

## NAM summit in Egypt

**An opportunity to deal with women affected by the current crisis**

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The Nam movement offered a political umbrella for forging solidarity on many issues and subjects especially related to the excluded, the discriminated against, to budge themselves out of what is conventionally called the modernization project on development co-operation, the Marshall Plan driven proposals from the UN in the 60s and the 70s. NAM's role in nudging women out of that trap, is worth recalling, as it points to where the movement can find a role for itself in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The NAM's model of the path to women's equality departed from UN strategies; the UN system at this time saw "women's status" as a social development issue that was not connected to the larger context of international development. Within the UN women were still viewed as resources whose potential could be tapped, not as political and economic agents in the development of their countries. But the NAM movement and gatherings offered a space where the women from these former colonies could reassert the standpoint that they were active agents in their nations, contributors to their country's progress, not just consumers of *social services*.

As a result of dialogues in conference venues, the NAM saw women's role in development as an international and political issue, in contrast to its earlier conceptualization of issues relating to women's status as social or cultural phenomena.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Summit being held this week in Egypt has also recognized the importance of drawing on women in leadership to articulate the concerns of women , by arranging a "summit " on the economic crisis and women . Data appearing from all corners of the world

reveal that women are the worst hit by the recession , as they have engaged with their economies in deep and difficult ways in order to provide sustenance to their households, - the poorer the more the engagement . Yet this is not fully articulated in the declarations nor in the bail outs and stimulus packages , except in providing social safety nets, where as those women want economic protection and support .

The first ladies summit by drawing attention to such a crisis in the lives of their less privileged sisters can make a difference - and perhaps if India would offer to host a NAM women's conference , addressed to the role and needs of women in NAM countries , this aspect of women's roles in their political economies would receive the recognition and the healing touch that they deserve .

NAM could set up a Women's Commission to reflect on these phenomena and prepare a report, such that women's location in the political economies can be understood and collective efforts made to prevent undesirable exploitation . The Commission's report could then be discussed at a NAM conference on Women and Development, and India could host this conference, as 25 years after its 1985 New Delhi conference, which was the last on women that NAM held ..thus showing that the NAM configuration of nations, can provide the healing touch, even more tangibly than the United Nations, and other multilateral agencies, like the WTO which have become uneven playing fields.