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## **Beijing Platform for action 30 years and beyond: A critical review and future direction for Burma/Myanmar**

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### **Introduction**

Our experiences on engaging **Beijing Platform for action** since the Beijing + 5 WLB attended CSW. I have a chance to attend the Beijing+10 to present the situation of young women in education, social issues, and politics as my very first international advocacy experience. I learned a great deal from the trip and built networks with women's organizations worldwide. After the trip, we enhanced the work of the Women's League of Burma as it related to 12 critical areas of concern essential for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including poverty, education, health, violence, and political participation, specifically engaging at the decision-making levels.

### **Our Achievements**

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) was born from a shared vision—a commitment to justice, equality, and a federal democratic union. Over 25 years, WLB has evolved into a pillar of feminist federalism, uniting women from diverse ethnic and political backgrounds in a shared struggle for dignity and rights. However, this journey has not been easy.

From the margins of society—conflict zones, refugee camps, and exile—WLB has confronted immense challenges. Limited resources, gender-based violence, and systematic human rights violations have tested our commitment. Yet, these adversities have also strengthened our determination. We have navigated these barriers through resilience and solidarity, empowering women to lead within their communities and on the national stage.

When WLB was founded in 1999, it brought together 12 women's organizations, each rooted in unique cultural and political experiences. The decision to declare WLB a political organization in 2002 was groundbreaking, establishing women as key actors in peacebuilding and governance. For over two decades, we have successfully advocated for women's participation in political spaces, including achieving critical milestones such as gender quotas in legislative processes.

We, at WLB, have remained steadfast in our conviction that dismantling societal patriarchal systems that result in gender inequality is as crucial as ending military dictatorship. WLB's international advocacy is equally important. By amplifying local voices on a global scale, we have highlighted the plight of women in Burma and held perpetrators accountable through international mechanisms. Through our submissions to the UN CEDAW Committee and by

organizing the International Tribunal on Crimes Against the Women of Burma, we have established ourselves as a force for justice and accountability.

### **Resisting Patriarchy and Injustice Through Resilience**

WLB mobilizes women across the country around three key issue areas: gendering political spaces, advocating for justice and accountability at the international level, and building the feminist movement.

Militarization and authoritarianism further erode the space for civilians. The rise of military regimes, violent repression of protests, and digital surveillance have turned civic participation into a dangerous act. In Burma, women human rights defenders are leading the pro-democracy movement, advocating for equality, inclusiveness, and self-determination for diverse ethnic communities despite systematic violence and oppression by the military junta. Military regimes also lead to poverty, especially for women who struggle amid ongoing conflict and the diversion of resources toward military spending.

In the case of Burma/Myanmar, the catastrophic policies of the military junta have resulted in financial hardship. The collective organising of women-led organisations and feminist leaders challenges the very structures that uphold inequality. Repressing civic space is not only an assault on women's rights, but also an attack on democracy, justice, and the potential for a future where all people live with dignity.

In Burma/Myanmar, women encounter distinct threats and challenges to their peace and security. These challenges stem from various factors, including conflict, displacement, social norms, and unequal power dynamics. Here are some key threats and challenges that women face regarding peace and security:

***Armed Conflict and Violence:*** Burma/Myanmar has experienced long-standing armed conflicts in various regions. Women and girls often bear the brunt of the violence associated with these conflicts, including sexual violence, human trafficking, forced labor, and forced recruitment.

***Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):*** SGBV is a significant threat to women's security in Burma/Myanmar. It includes rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and forced prostitution. Conflict and displacement exacerbate the risk of sexual gender-based violence as women and girls become more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

***Displacement and Refugee Crises:*** Ongoing conflicts in Burma/Myanmar have led to significant internal displacement and refugee flows. Displaced women face multiple

challenges, including limited access to basic services, loss of livelihoods, and increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

***Discriminatory Laws and Practices:*** Women in Burma/Myanmar face various forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, custom, tradition and social status. Discriminatory laws and practices restrict their rights and access to justice, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, undermining their overall security and well-being.

***Limited Participation in Peace Processes:*** Women's participation and representation in peace processes in Burma/Myanmar remain limited. Their voices and perspectives are often marginalized or excluded, hindering the development of inclusive and sustainable peace agreements.

***Human Trafficking & migration:*** Burma/Myanmar serves as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, which includes trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour. Women and girls, especially those from marginalized communities, face a heightened risk of becoming victims of human trafficking networks while migrating to Thailand, China, Japan, and Malaysia due to conflict.

***Political Instability and Repression:*** Burma/Myanmar has faced political instability and repression, impacting the overall security of its population. Women human rights defenders, activists, and journalists frequently encounter sexual harassment, intimidation, imprisonment, and murder for their advocacy work.

***Access to Justice:*** Women in Burma/Myanmar face barriers in accessing justice, including limited legal awareness, corruption, lack of gender-sensitive mechanisms, and social stigma surrounding reporting incidents of violence. This hampers their ability to seek redress for human rights violations and perpetuates a culture of impunity.

***Social-cultural norms:*** Women bear a triple burden: caring for the family, engaging in community matters, and earning a livelihood. This prolonged challenge hinders women's active participation in political, security, and public affairs.

Tackling these threats and challenges requires collaborative efforts from the government, civil society organizations, and the international community. It involves promoting women's rights, gender equality, ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace processes, strengthening legal frameworks, providing support services for survivors of violence, and addressing the root causes of conflict and discrimination.

On behalf of the women community, I therefore call for the following:

**Recommendations:**

- Deny the military junta, recognition as the rightful representative of the people of Burma/Myanmar, including as the Permanent Mission to the Republic of the Union of Burma/Myanmar to the United Nations;
- To effectively and immediately end military impunity in Burma/Myanmar by advocating for an immediate referral of the military junta to the international criminal court;
- An end to militarization and authoritarian repression. Governments must demilitarise public life, end state-sponsored violence against activists, and prioritise human security over military spending;
- There must be a shift in resources to the people and power to feminist and grassroots movements. Development financing must stop fuelling corporations and instead go directly to the movements driving transformative change;
- To support strengthening the women's peace and security framework and its implementation in all levels;
- Ensure all funded projects include gender-responsive budgeting to adequately address the specific needs of women and marginalized groups; and to fulfill BpfA.

Thank you for your time and meaningful attention.