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Statement submitted by the Global Gender Climate Alliance, International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women (ICW-CIF) and Women's Environment and Development Organization-- Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

INTRODUCTION

Urgent action is needed to mainstream gender equality and rural women's empowerment into climate change policies and programs. No action would be more strategic to accelerate action and ensure effective implementation. Among the international instruments that can play a powerful role in this endeavour is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Although Article 14 is specifically about rural women, all Articles are relevant. The provisions of CEDAW related to gender equality and climate change are presented here.

Ratified by 187 countries (2011), CEDAW is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The Convention protects women from discrimination and all forms of political, social, cultural and economic inequality based on gender. It is the only human rights treaty that affirms the reproductive rights of women.

A statement by the CEDAW Committee issued at its 44th session noted that gender equality is essential to the successful implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate change policies.ⁱ Therefore, women's human rights should be included as an overarching guiding principle (e.g. "Shared Vision" or Preamble) in the climate change treaty. CEDAW affects the legal interpretation of treaty articles and it provides a moral compass for their practical application. It is also an important tool to plan for gender and women's empowerment in the Rio+20 process.

ARTICLE 2

Women's invisibility in national statistics constitutes a violation of CEDAW provisions, as lack of information affects a government's ability to prevent discrimination. Examples are found in sectors such as forestry, energy, transport, construction and infrastructure, which typically do not collect gender-disaggregated data. Yet preliminary research indicates that when gender-blind policies in these sectors persist, women's contributions are undervalued and technology

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innovations fail to reach women.

Financial mechanisms associated with climate change such as the Adaptation Fund, the Clean Development Mechanism, REDD and the future Green Climate Fund, should be monitored and gender should be mainstreamed into their policies. This would comply with Article 2 of CEDAW that obliges States Parties to embody the principle of the equality of men and women to ensure that public authorities and institutions, organizations or enterprises take actions to remedy discrimination against women.

The treaty further addresses root causes. As discrimination is embedded in wider social inequalities, States Parties must take necessary steps to combat prejudices and customary practices based on stereotyped roles. One stereotype that is typically projected among scientists is that rural and indigenous women do not offer scientific knowledge, even though in many communities they often maintain and promote biodiversity and are experts in medicinal plants. Other traditional knowledge can include management of forests, water conservation and food storage.

ARTICLES 7 and 8

States Parties must ensure women have equal decision-making power at all levels, including in international processes such as the climate change treaty negotiations (Articles 7 and 8). However, only 14 percent of heads of delegation to the Conference of the Parties 16 in Cancun (2010) were women. There is reason to be concerned, as women are poorly represented in bodies that will implement the treaty at national and local levels -- notably technical advisory bodies, parliaments/congresses, business councils and courts.

One hopeful sign is that several of the National Adaptation Programmes for Action (NAPA) reference gender. In these plans, it is important to emphasize women's right to equal decision-making in public life, including the design of NAPAs and the medium-to-long-term adaptation plans (National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)). Policy-makers have yet to tap the potential of international women's movements. The "win-win" scenario is one that creates synergy between women's empowerment and mitigation and adaptation policies.

ARTICLE 14

Article 14 of CEDAW further strengthens provisions for rural women, including pastoralists, nomads, and hunters and gatherers, in diverse occupations (e.g. fishing, wage labor, and swidden agriculture). Recognizing the diversity of rural women is critical in rural communities experiencing food insecurity and environmental devastation. Of particular concern is the feminization of agriculture and the rise in numbers of older women and female heads of households due to out migration of men. In many communities, women must add work in fields and animal husbandry to existing responsibilities in cooking, gathering wood and water.

The FAO's *2010-2011 State of Food and Agriculture* states that because women in rural areas have less access to productive resources and opportunities than men, there is a productivity gap causing women farmers to produce less than men farmers.ⁱⁱ If the gender gap closes between women and men, productivity yields will increase on the women's farms by 20-30 percent, which potentially reduces the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17 percent.

CEDAW notes that rural women should be empowered to manage the environment through equal access to productive resources. Article 14 guarantees rural women equal access to water and sanitation, agricultural credit and loans, and appropriate technology. One strategic use of credit would be to use clean energy burning stoves. However, this must happen rapidly and on a massive scale because Black Carbon produced by biofuel stoves is not only detrimental to women's health, but also a main contributor to global warming. If poor women are to change cooking technologies, they must be given better access to financing options such as micro-credit, rent and collective schemes.

Safety nets and insurance for social protection are considered essential to national adaptation plans as part of poverty reduction strategiesⁱⁱⁱ and improving the ability of women to cope with ecological stresses strengthens the entire family's adaptive resilience. However, rural and indigenous women rarely have access to adequate health care facilities and social security. And while CEDAW recognizes that rural women have the right to adequate standards of living, housing and communications, these are seldom considered in climate change discussions.

