

Women as a Major Groups Statement for Industrial Development
Tuesday afternoon, May 1

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.