

## WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP REFLECTIONS on CSD11

Friday, May 9, 2003

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We have been here for two weeks—contributing to CSD11 our statements, dialogues, side events, partnerships and negotiations. We came to New York to help plan for a healthy and peaceful future (at least for the next 10 years), to make sustainable development a reality in every community and in every corner of this Planet.

We—women as a major group—appreciate the way the bureau, chair, and secretariat facilitated this multilateral and multi-sectoral process. Ministers, delegates and representatives of major groups shared their views and opinions and there appeared to be a collective commitment to contribute towards the full and successful implementation of Agenda 21 and the JPOI. However, when the ministers left and negotiations began, we were surprised to find that there was less common ground and understanding than we thought. The air seemed to be infected with CNS—‘continuous negotiation syndrome’—in the process of action and reaction, of drafting and redrafting, arguing and rearguing, there was a tendency to lose focus on what was at stake.

We are pleased that agreement was reached on the overall goals of our endeavors: poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and social development. We also underline the importance of the decisions made regarding the process and organization of work, and the different theme areas. The debate over Major Groups participation, however, was a sign that sustainable development is too often seen as the arena of governments, when in actuality it is people on the ground who will determine whether sustainable development happens or not. We would like to stress the recognition of contributions of NGOs that were accredited to the WSSD, and urge ECOSOC to give them full consultative status so that we all can optimally benefit from their participation on JPOI implementation and CSD work.

The centrality of a human rights approach, **gender equality** and **women's empowerment** to poverty eradication, environment sustainability and social development has been demonstrated in a broad range of policies and studies. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan remarked on International Women's Day 2003: “Study after study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier, and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestments go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, of whole countries.”

In the JPOI—para 20—you, our governments, committed yourselves to: “..ensure that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the MDGs and the POI of the summit.” Making gender equality explicit as a crosscutting issue for the future work of CSD is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. And we are pleased with your call for gender balance and the use of gender indicators in reporting.

We stand ready to work with member states, CSD Bureau and Secretariat, UN agencies, and other Major Groups to ensure that women's experiences and systematic barriers to women's equality are addressed as a central component in Agenda 21 and JPOI implementation, putting it on the agenda of CSD12 and beyond.