

## Meeting Summary

### **Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for Environment**

UNFCCC COP-13 in Bali, Indonesia

December 11, 2008

Meeting organized by IUCN, WEDO, UNDP, UNEP,  
and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs of South Africa.

#### *Participants*

The meeting and lunch convened about 30 participants, including government representatives from Australia, Fiji, Honduras, Iceland, Korea, South Africa, Suriname, and Zimbabwe. Special guests included Gro Harlem Brundtland and Wangari Maathai (the latter by video).

#### *Summary of discussions:*

Lorena Aguilar, IUCN Senior Gender Advisor, introduced the agenda and reviewed the goals of the meeting, which were to:

- Affirm purpose of Network and commitment by Network participants
- Approve Network facilitation and communications structure
- Launch a Network Action Plan

Honorable Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Network Co-Chair and Deputy Minister of Environment of South Africa, expressed the need for more ministers to be involved in the Network in order to give women a voice in the UNFCCC and other global environmental negotiations. Since women have strong knowledge of the environment and for centuries women have been using natural resources for agricultural and health purposes, women should be involved in the climate change debate.

Winnie Byanyima, Director of the Gender Team at UN Development Program (UNDP)/Bureau for Development Policy, remarked that the Network has great significance and potential to involve women in climate change decision-making, and could grow to be a powerful organization that promotes dialogue between women from the South and the North. Greenhouse gas emissions are based on what rich countries have done, but developing countries are catching up, therefore solutions to reduce emissions are global. This can help rich countries “come out” of their adaptation apartheid, in that they have not been put in a position of needing to adapt. Through this Network, women’s leadership will bring urgency to the climate change discussion, as well as a strong human rights perspective, and together women can devise solutions to the problem of climate

change. The Network can also provide a new perspective on economic growth. Economy policy has treated the environment as it has treated women, in that women's contributions have been left out of the process and we have a world focused only on economic interests. The Network is the beginning of a change where women are included and the "longest journey begins with a short step".

Julia Marton-Lefevre, Director General of World Conservation Union (IUCN), reminded us that "women hold up half of the sky." In the case of climate change, discussions should bring women together and create a space where their common sense has to be heard.

Wangari Maathai addressed the meeting by video. She remarked that women are the missing voice in climate change. Global warming is not going to spare anyone, but women are the most affected because they are the ones that depend more often on natural resources. Women should come together to move forward and bring solutions to global warming.

Rebecca Pearl, WEDO Sustainable Development Program Coordinator, presented the Objectives, Guidelines, and Working Modalities of the Network (see annex), as well as what each of the Network's institutional organizing partners – IUCN, UNDP, UNEP, WEDO – bring to the table.

There was a discussion about why women are not included in the climate change convention and its implementation. The system seems prepared to make an effort to include gender. There is openness but the parties have to make an official request. Perhaps the solution is to remobilize various women's organizations from the north and the south to influence the outcome of Copenhagen (as was done in Rio with Agenda 21)

Christine Milne, Green Party Senator from Australia, asked about Network membership. In some countries, such as Australia, women leaders who are strongest on environment are Green Party members who, because they are a third party, will never be part of the Ministry. Since the Network doesn't want to exclude anyone, the name is being changed to Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment. Rejoice emphasized that we didn't want to "suffocate ourselves with technicalities." Lorena said that the Network is informal in its approach to decision-making and that, in past years, the body has reached "consensus decisions that countries are not mandated to follow."

Thorunn Sveinbjarnadottir, Minister of Environment from Iceland, added that the Network should be more inclusive in order to be more influential. Also, there are only a handful of women ministers and we need all levels of politicians interested in the environment. The Deputy Minister of South Africa shared a decision South Africa made to invite women in business to be part of a women and environment network.

Janet Macharia, UNEP Senior Gender Advisor, described the kind of support UNEP is giving to ensure that gender issues do not continue to be invisible in the process. In her view, the Network is a key vehicle to help build capacity and UNEP is eager to support members of the Network as we continue on the road to Copenhagen.

Gro Brundtland asked if we've ever found out why gender wasn't in the original climate convention. She also talked about UNFCCC's appointment of a gender focal point, but that they need to hear from member states, since the Secretariat says that parties haven't asked them to move on this. There was conversation about the role the Network could play and about the importance of impacting on the newly formed Adaptation Fund, which currently has no gender equality in the plan.

