

# Statements for Women as a Major Group at CSD-15

30 April 2007

## 1. Multi-stakeholder Dialogue – Monday, April 30, 11:30am

Women as a Major Group would like to thank the governments that have encouraged the Chair to address the particular roles of women in sustainable development within the draft outcome document for CSD 15. In many countries, especially in Africa and Asia, cultural traditions make women responsible for collecting and managing traditional biomass fuels, and in many cases they provide a large proportion of the national energy supply. Therefore, it is time for national energy and development policies to acknowledge the existing contributions of women in the energy sector. New policies and investments in basic energy infrastructure are urgently needed so that women can manage their energy supplies, their businesses and their lives more effectively and productively.

With regard to **climate change**, we were pleased to see that the Chair took into account the issues raised by Ghana and other delegations concerning women's particular vulnerability to climate variations, with text urging countries to involve women in all aspects of decision-making relating to adaptation and mitigation. We also welcome additions made to the section on **industrial development** that emphasize the need to promote entrepreneurship opportunities for women and easier access to credit for small-scale entrepreneurs. We would also like to see greater attention to strategies for sustainable industrial development within the countries in transition, where heavy health and environmental damages are associated with the current emphasis on economic growth.

It is crucial, however, that national development policies choices work towards reducing long-term reliance on fossil fuels for transportation, electricity generation and industrial development. Emissions from industry, power plants and motor vehicles present major threats to women and families throughout the world, in addition to their impacts on the earth's atmosphere. Climate change policies also need to take into account potential social and environmental impacts that may negatively affect women and their families, and avoid new hazards, such as radiation from nuclear power facilities, environmental degradation from mining operations, or biofuel production programmes that adversely affect food crops, biodiversity and water resources. In addition, consideration should be given to ways in which existing financing mechanisms such as the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism can be made to work for the benefit of the millions of women currently collecting biomass fuels.

On the topic of **indoor air pollution**, the European Union, South Africa and a number of other delegations have cited recent studies by the World Health Organization showing that burning biomass fuels for household energy presents major health threats for women and children in developing countries. This concern is well reflected in the Chair's draft text. We urge governments at CSD 15 to go a step further and endorse the WHO target put forward at this meeting: 'By 2015, to reduce by half the number of people without access to modern cooking fuels and to make improved cooking technologies widely available.'

The hardships associated with use of traditional fuels go well beyond indoor air pollution, however, and include the drudgery of gathering, transporting, and processing these fuels. Lack of access to modern fuels, electricity, and motorized equipment damages women's health and limits their time and capacity to care for their families, educate themselves and their children, earn income, and engage in social and political affairs.

We are concerned, therefore, that the Chair's text does not strongly enough reflect the points raised by Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Fiji and other delegations at the IPM and CSD 14 regarding the need for mainstreaming of gender issues into **energy** policy formulation, planning, and decision-making processes. It is important for governments to move beyond just talking about involving women in energy programs, and to consider how to better engage women as active participants in designing and implementing energy solutions.

Particular strategies that should be highlighted include:

- investments in capacity building, technical and business training, scientific education and enterprise development for women;
- capacity building for government officials and development practitioners to assist them in integrating gender considerations into energy policies, projects, programmes;
- gender budgets, audits and gender disaggregated data to inform national energy and development policy and implementation strategies;
- innovative measures that enhance women's access to financing for energy-related equipment and enterprises
- institutional arrangements to ensure women's representation in designing and implementing energy policies, programmes and projects; and
- gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation based on gender indicators.

Women, and women's organizations, stand ready to work with governments as partners on mainstreaming gender in energy and invite government delegations to actively engage with Women representatives here at the CSD as well as in national discussions on energy policies and programmes.

## **2. Energy - Tuesday morning, May 1 (parallel session with Air Pollution)**

As discussed in yesterday's Multi-stakeholder Dialogue, we are concerned that the Chair's text does not strongly enough reflect the points regarding the need for gender mainstreaming approaches in energy policy formulation, planning, budgeting and decision-making processes which were raised by Women and other delegations at the IPM, and CSD 14, including Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Fiji.

What is needed goes beyond merely involving more women in energy programs. It requires both a recognition of the fact that women and men have different social and economic roles, and a commitment to ensure that women's concerns and contributions are represented and taken into account. To assist governments in understanding the linkages between gender and energy in developing countries, we have compiled recommendations from stakeholder consultations in 19

different countries in preparation for CSD 15 and presented them in a book entitled Where Energy is Women's Business, which we are happy to share with you.

In developing countries, particular attention is needed to promote access to electricity and modern fuels and equipment for domestic uses, agriculture, informal income-generating activities, and community-based enterprises. In many countries, women already play an important role in the energy sector, particularly with regard to collection and consumption of traditional biomass fuels, but they are not at the table when energy plans are made, and national energy decisions are not necessarily designed with their needs in mind. It is critical for sustainable development that investments in energy infrastructure and services promote women's social and economic development, as well as men's.

