



**Concept Note
CSW69/Beijing+30 Official Side Event:**

**From Faith to Action: Women Religious Leaders Turning the Commitment of
Beijing Platform for Action into Reality**

**Monday, 17 March 2025
from 4:45 – 6:00 PM at Conference Room E, The UN Headquarters in New York**

A. Background

Over the past several years, the international community has witnessed a growing backlash against fundamental human rights, including political and civil rights. This backlash can be notably seen against women's rights and the broader gender equality agenda. From discriminatory laws and social norms to targeted violence against politically-active women, these barriers prevent women, especially young women, from advancing into higher forms of leadership. Despite these barriers, women of faith have been integral to advancing change. During this turbulent time, many religious leaders have been at the forefront of their communities in shaping and advancing women's leadership and participation in public life.

Women of faith are key advocates for inclusive development in both their presence and practice as their work necessitates the intersection of the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief and the right to non-discrimination in the context of gender. The multidimensional threats of today require comprehensive, contextually sensitive responses designed by and for those most affected. Women of faith are uniquely positioned to build trust across communities, catalyze public support, and emphasize a whole-of-society approach to advance inclusive and sustainable development.

In Indonesia, the establishment of the Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) has revolutionized the discourse on women's rights in Islam by introducing a transformative approach to Islamic studies. This methodology places women's experiences and knowledge at the center of religious interpretation, creating a foundation for progressive change. KUPI has been a groundbreaking force in

advocating for raising the minimum age of marriage and ending sexual violence. Similarly, women of faith in Africa have played a pivotal role in advancing women's rights by bridging the divide between cultural traditions, religious teachings, and gender equality. In Kenya, the establishment of the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) has encouraged the growth of women religious leaders to network and strengthen the dissemination of open religious interpretations in response to gender-based and sexual violence, female genital mutilation, and violent extremism. In Nigeria, women ulama are leading a counter-narrative movement, transforming the discourse from Boko Haram to Boko Halal, by promoting religious interpretations that advocate for women and encouraging communities to support victims of sexual slavery perpetrated by extremist groups. This movement also mobilizes the empathy of religious leaders to care for women victims and encourages communities to accept survivors of sexual violence as an integral part of society that needs to be rehabilitated.

In line with the priority theme of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) on the thirtieth anniversary of their adoption to better advance the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, The Government of Indonesia in collaboration with The JISRA partners will host a 75-minute dialogue to explore the contributions of women and young women of faith in advancing gender equality and women empowerment to achieve sustainable development. Bringing together participants from diverse national and religious contexts, the discussion will highlight their efforts in addressing the twelve critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. The event will serve as a platform to exchange best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions, demonstrating how interdimensional approaches can promote gender equality and uphold freedom of religious belief.

The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) is an international, interreligious partnership, supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comprising 50 civil society organizations across Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and Uganda, with supporting advocacy in Europe and the USA. JISRA works to advance peaceful and just societies where all individuals enjoy Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). JISRA partners and consortium partners, including AMAN Indonesia, Mensen met een Missie, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Tearfund and the Faith to Action Network, have played a transformative role in shaping inclusive policies, advocating for gender-responsive reforms, and fostering interfaith collaborations that advance gender equality and human rights.

This initiative underscores the transformative potential of engaging female religious leaders in driving social change. By fostering inclusive interpretations of religious texts, women of faith challenge the notion that religion is an obstacle to equality, instead using it as a tool for reform. As the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action is celebrated, the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) provides an opportunity to showcase these achievements and inspire further collaboration in advancing gender justice globally.

B. Objective

There are three objectives of the side event that we can gain:

- 1) To showcase the pivotal role women of faith play in addressing the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration, particularly in promoting gender equality, combating violence against women, and advancing education and health rights for women and girls.
- 2) To provide a platform for sharing successful initiatives and transformative approaches from various points of views, such as Asia, particularly Indonesia and Africa, where women of faith have driven social change and fostered gender justice within religious and cultural frameworks.
- 3) To strengthen global networks and partnerships between women of faith, policymakers, and civil society organizations, promoting the integration of inclusive religious perspectives in advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and achieving the goals of the Beijing Declaration.

C. Scope of the Side Event

Rather than structure the event traditionally as a panel with isolated remarks from each panelist, this event will foster dialogue amongst the panelists. There will be brief welcoming remarks and introductions and then the speakers will have an opportunity to share which focus areas have been most relevant to their work before transitioning to a discussion with participants asking questions of each other to create a more genuine exchange.

D. Agenda (tentative)

Time	Agenda
4.45 – 4.48 PM	Opening Session – Moderator Introduction <i>[The moderator introduces the agenda, theme, and significance of the event]</i>
4.48 – 4.54 (@3 minutes /speakers)	Welcoming Remarks <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ambassador Hari Prabowo, <i>Charge d’Affaires, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations, New York</i>2. Patimasang, <i>Special Advisor to the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection of The Republic of Indonesia</i>

Time	Agenda
4.54 – 5.00 PM (6 minutes)	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>Beijing+30: Advancing Gender Equality Through Faith and Action, Bandana Rana, a member of CEDAW Committee</p>
5.00 – 5.25 (5 minutes/ speakers and discussant)	<p>Main Session: Panel Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women’s Voices as Basis of Fatwa Formulation: “Keadilan Hakiki” Conceptual Framework, Dr. Nur Rofiah, <i>Member of MM KUPI, Indonesia</i> 2. Reshaping narratives on gender justice: Learning from KUPI, Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah, <i>Country Representatives AMAN Indonesia, Indonesia</i> 3. Young Women at the Forefront of Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Gender Equality, Djeneiba Toure, <i>Member of Muslim Youth Union of Mali, Interreligious Council for Peace, Mali.</i> 4. Unleashing the Power of Women and Youth in Transforming Faith Communities and Building Peace, Sr. Veronica Ifeyinwa Onyeanisi, <i>Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, Nigeria</i> • Discussant: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Asma Barlas, PhD, <i>Professor Emerita of Politics, Ithaca College, New York, USA</i> <p><i>Moderator: Gina Dias, Regional Programme Manager Africa, Peacemaker Network, Kenya.</i></p>
5.25 – 5.57 PM (32 minutes)	<p>Q&A Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to the audience for questions directed to the panelists and discussants.
5.57 – 6.00 PM (5 minutes)	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Summary of key insights and a call to action</p> <p>Rick van der Woud – CEO Mensen met een Missie, <i>Lead of The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA)</i></p>