

PRESS STATEMENT

25 YEARS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION; WHERE ARE WE?

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, which presented a turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action recognises women's rights as human rights and sets out a comprehensive roadmap for achieving equality between women and men.

2020 is a year of many milestones. 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, 5 years since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 25 years of the 1995 Uganda Constitution and 25 years of the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) championing the cause for gender equality in Uganda.

The Government of Uganda is a signatory to several international and regional human rights instruments that affirm women's right to participate in decision making and leadership. These include; the Beijing Platform of Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 1995 Uganda Constitution reaffirms equality and women's leadership in Article 33 (4) which states that "Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities." Article 32 provides for affirmative action "in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them." The National Gender Policy and National Gender Action Plan provide strategic guidance to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) about mainstreaming gender. Also, worth noting is the Electoral Commission Gender Strategy (2019) which highlights the steps the EC plans to take to mainstream gender in the Commission and the entire election cycle.

The numbers of women in the political sphere in Uganda are improving and show promise. However, when one turns to the civil service and private sectors, the numbers of women in decision making remain abysmally low. Gender inequalities persist, obstacles to the advancement of women are still intact and progress is slow. Women join the workforce in both the public service and private sphere in big numbers but the percentage of drastically dwindles as one moves up the ladder.

We call upon Government to account for the global and national commitments on gender equality and other sector-specific policies. Government should firmly take deliberate rather than ad-hoc efforts to address gender imbalances in human resource recruitment and career development across all sectors.

The Equal Opportunities Commission should intensify its efforts of ensuring inclusion and assessment of gender balance in staffing as part and parcel of the indicators for the awarding of Gender and Equity Certificates to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

Evidence shows that the numbers of women contesting on direct seats is low. As Uganda gears up for the 2020/21 elections, it is important that women are able to participate not only on affirmative action but also on direct seats at local and national level.

As we celebrate 25 years of progress, FOWODE continues to advocate for inclusive democratic and governance processes, and ensuring that *no woman is left behind*.

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