We mentioned yesterday some tools that could be used by governments in this regard, such as strategic investments in capacity building, technical and business training, and enterprise development for women, together with capacity building for government officials and development practitioners regarding gender and energy issues and institutional arrangements to ensure women's representation in designing and implementing energy policies, programmes and projects. In addition, gender budgets, audits and gender disaggregated data can be used to inform national energy and development policy and implementation strategies, and innovative financing measures are needed to enhance women's access to credit for energy-related equipment and enterprises. Above all, national energy policies should specifically address women's and men's energy poverty in rural and urban contexts.

Women as a Major Group strongly support governments that are working towards low carbon development paths and reject unsustainable energy policies such as those emphasizing increased nuclear generating capacity. We note that many countries in transition plan to base their energy sector development on nuclear power, and call instead for clear targets on renewables and improved energy efficiency as there is enormous potential for improvements in these areas. We also recommend strong action to prevent destruction of land and communities as a result of coal and uranium mining, large-scale hydropower and commercial ethanol production. We are eager to participate in fair and inclusive partnerships to promote access to clean, safe and affordable energy for the future, including modern cooking fuels, renewable wind and solar systems, small hydro-electric generators, modern biofuel systems and energy efficiency mechanisms.

### **3. Air pollution - Tuesday morning, May 1 (parallel session with Energy)**

As many delegations have pointed out, recent studies by the World Health Organization show that indoor air pollution from burning biomass fuels for household energy presents a major health threat for women and children in developing countries. This concern is well reflected in the Chair's draft text. We urge governments to go a step further and actually endorse the WHO target put forward at this meeting: 'By 2015, to reduce by half the number of people without access to modern cooking fuels and to make improved cooking technologies widely available.'

We would also like to point out that indoor air pollution caused by using traditional biomass fuels in smoky fires is due to lack of access by the poor to modern energy services. Indoor air pollution

problems can be reduced through the use of chimneys and vents, improved kitchens and equipment arrangement, as well as better-quality wood supplies, wider availability of cleaner-burning ‘improved’ wood stoves and use of modern equipment, including solar cookers. However, the problems can only be solved when access to affordable, cleaner and sustainable modern energy sources is ensured.

Women in developing countries would benefit from government strategies to promote expanded access to affordable, cleaner and culturally appropriate technologies, including biogas digesters or solar cookers, as well as cleaner-burning and more efficient cooking fuels (such as LPG, kerosene, butane, natural gas, and locally and sustainably produced biofuels) and community reforestation programmes. Financing for investments in cooking energy programmes could be provided in the form of pro-poor financing mechanisms and smart subsidies, and should be included under the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism and other voluntary funds.

For countries in transition, air pollution from industry and motor vehicles presents major health and environmental threats. Therefore we call for improved monitoring and quantitative assessments of these risks, regulations to control small particulates, and full implementation of the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

#### **4. Industrial Development - Tuesday afternoon, May 1 (parallel with climate change)**

We are pleased with the connections made between women’s livelihoods and industrial development in the Chair’s draft text, which include employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, reducing the negative social impacts of industrial restructuring, and enhanced access to credit for women.

However, the Women’s Major Group has always looked beyond the needs of the world’s women and taken a strong stance on policies that are dangerous to all human beings and the environment. We would like to draw attention to the alarming focus on the development and dissemination of fossil fuels in the Chair’s text. We are certain that many governments in this room share our concern that the Commission on Sustainable Development is diverting time and resources away from the urgent task of up-scaling renewable energy development. The CSD is charged with implementing two of the most important global agreements in the history of the United Nations—Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action—and neither of these agreements call for heightened dependence on fossil fuels.

We request that the outcome document of CSD-15 focus instead on reducing reliance on fossil fuels. In addition to contributing to global warming, combustion of fossil fuels produces air pollution that negatively impacts human health, particularly in poor and disadvantaged communities. Extraction and transportation of coal and oil also negatively impacts communities by destroying land and degrading water resources, not only in developing countries. In fact, during CSD-14 last year, a group of women and men from the Appalachia region of the United States—where coal mining is a major industry—visited the CSD to share their stories about health issues and other threats to their lives from fossil fuel development.

Governments, institutions, and all of us, have a part to play in promoting investments in alternative energy technologies and raising awareness about the economic development opportunities inherent

in shifting industrial development toward sustainability. Alternative energy technologies are now more accessible than ever – including wind and solar, small hydroelectric generators, modern biofuel systems, and energy efficiency mechanisms. Developed countries currently have the most unsustainable consumption and production rates and should use policy measures, awareness campaigns, legal requirements, and economic incentives to promote industrial development that prioritizes renewable energy and energy conservation and efficiency.

Countries in transition are currently basing their economic growth on unsustainable consumption of energy and natural resources. Therefore stronger regulatory systems are needed to address health and environmental risks from industrial pollution and out-of-date technologies. An important role for NGOs is to build the capacity of women to pressure industries to reduce their negative environmental impacts and governments to promote full implementation of the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

Finally, we ask that the Chair’s text reflect the widespread concern among governments and the Major Groups about the dangers of nuclear energy. Given the wide-reaching and dangerous impacts of nuclear accidents and radioactive nuclear wastes, environmental degradation due to uranium mining, and health risks from nuclear energy, the CSD and governments should work to ensure that nuclear energy sources are phased out as unsustainable energy choices.

