



Concept Note

“Strengthening Gender Justice and Human Rights to Achieve Sustainable Development”

A Side-Event to the Opening of the 68th UN General Assembly

The Women’s Major Group (WMG) for Sustainable Development at the United Nations¹ and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Office are organizing an event on 19 September, 2013, from 3pm-6pm in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, inside the United Nations General Assembly building, with co-sponsorship by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, UN Women and the Permanent Mission of Norway.

Given that the first meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the UN General Assembly Special Event towards achieving the MDGs will take place on the 24th and 25th September 2013 respectively, this is a pivotal moment where women’s movement perspectives and strategies on sustainable development, especially from the Global South, must be articulated, heard and strategically amplified within the UN and with governments, development partners, the media and others in civil society.

The WMG, comprising over 420 organisations, networks, social movements and Indigenous groups from all regions of the world, has the mandate and responsibility to facilitate contributions and participation of women throughout the sustainable development process, including the post-Rio+20 and Post2015 development processes. Further, the WMG has prioritised efforts to substantially raise levels of direct representation of women's movements from the Global South, and also linking further into the UNFCCC, ICPD Beyond2014 and other global development processes.

Participation in the global processes have also been dominated by traditional large development organizations and those with funding or a presence in New York. Those groups can potentially address aspects of Northern governmental policies in trade, aid, consumption/production especially where they are prepared to hold North governments

¹ The WMG is an open-ended group of representatives from civil society organizations, networks, social movements from across the world working on women's rights, gender equality and sustainable development. It was created as a result of the EcoRio and it is composed by over 400 organizations, networks and individuals which are members of the listserv. For more information go to www.womenrio20.org



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accountable, and also sometimes bring representatives and perspectives from the economic south via partners and networks. However, real progress can only be made with substantial direct representation from people sharing their particular perspective, messages and experience, particularly those marginalized by existing structures and practices, including women in the economic south, and including from countries identified for special attention in the Rio+20 outcome document, namely Africa, SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs.

The WMG has therefore engaged in tracking and participating throughout the Post-Rio+20 processes, including active contributions to sessions I, II, III and IV of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) process, and on the role and modalities of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, including advocating on the role of Major Groups. Also through the Post-2015 Development Agenda process as led by the UN Secretary General, the WMG has engaged in national and regional consultations; thematic consultations; and the Monrovia and Bali High Level Panel meetings, among others.

There have also been several organisational and joint WMG analyses and recommendations generated, including detailed assessments of the High Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; Global Compact Report, and the Sustainable Solutions Network Report on the future of the international sustainable development agenda. The WMG has developed analyses from this period into substantive recommendations. These will be launched with a compilation of women's perspectives on sustainable development themes as a joint WMG/FES paper, during the opening of the 2013 UN General Assembly in New York.

This publication will include detailed analyses and recommendations on sustainable development and the development agenda—global development frameworks, means of implementation, multilateralism, the role of the UN, private sector, IFIs, women's groups, social and Indigenous movements, food security and sovereignty, climate change, ecological degradation, extractivist-based resource development, and alternate development proposals. The publication gives specific attention to the multiple forms of resistance and resilience used by women's groups in every region to maldevelopment, the military-industrial complex, cooptive State and transnational corporation partnerships, and also the special needs of Africa, Small Island States, LDCs and LLDCs, as well as reflections on specific aspects of pervasive extreme poverty and rising inequalities throughout the economic south. It also examines the impacts of current austerity measures in/on the economic North and South, including attention to persistent low levels of realisation of ODA and lack of progress on debt cancellation and alleviation, as well as the realities of changing poles of accumulation in many south States including the BRICS.



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The side event presentations and WMG-FES publication will be shared with onsite and online audiences including States, UN agencies and other development actors. It will then be shared back into the wide WMG networks of varied, linked and severe development struggles that women are facing in different regions of the world, including examples of tensions where one aspect of sustainable development is prioritised over another; where gender equality is subsumed in other development aims; and where there are contradictions between state as duty-bearer and regulator, public-private partnerships, and human rights protections.

There is an urgent need to ensure that gender equality is considered, not as a sectoral issue but rather that gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment are seen as core to the realisation of a transformative development agenda inclusive of diverse women's visions of structural transformations to sustainable development, social justice, gender equality and justice, and universal human rights.

Speakers will highlight some of the concrete proposals advanced by women's civil society, social movements and other groups toward transformative development sustainability. WMG panelists working in Africa, the Pacific, Asia and/or Latin America will articulate Southern feminist and other heterodox perspectives on advancing gender equality, human rights and social justice in the multiple dimensions of sustainable development, and their inter-linkages.

Co-sponsoring States and agencies have shown commitment to the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights in all areas of development. UN Women brings a strong voice and valuable insights into the important role of multilateral spaces such as the UN in furthering gender equality and sustainable development, in these times of global and interlinked crises and possibilities.



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