

CDKN Event

"Is international consensus on climate change the way to save the planet?"

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Climate change is an environmental issue. But we care because we're humans, and we need a planet to live on. It seems like common sense, but a human perspective on climate change – and certainly on its solutions – needs to actually respond to, and uphold, the rights and diverse needs of the human population. Can the UNFCCC, or any multilateral process at the moment really claim to be aimed at fostering and finding consensus? And if so, – *whose* consensus? I'm pretty sure the 7 billion people on earth don't all wear navy blue power suits.

We need to start thinking differently. Diversity leads to efficacy and more sustainable solutions, as piles of research shows. Alternatives spaces for consensus decision-making is a futile discussion until there's equitable representation of perspectives around any table.

I propose three ideas to move us forward:

- 1) Currently, much capacity building for negotiators is essentially focused on providing skills and tools, often to a majority of male career politicians, to become more effective players in the political theatre of the multilateral process. It assumes that those with the most experience of the process are the most capable of engaging in it. We need capacity building to transform the process into one that crucially values the inputs of diverse perspectives and expertise, which can help move beyond political positions to common long-term interest.
- 2) The dichotomy between civil society and member states must be dissolved. At present, bigger nations define the basis on which they participate and contribute to the reduction of rapidly growing environmental problems, while civil society, including women, youth, indigenous, farmers, etc., the very people whom the negotiators are



meant to serve, advocate from the outside. There are other models for how states and experts could work together. Civil society must be view as technical experts in support of consensus building. Member States should be open to these models and encouraged to have civil society members on their delegations – or maybe even required to do so.

- 3) Specific resources should be allocated to support Delegations to transform representation, mirroring their own unique populations. There are Countries, where the evidence is abundant that women and youth and communities facing marginalization contribute less to and will be most affected by, and which have the experience and knowledge to create solutions to adapt to and mitigate climate change, that are represented by delegations of up to 20 men and no women? 20 men and no youth? Do we really expect this demographic alone to transform business as usual? Beyond the capacity building already described there is a need for resources to support delegates with expertise in cross-cutting social justice issues and human rights.

As individuals, we can accomplish only so much. We're limited in our time, our experiences, our abilities. We each bring only one piece of a puzzle to the table. But collectively, we face no such constraint. If meaningfully included at the negotiating table, such diversity can provide the cross-cutting experiences necessary to both embody social equity and transform environmental consensus-making. We have the potential to develop climate solutions which are gender responsive, socially inclusive and based on human rights. These are the only real solutions which could tackle these challenges.