## **5. Climate Change - Tuesday afternoon, May 1 (parallel with industrial development)**

In November 2006, the Green Belt Movement, founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai, and the World Bank’s Community Development Carbon Fund Project signed an Emission Reductions Purchase Agreement (ERPA) to reforest two mountain areas in Kenya. Women’s groups will plant thousands of indigenous trees on 2,000 hectares of the Aberdares and Mt. Kenya forest ranges. By 2017, the trees they plant will have captured 375,000 tons of carbon dioxide and restore soil lost to erosion and support regular rainfall – essential to Kenya’s farmers and hydro-power plants, the country’s main source of electricity. Planting the trees also provides poor, rural women with a small income and with it some economic independence and a greater measure of control over their lives.

We share this case to illustrate two points:

The first point is that the inclusion in the Chair’s draft text of women’s involvement in decision-making relating to adaptation, as well as disaster risk reduction and adaptation technologies, accurately reflects the importance of women’s contributions. We thank you for acknowledging the value of women’s involvement in climate change initiatives.

The second reason for sharing this case is to demonstrate that women’s participation is only the first step. Policies and programs related to climate change, such as the partnership between the World Bank and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, often present an opportunity to address deeper inequalities. Existing conditions and existing discrimination will always determine who is most impacted by natural disasters and other drastic environmental changes. For this reason, climate change often magnifies gender inequality. For example, when natural disasters cause more difficulty

in securing water and fuel wood, women carry a heavier burden, their time is taken away from income-generating activities, and traditional roles are reinforced. Given this reality, we request that the Chair's text call on governments to incorporate measures to achieve gender equality in climate change policies and programs. This would include:

- Analyzing and addressing gender-specific resource use, management and control patterns;
- Recognizing that women are already more vulnerable to poverty than men and therefore have specific needs in climate change policies and programs; and
- Identifying women's particular capacities in managing households and natural resources that lend themselves to mitigation and adaptation.

While the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol are the primary fora for negotiating emissions related to climate change, they have so far failed to integrate social and gender-related concerns about climate change impacts. The CSD, therefore, can play an important role in highlighting women's particular vulnerabilities and potential contributions in this area. Gender equality should be included in the CSD-15 outcome on climate change because it is one of the primary challenges in society and because it is an official cross-cutting issue of the CSD.

Given the health and environmental risks associated with nuclear power plants, Women do not view nuclear energy as a sustainable alternative for greenhouse gas emission reduction programmes. In addition, we recommend strong action to prevent destruction of land and communities as a result of coal and uranium mining operations, large-scale hydropower projects and commercial ethanol production.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that the focus on fossil fuels in the Chair's text is a cause for grave concern. The Chair's text should instead reflect a renewed momentum toward the development of renewable and safe energy technologies that have proven to reduce emissions and contribute to curbing climate change. Developed countries that are the major sources of greenhouse emissions should take the lead on reducing emissions, and non-binding agreements should be discouraged.

## **6. Inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues, including gender - Wednesday morning, May 2**

We would like to express our support for the interventions made with regard to gender as a crosscutting issue by governments at the IPM session, including South Africa, Nigeria, Norway, and Germany (speaking for the European Union).

Norway, for example, offered a very coherent set of policy recommendations, which we would like to highlight as elements that could be included in the Chair's text:

- Enhance research and data collection on women's energy use and needs in connection with developing energy policies and projects
- Increase capacity building and technical training for women as a means of empowerment in order for women to take an active part in decision-making processes

- Develop energy infrastructure and institutions that directly benefit women and the poor. Women should be included at all parts of the project, policy and development planning process both as energy providers and energy users.
- Promote the integration of gender and rights issues into energy projects to involve women in the choice and use of energy resources and technologies. This leads to a more flexible approach, with projects responding to the particular needs of women, and with regard to local priorities and contexts.”

South Africa also identified specific policy actions, which Women would like to see included in the Chair’s text, including:

- Support for the development of gender expertise at national, regional and international levels
- Establishment of new, and strengthening of existing networks that seek to address gender and sustainable development issues
- Enhancing access to information and capacity for data collection on the impacts of gender-focused interventions.

The EU added a recommendation on removing gender discrimination in terms of legal rights (including inheritance and equal access to secure tenure of land and finance).

All of these suggested recommendations would be welcome additions to the Chair’s draft document, which currently contains only one general point at the very end of the inter-linkages section – “To enhance gender mainstreaming in all areas of sustainable development”.

In addition, Women would like to emphasize the need for actions that will increase the capacity of government officials and development practitioners, researchers and policy-makers to integrate a gender perspective into energy planning and implementation. We are eager to share our specific recommendations on these issues, and call on the CSD to strengthen existing networks and partnerships that seek to address the connections between gender, energy and sustainable development issues.