ARTICLES 11.1, 13 and 15.1

The climate change crisis potentially opens new financing, business and employment opportunities for women living in cities as well as in the countryside. The climate change treaty will set new directions for carbon trading markets and businesses for green technologies. In developing countries, renewable energy technologies promise to create more income-generating projects, such as making lamps and repairing devices using solar voltaic cells.

Diversification of income sources can help cushion the negative impact of climate change on agricultural livelihoods. The question is: Will rural women benefit equally from these entrepreneurial opportunities? Articles 11.1, 13 and 15.1 in CEDAW hold States Parties responsible to guarantee that women will have equal economic and employment rights. Governments should also promote child-care facilities to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities.

Article 15.1 affords women the same legal capacity as men to conclude contracts, administer property and mortgages, and in all other areas of economic life. Women employed in sectors that are traditionally male-biased must be afforded equal remuneration, including benefits, and granted equal treatment in the value of their work. They also need to be better represented in management and social audits of wage employment schemes.

ARTICLE 12.1

Women's rights to health are found in Articles 12 and the General Recommendation 24 of CEDAW. These recognize the importance of gender equality to the quality of family life and the need for governments to improve health statistics, as well as allocate adequate resources for women's health care throughout their life cycle. The CEDAW Committee has noted that women's health status and ability to access health services, including family planning, are intricately linked to gender-specific roles.

Some research indicates that women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters such as drought, floods and heat waves. For example, according to the WHO, adverse reproductive outcomes follow disasters, including early pregnancy loss, premature delivery, stillbirths, delivery-related complications and infertility.^{iv} One study on a 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh noted that many women perished with their children at home as they had to wait for their husbands to return and make an evacuation decision.^v

Climate change will further burden poor women through increases in malnutrition, floods, storms and fires, increased diarrheal diseases and changes in the distribution of some infectious diseases vectors. The whole family suffers if women die or cannot carry out care giving roles.

ARTICLE 10

Rural women's access, use and control over science and technology, including formal and informal education and training, are vital to a community's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Gender equality in education is guaranteed by Article 10. CEDAW identifies the need for women's equal access to technical and professional education, remuneration, and support for social services to combine family responsibilities with work.

Article 10 reiterates that educational information to help improve the health and wellbeing of families, including information and advice on family planning, is a woman's right.

ⁱ Adopted at the 44th session of CEDAW, New York 2009.

ⁱⁱ *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*, FAO, Rome 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Technical Summary, report by Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007, Cambridge U. Press, Cambridge, UK 2007 p. 69.

^{iv} "Gender and health in disasters," Gender and Health, WHO, Geneva July 2002.

^v "Is there a connection between gender and climate change?," Lorena Aguilar, presentation at the Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance, CAPWIP, Manila 2009.

APPENDIX I (WEDO compilation)

A compilation of gender equality texts in the Cancun Agreements, Outcome of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention Draft decision (-/CP.16)1:

Noting resolution 10/4 of the United Nations Human Rights Council on ‘Human rights and climate change’, which recognizes that the adverse effects of climate change have a range of direct and indirect implications for the effective enjoyment of human rights and that the effects of climate change will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population that are already vulnerable owing to geography, **gender**, age, indigenous or minority status and disability;

7. *Recognizes* the need to engage a broad range of stakeholders at global, regional, national and local levels, be they government, including subnational and local government, private business or civil society, including the youth and persons with disability, and that **gender equality** and the **effective participation of women** and indigenous peoples are important for effective action on all aspects of climate change;

12. *Affirms* that enhanced action on adaptation should be undertaken in accordance with the Convention; follow a country-driven, **gender-sensitive**, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems; and be based on and guided by the best available science, and as appropriate traditional knowledge; with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate;

72. *Requests* developing country Parties, when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plan, to address, inter alia, drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure issues, forest governance issues, **gender considerations** and the safeguards identified in paragraph 2 of Annex 1 to this decision, ensuring the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia, indigenous peoples and local communities;

Affirming that responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner, with a view to avoiding adverse impacts on the latter, taking fully into account the legitimate priority needs of developing country Parties for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty, and the **consequences for vulnerable groups, in particular women** and children,

130. *Decides* that capacity-building support to developing country Parties should be enhanced with a view to strengthening endogenous capacities at the subnational, national or regional levels, as appropriate, **taking into account gender aspects**, to contribute to the achievement of the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention, through, inter alia:

3. Parties are encouraged to nominate senior experts with a view to achieving, within the membership of the Technology Executive Committee, an appropriate balance of technical, legal, policy, social development and financial expertise relevant to the development and transfer of technology for adaptation and mitigation, taking into account the **need to achieve gender balance in accordance with decision 36/CP.7**;