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Beijing+10: Accelerate rather than impede women's human rights

Governments meeting at a UN women's conference should seize the chance to accelerate work for women's human rights, rather than becoming embroiled in petty politics, said Amnesty International today.

"Ministers from around the world are gathered to review their progress on the commitments they made to women ten years ago," said Hilary Fisher, Director of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign. "They must use this unique opportunity to rise above political considerations and narrow domestic agendas to uphold the promises to women and girls made ten years ago to make women's human rights a reality."

"Thousands of human rights activists have traveled here hoping to work from a stronger base when they return having shared the challenges and opportunities they face in stopping violence against women," said Hilary Fisher. "The very least governments can do is to reaffirm unconditionally the commitments they made ten years ago. Adding negative and unnecessary conditions to the reaffirmation, as the US is doing, threatens to distract delegates' efforts from the real task at hand."

Amnesty International welcomed the strong message to governments from Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who said: *"Efforts to restrict or dilute women's rights must be vehemently opposed. This session of CSW should result in a resounding reaffirmation of a political commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of Beijing plus 5. It should also provide a vision of equality for women in the 21st century and elaborate bold actions to translate this vision into reality."*

Amnesty International is attending the conference in order to lobby governments as part of its Stop Violence Against Women campaign. In a verbal statement to the plenary session of the Commission for the Status on Women, the organization stressed that violence against women continued unabated and that governments needed to think of the effect of their current actions on future generations of women.

According to the World Health Organization, one in three women in the world -- one billion women -- will suffer from serious abuse, sexual assault, rape or coerced sex at least once in her life.

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