

Nordic Forum Malmö 2014

- New Action on Women's Rights

The Nordic Women's Movement issues invitation to Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 – New Actions on Women's Rights. The conference is a continuation of Nordic conferences held in Oslo 1988 and in Turku (Åbo) 1994. Thousands of activists, organizations, politicians and other stakeholders discussed both national and international strategies and issues of women's empowerment and gender equality. The results were substantive suggestions to promote equality between women and men.

Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 is a forward looking power event to mark our determination to jointly develop a society of equal opportunities, where women enjoy their full human rights be it in the Nordic countries, in Europe and in the World.

Background

The United Nations conducted the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. The governments of UN member states adopted the Platform of Action. It was a victory for women's organizations and built on worldwide efforts by women's organizations both regionally and internationally, as in the Nordic countries, and showed the strong determination to reach agreements. The member state governments who signed the plan of action, with its twelve articles, undertook to implement the CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women, through more active and transparent actions.

Since 1995 no additional world conference on women's rights has been conducted. Over the past few years voices have been raised in favor of a conference, but there have also been warnings about the risk of organizing a conference that could open up the Beijing Platform of Action for renegotiations. There is a general lack of confidence that governments' of member states would uphold their previous commitments, but that instead women's rights and living conditions would be substantively diminished. Women's right to a decent development and to decide over their own bodies and sexuality, remain controversial issues which unleash endless negotiations without leading to results. The global development towards equality is being questioned, as are principles of universal human rights and democracy. To realize that today we are in a situation where in the inter-governmental negotiations and summits within the UN, the principles and languages, agreed 20 years ago, are at risk of being watered down or removed, is a sign that international development is not progressing. The latest such proof is the inability of UN member states to adopted agreed conclusions at the 2012 Committee on the Status of Women. Another example is the weak language about women and equality included in the final document of the Rio +20 meeting.

Women's human rights and equal opportunities meet with active resistance with reference to traditions, religions and culture. Rights are conditioned and surrounded by limitations. But

women's existence is also put under pressure by economic, environmental, and political crisis. It has repeatedly been shown that women suffer more negative effects from different crises, especially poor women. The world has seen important changes through globalization and new technology developments, which per se entail important positive opportunities. However, the models and solutions being discussed to solve global problems and use the positive potential often lack the gender perspective. There is an imperative need to develop these aspects.

Of utmost importance in the next few years is the Millennium Development Goals process and the definition of the development agenda beyond 2015. During the UN conference in Rio 2012, work on global sustainable goals were launched, the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Millennium Development sub-goals, which have no chance of being achieved, are those involving women's rights and equality. The keys to Sustainable Development are to promote women's empowerment and women's rights. The Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 will be a milestone for Nordic women and women's organizations. Regardless of a UN decision on a fifth World Conference on Women, the Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 will identify challenges and opportunities to implement the Beijing Platform of Action and achieve equal opportunities, development and peace.

The Nordic countries are facing important challenges in gender policy and women's rights. The Beijing Platform of Action established explicit, clear goals which the Nordic countries have yet to live up to. Important shortcomings are present in such crucial areas as Violence against Women, in the Labor Market and Equal pay for equal work, Women's Economic Self-sufficiency, Women's influence and decision-making power, as well as the situation for Girls and Elderly women. Current economic, social and ecological crisis impact negatively on women's living conditions and opportunities to live with equal opportunities, in the Nordic countries.

Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 will provide women and women's movement in Nordic countries, the opportunity and the space to formulate clear recommendations and demands to governments and other politicians. It is not evident that equality is regarded as a joint ambition and a continuing process towards new goals. It is thus important that Nordic countries join together to analyze the present situation, define the agenda and take stock of challenges in the struggle towards equal opportunities.

Organization

The Swedish Women's Lobby took the initiative to hold a preparatory conference in November 2011, which gathered some fifty representatives from Nordic organizations working for gender equality and women's rights. As a result a Nordic Steering Group was created and mandated to continue the initiative and planning of the Nordic Forum Malmö 2014. The following organizations make up the Steering Group:

- The Swedish Women's Lobby, Sweden (Sveriges Kvinnolobby)
- The Women's Council in Denmark (Kvinderådet, Danmark)

- FOKUS – Forum for Women and Development, Norway (FOKUS – Forum for Kvinner og Utviklingsspørsmål, Norge)
- The Women's Shelter, Norway (Krisesentersekretariatet, Norge)
- The Coalition of Finnish Women's Association NYTKIS
- Federation of Icelandic Women's Societies, Iceland (Kvenfélagasamband Islands)
- Women's Rights Association of Islands (Kvenréttindafélag Islands)

Over and above the joint mandate for planning and coordinating the forum, these organizations have undertaken the role of national coordinators and promoter of participation by national organizations and event organizers. The conference will be carried out in close cooperation with Nordic governments, the Nordic Council of Ministers, Region Öresund, Region Skåne and the City of Malmö. MCI has been engaged to act as Professional Conference Organizers (PCO) and will be responsible for practical, administrative and logistical arrangements. The Malmö Conference Bureau will also help arrange the conference. The Conference Centre is in Hyllie and activities will be concentrated at Malmö Arena and Malmö Fair. Invitations will be issued by the Nordic Women's movements, and it is expected that the conference will gather 15,000 participants.

