

Press Release

WOMEN LEADERS RESOLVE FOR RECOGNITION IN COPENHAGEN AGREEMENT

Copenhagen, 4 December 2009—Saving the lives of millions of women and children could depend on whether gender equality is reflected in the final outcome agreement of the globally anticipated international climate change conference (COP 15) set to begin December 7th in Copenhagen, Denmark.

“The only way we can save humanity from this crisis is if women are recognized as effective actors in the final climate change outcome,” said Lorena Aguilar, Senior Gender Advisor for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

IUCN is part of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), an alliance of 13 United Nations and 25 civil society organizations that has been providing technical language and training on the connections between gender and climate change to negotiators throughout the year.

An analysis of 141 countries revealed that natural disasters, and their subsequent impacts, on average killed more women than men in societies where women’s economic and social rights were not protected. The death rate for women in the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone and flood was almost five times higher than men.

Building on the achievement of 43 references to gender in the negotiating text earlier this year—with eight currently remaining—the GGCA plans to hold multiple events throughout the two week conference to raise awareness that women’s leadership is central to climate solutions.

A press conference in the Bella Center headlining gender experts starts the week at noon on December 7th. An ARTPORT exhibit with world-renowned artists, *(Re-) Cycles of Paradise*, opens on December 8th at the DGI-Byen. *Theater for Africa*, celebrated for its work during the anti-apartheid movement, will stage dynamic street theater performances of *Want it Done, Ask a Woman* below the Bella metro station.

The GGCA will also host a monumental photo shoot featuring a hundred women leaders taking a stand for climate change. This will follow a high-level side event in which the President of Finland, President of Liberia, Development Minister of Denmark, a senior US representative and other well-recognized officials will pledge commitments to gender equality in the Copenhagen agreement.

“The agreement could be an historic moment for saving the lives of entire communities, countries and regions; when women are empowered, the whole world benefits,” said Winnie Byanyima, Director of the Gender Team at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), while noting that the UNFCCC climate change convention is the only major environmental agreement that does not address gender inequality.

“In the many years that gender advocates have attended climate change talks we have never seen something as tangible as this; we are confident that the new climate change agreement will be gender sensitive,” added Monique Essed-Fernandes, Board Chair of the Women’s Environment & Development Organization (WEDO).

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