

Statement by Major Group WOMEN to the UNFF 7

18 April 2007

The MG WOMEN would like to re-emphasize the critical importance of women's contributions to the implementation of the NLBI and MYPOW, as well as the Millennium Development Goals. The Major Group WOMEN has, over the past several years, compiled priority areas for action and proposed achievable goals and targets in discussion papers submitted to the UNFF 3, 4 and 5. To date, the Major Group WOMEN has been successful at ensuring that the experiences and concerns of women have been voiced and tabled in the UNFF formal sessions and expert meetings to raise awareness on the barriers faced by women foresters, forestry students and community members, and to describe successful initiatives that have achieved SFM and women's empowerment. These have all pointed to the need for structural changes within forestry organizations to address gender equality.

Specifically the Women's Major Group is of the opinion that current levels of participation by women in forest management decision-making and governance are issues of major concern, and would like to see more strategic concerted efforts and commitment by governments, members of the CPF, regional and sub-regional networks, as well as relevant multilateral environmental agreements, instruments, processes and United Nations bodies to strengthen women's role in these processes. The active engagement of women is imperative to ensure that the discussions at the UNFF 7 include women's perspectives and concerns. As a group, women are an integral part of implementation and their participation in the process is required to ensure ownership of the outcomes and effective action; women leaders have an important responsibility in creating focused priorities for future action.

Major concerns and challenges faced by the Major Group WOMEN include:

- (a) Insufficient commitment to issues of gender equality amongst environment-related institutions and donor agencies;
- (b) Inadequate data and indicators for gender related aspects of forestry policies and programmes;
- (c) few women in forestry institutions who represent the interests of women within the global level processes;
- (d) lack of capacities within forestry institutions to design gender responsive strategies
- (e) lack of mechanisms to assure equitable sharing of benefits for women for livelihoods and economic advancement, especially in the context of private sector initiatives.
- (f) women's insecure land tenure

To take on these concerns and challenges, the Major Group WOMEN wishes to suggest additional areas of need and concerted actions at national, regional and international levels:

- policy and legislation
- capacity building for gender mainstreaming
- sustainable development activities for women in forest management
- research and impact assessment
- organizational change within forestry institutions
- recruitment of women in international forestry institutions
- partnerships between community and professional women
- inclusion of MG WOMEN in the Advisory Group of the UNFF

This next phase of the NLBI now requires that more significant attention and resources be devoted to gender issues and women's needs and contributions related to Sustainable Forest Management, poverty alleviation and related topics such as those of health and land tenure so that such changes can be implemented. Towards this goal, Major Group WOMEN offers cooperation, skills, knowledge and networks of women throughout the world to forge new paths by engaging women as major partners in sustainable forest management.