

MILESTONE GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT ON HORIZON

Barcelona, 4 November 2009—Copenhagen agreement may be the first to recognize the gender dimensions of climate change, saving the lives of millions of women and children and taking a major step toward addressing the human impacts of climate change.

"The women of the world are demanding a paradigm shift that ensures their participation and leadership on decisions that affect their very survival and that of their families and communities," said Lorena Aguilar, Senior Gender Advisor for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), on the occasion of the UNFCCC negotiations currently taking place in Barcelona, Spain, ahead of the Copenhagen session this December.

A team of women's organizations and gender experts from around the world representing the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) has been following the UNFCCC negotiations since the Bali Climate Change Talks in 2007, providing technical assistance and training to government delegates on the gender aspects of the Bali Action Plan building blocks of mitigation, adaptation, technology, and finance. As a result, the negotiation texts contain the first ever language on gender equality and women—including 43 references in the texts earlier this year, and 8 references in the current "non-papers". The Barcelona session is critical for retaining key references, particularly the recognition of women as agents of change, the prioritization of vulnerable groups, the active participation of all stakeholders, and a commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The climate change convention is the only major environmental agreement from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit that does not address gender inequality. Winnie Byanyima, Director of the Gender Team at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted, "If we do not address the importance of gender in the climate change debate, we will be responsible for the death and impoverishment of millions of people—many who already suffer extreme poverty, hardship and indignation."

Cate Owren of Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) and the GGCA Advocacy Team added, "This is an historic time for gender and climate change. We're very inspired and positive that something will emerge from Copenhagen, and that it will be gender-sensitive."

The GGCA will attend the Copenhagen COP, continuing to work with the many supportive Parties on gender-specific text; raising awareness and networking with UN, intergovernmental and civil society organizations; and launching new initiatives by bringing high profile women leaders to speak at a side event and commissioning two major performing arts events.

The GGCA is a joint initiative of 13 UN agencies and 25 civil society organizations working to ensure that climate change initiatives and decision-making at all levels are responsive to both women and men.

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