Objectives of the Conference

Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 – New Actions on Women's Human Rights will:

- Build commitment and understanding around the challenges and opportunities of gender policies within the Nordic region.
- Promote and develop the Nordic debate about women's human rights, locally, regionally and globally.
- Formulate demands and specific proposals to the Nordic governments and politicians concerning future gender policies.
- Develop networks for exchange of experiences among activists, researchers, organizations, authorities, the private sector and the general public.
- Disseminate information on CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action.
- Formulate recommendations for future strategies towards gender sensitive sustainable development and the successor arrangements to the Millennium Development Goals 2015.
- Open up new ground through engaging, involving and exploiting the competencies and new thinking of the generation who has grown up since the World Conference in Beijing 1995.

- Strengthen the organization and effectiveness of Nordic Women's Movement and further develop its international perspective and commitment.

Form

The conference is geared towards activists, organizations, groups, political parties, private sector, authorities, the general public and other stakeholders in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Åland and the rest of the World. Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 will contain different types of programmatic activities:

- A. An Official Programme will provide the general framework for the conference according to the initiators and organizers. The Official Programme will run over three days and will conduct discussions on the global challenges for Women's Rights in general and in particular in connection with CEDAW and the Beijing Platform of Action. The goal is to formulate clear demands and calls for action directed to the Nordic governments and politicians on future policies for women and gender equality as an integral part of policies on sustainable development, strengthening democratic development and global political processes, at the national, regional and global levels.
- B. Activists, organizations, groups, political parties, the private sector, authorities, and other stakeholders will be invited to arrange seminars, workshops, lectures, presentations, happenings, cultural events, exhibitions, and other events. The organizations who conduct such programmes are doing so in their own rights and define direction and programme content. Together they make up the complex and manifold political expressions of the commitment to gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men, which the Conference caters for.
- C. An Open-Space will be provided at the Conference, where individuals and groups can initiate discussion around a particular issue which has been raised or is being discussed during the Conference.

The different sections in the programme will thus provide a gathering of anything from 5 to 15,000 participants. Nordic Forum Malmö 2014 contains closed sessions, open meeting places and activities geared towards the general public.

The Conference shall be participant-driven and engage every participant actively.

Themes of the Conference (to be developed)

Feminist economy – economic and social development

Women's and Girls bodies – sexuality, reproductive rights and health

Women in the workplace, equal pay, education and career

Violence against women and girls

Environment, climate and sustainable development

Care and social welfare

Peace and Security

Political participation and development

Gender integration and gender equality in operations

Feminism in the future in the Nordic region and the organization of women's movement

Vulnerable women and women from minority groups

New technologies and media

The deliberations will result in a number of recommendations and explicit suggestions and demands which will be presented to governments. Our ambition is to increase the conscientiousness around local, Nordic and international women's rights and gender issues among all participants and create distinct engagement for future gender equality policies and challenges.

In addition, an important cultural programme will be on offer, with exhibitions, music, performance, dance and theatre geared towards both participants in the Conference and visitors to Malmö and Region Öresund. The event will have a large impact and will be beneficial for the region, the city and the people living there. The Conference's large inaugural party will take place in Central Malmö and be open to everybody.

Time and location

The Conference is planned to take place from Thursday 12 June though Sunday 15 June 2014. The Conference will be held in Malmö, and the city has offered close cooperation for the conduct of the Conference. The geographical position of Malmö, and its excellent communications, are considered an advantage and a condition for the conduct of Conference.

Financing

In cooperation with MCI, contracted as a Professional Conference Organizer, a detailed budget for the event will be elaborated. The estimates are that costs will amount to around SEK 40 million. The Conference will require inter-governmental funding, contributions from the Nordic governments, support from the City of Malmö and the City of Copenhagen, Region Scania, Region Öresund, Nordic Ministerial Council, authorities, foundations and funds. Sponsors are expected to contribute funding to the Conference. Important contributions will come from organizers' and participants' fees. Travel and lodging will be paid for by

participants. In addition to the budgetary posts, a substantive amount of voluntary work will be carried out by the Nordic Women's Movements and others.

Secretariat

A Conference Secretariat has been established under the auspices of the Swedish Womens' Lobby:

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