

**Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) \* Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) \*  
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)**

**For Immediate Release:**

March 4, 2005

**Contact:**

Charlotte Bunch, CWGL, 732-407-8497  
June Zeitlin, WEDO, 917-921-1932  
Jodi Jacobson, CHANGE, 301-257-7897  
Ketayoun Darvich-Kodjouri, 202-997-1084

**Women's Leaders Welcome U.S. Decision  
To Rejoin Global Consensus for Women's Human Rights**

**NEW YORK, March 4** – Leaders of prominent women's organizations today welcomed the U.S. decision to withdraw all its demands for controversial changes to a new United Nations declaration affirming women's human rights. They called for a new focus on advancing women's health, development and rights worldwide.

"We applaud the U.S. decision to rejoin the international community in support of women's human rights," said Jodi Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Health and Gender Equity. "We regret only that it took so long."

The controversy erupted at a UN gathering of government delegations here to revisit women's progress since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women met in Beijing in 1995. The U.S. delegation stalled consensus on reaffirming the 1995 Platform for Action by offering language specifying that the Platform conferred no new international rights, including no right to abortion.

But today the United States backed down. The head of the U.S. delegation to the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Ellen Sauerbrey, told reporters the delegation would withdraw its proposed amendment. She said she was "pleased that other countries agreed" with the U.S. position and the amendment was therefore not needed.

"They are declaring victory and going home, as in Vietnam," said Charlotte Bunch, executive director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. "The reality is that they heard loud and clear the voices of 6,000 women here saying 'No,' echoing millions of other women worldwide."

Bunch added that the U.S. language "was completely unnecessary, an effort to inject U.S. politics into a broad international consensus. It distracted everyone here from the real issues. We hope they will now join us in pressing to make sure that women's rights are recognized as human rights everywhere and that the Beijing platform is a critical step to realize those rights."

June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) expressed hope that the CSW review of changes in women's status since the 1995 Beijing conference would now focus on renewing the drive to implement the Platform for Action. "We are hoping soon to pour the champagne in celebration that the United States is returning to leadership on women's rights," she said. "Our real crisis is that the promises of Beijing have not yet been fulfilled. We need a major escalation in political will for that to happen, and Washington could provide that, if it wants to."

###

More information on the United Nations Beijing+10 review is on [www.PLANetWIRE.org](http://www.PLANetWIRE.org).