In preparation of the Network's Bali Declaration targeted at the UNFCCC, suggestions were made to address indigenous women and to make mention of women's rights as human rights. There was overall agreement that the document should be shorter for easy capture by government. It was agreed that a new draft would be written and circulated to participants and other ministers.

The Minister from Iceland was invited to co-chair the Network with the Rejoice Mabudafhasi. Following the meeting, she responded positively to the invitation.

Decisions made at the meeting include:

1. The Network should broaden to women politicians and leaders that are involved with environmental issues.
2. The Network should come together before any event to formulate a gender sensitive statement that can be given to the official delegations with enough time to influence their positions and speeches.
3. There should be a strong supporting process previous to any event and an identification of the key actors that should receive guidance or a statement from the Network
4. The Network should be fully involved on the road to Copenhagen.

June Zeitlin, Executive Director of WEDO, closed the meeting and expressed WEDO's interest in continuing to engage with the Network.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**NETWORK OF WOMEN MINISTERS AND LEADERS FOR ENVIRONMENT**  
**Bali, Indonesia**  
**11 December 2007**

The Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for Environment calls upon the Parties and the Secretariat of the UNFCCC to:

- Recognize that women **are powerful agents of change** and that their full participation is critical in adaptation and mitigation policies and initiatives, and hence, guarantee that women and gender experts participate in all decisions related to climate change;
- Take action in order to ensure UNFCCC compliance with human rights frameworks, international and national commitments on gender equality and equity, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Develop a gender strategy, invest in gender-specific climate change research and establish a system for the use of gender-sensitive indicators and criteria for governments to use in national reporting to the UNFCCC Secretariat;
- Analyze and identify gender-specific impacts and protection measures related to floods, droughts, heat waves, diseases, and other environmental changes and disasters;
- Given that millions of poor women affected by climate change live and work outside the reach of formal markets, design and implement funding mechanisms accessible to them to reduce their particular vulnerabilities. In addition, increase equitable access by poor women and men to climate change market-based approaches such as the Clean Development Mechanism.

## **Network Objectives, Guidelines, and Working Modalities**

### **Goal of the Network**

To enhance representation and involvement of women in decision-making in the areas of environment and sustainable development at all levels.

### **Objectives of the Network**

The Network's objectives include the following:

- ◆ Provide a platform to enable women ministers of the environment to exchange ideas and points of view and to work toward solutions to critical environmental and sustainable development issues.
- ◆ Develop recommendations for practical solutions to environmental and sustainable development problems confronting nations and the world.
- ◆ Build Network partnerships with appropriate civil society, non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies.
- ◆ Learn from each other in order to develop practices that promote sustainable development and gender equality.
- ◆ Demonstrate the effectiveness of women leaders by engaging the Network in high-level meetings.
- ◆ Increase the number, visibility, and influence of women environmental leaders worldwide.

### **Network Guidelines**

The Network will work according to the following guidelines:

- ◆ The Network will be independent and non-partisan.
- ◆ Network membership will consist of current Ministers of the Environment. Former Ministers, Deputy Ministers of Environment, and women in a senior ministry position are invited to join the Network as affiliates. All members and affiliates are invited to participate in Network activities.
- ◆ Women environmental leaders in civil society and intergovernmental agencies will be invited to participate as partners when relevant.

### **Working modalities of the Network**

1. Meetings at least semiannually, which will preferably be held in conjunction with major events that most members would attend, in order to increase participation and reduce costs.
2. Development and distribution of Network position papers that communicate a common vision on specific environmental and sustainable development issues.
3. Seminars and expert working groups for members and other women leaders in the field of the environment and sustainable development. These events will provide opportunities for alliance building and the sharing of ideas.

4. Side events, expert working groups and high-level roundtables held on the occasion of large international and regional meetings. These can be used to raise issues on the international agenda and build awareness with a broader constituency.
5. Creation of mechanisms through which the network will provide guidance to high-level environmental leaders in the UN system, allowing for full representation of diverse concerns and priorities.<sup>1</sup>
6. Communication through web publishing, including electronic communication, virtual conferences, digital announcement boards. A newsletter will be developed to strengthen cooperation and information-sharing between partners and organizations and communicate Network activities externally. Members will communicate with each other through an email list.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the UNFCCC, CBD, or UN Environment Management Group.