against migrant women.

V-7 That States recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and conform in particular to the provisions, especially those that define rape and sexual abuse as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

V-8 That all States adopt and implement disarmament policies with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons.

That all countries ratify the Convention Against Land Mines.

That the United Nations end all forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation, assure the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and bring pressure to bear on governments to enforce the observance of human rights and to resolve conflicts.

V-9 That the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and sexual violence be adopted as soon possible.

The next two demands were supported by the majority of women present at the International Preparatory meeting on the condition of a country-by-country adoption process. Some delegates were not in a position to be able to commit to publicly defending these demands in their respective countries. They remain an integral part of the World March of Women in the Year 2000. Over the next few months, the names of adopting countries will be added.

V- 10 That, based on the principle of equality of all persons, the United Nations and States of the international community recognize formally that a person's sexual orientation shall not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in the following international instruments: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

V-11 That the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation be adopted as soon as possible.