

Agreed conclusions on environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters

1. The Commission on the Status of Women recalls that in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,¹ it was recognized that environmental degradation and disasters affect all human lives and often have a more direct impact on women and that it was recommended that the role of women and the environment be further investigated. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) identified natural disasters as a current challenge affecting the full implementation of the Platform for Action and emphasized the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the development and implementation of disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery strategies. The Commission also recalls the resolve in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) to intensify cooperation to reduce the number and effects of natural and man-made disasters, as well as General Assembly resolution 46/182, which contained the guiding principles on humanitarian assistance.
2. Deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people.
3. The Commission reiterates the strategic objectives and actions adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, held in New York in 2000, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".²⁷
4. The Commission recognizes that women play a vital role in disaster reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness), response and recovery and in natural resources management, that disaster situations aggravate vulnerable conditions and that some women face particular vulnerabilities in this context.
5. The Commission also recognizes that women's strengths in dealing with disasters and supporting their families and communities should be built upon following disasters to rebuild and restore their communities and mitigate against future disasters.
6. The Commission recognizes the need to enhance women's capacities and institutional mechanisms to respond to disasters in order to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women.
7. The Commission urges Governments and, as appropriate, also urges the relevant funds and programmes, organizations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, civil society, including the private sector and

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

NGOs, and other stakeholders, to take the following actions to accelerate implementation of these strategic objectives to address the needs of all women:

(a) Pursue gender equality and gender-sensitive environmental management and disaster reduction, response and recovery as an integral part of sustainable development;

(b) Take measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of, among other things, environmentally sound and sustainable resource and disaster management mechanisms and establish mechanisms to review such efforts;

(c) Ensure the full participation of women in sustainable development decision-making and disaster reduction management at all levels;

(d) Ensure the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development — including in disaster reduction, response and recovery; in this context, special attention should be given to the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence;

(e) Mainstream a gender perspective into ongoing research by, inter alia, the academic sector on the impact of climate change, natural hazards, disasters and related environmental vulnerability, including their root causes, and encourage the application of the results of this research in policies and programmes;

(f) Collect demographic and socio-economic data and information disaggregated by sex and age, develop national gender-sensitive indicators and analyse gender differences with regard to environmental management, disaster occurrence and associated losses and risks and vulnerability reduction;

(g) Develop, review and implement, as appropriate, with the involvement and participation of women's groups, gender sensitive laws, policies and programmes, including on land-use and urbanization planning, natural resource and environmental management and integrated water resources management, to provide opportunities to prevent and mitigate damage;

(h) Encourage, as appropriate, the development and implementation of national building standards that take into account natural hazards so that women, men and their families are not exposed to high risk from disasters;

(i) Include gender analysis and methods of mapping hazards and vulnerabilities at the design stage of all relevant development programmes and projects in order to improve the effectiveness of disaster risk management, involving women and men equally;

(j) Ensure women's equal access to information and formal and non-formal education on disaster reduction, including through gender-sensitive early warning systems, and empower women to take related action in a timely and appropriate manner;

(k) Promote income generating activities and employment opportunities, including through the provision of microcredit and

other financial instruments, ensure equal access to resources, in particular land and property ownership, including housing, and take measures to empower women as producers and consumers, in order to enhance the capacity of women to respond to disasters;

(l) Design and implement gender-sensitive economic relief and recovery projects and ensure equal economic opportunities for women, including both in the formal and non-formal sectors, taking into account the loss of land and property, including housing and other productive and personal assets;

(m) Make women full and equal partners in the development of safer communities and in determining national or local priorities for disaster reduction and incorporate local and indigenous knowledge, skills and capacities into environmental management and disaster reduction;

(n) Support capacity-building at all levels aimed at disaster reduction, based on knowledge about women's and men's needs and opportunities;

(o) Introduce formal and non-formal education and training programmes at all levels, including in the areas of science, technology and economics, with an integrated and gender-sensitive approach to environmentally sound and sustainable resource management and disaster reduction, response and recovery in order to change behaviour and attitudes in rural and urban areas;

(p) Ensure the implementation of their commitments by all Governments made in Agenda 21 and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,²⁷ including those in the areas of financial and technical assistance and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries, and ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into all such assistance and transfers;

(q) Document good practice and lessons-learned, particularly from effective community-based strategies for disaster reduction, response and recovery, which actively involve women as well as men, and widely disseminate this information to all stakeholders;

(r) Improve and develop physical and mental health programmes, services and social support networks for women who suffer from the effects of natural disasters, including trauma;

(s) Strengthen the capacities of ministries, emergency authorities, practitioners and communities to apply a gender-sensitive approach to environmental management and disaster reduction and the involvement of women professionals and field workers;

(t) Forge constructive partnerships between Governments, international organizations and civil society, including the private sector and NGOs, and other stakeholders in integrated and gender sensitive sustainable development initiatives to reduce environmental risks;

(u) Encourage civil society, including NGOs, to mainstream a gender perspective in the promotion of sustainable development initiatives, including in disaster reduction;

(v) Ensure coordination in the United Nations system, including the full and active participation of funds, programmes and specialized agencies to mainstream a gender perspective in sustainable development including, inter alia, environmental management and disaster reduction activities.

8. The Commission on the Status of Women calls for the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of all policies and treaties related to sustainable development and in the review of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, scheduled for 2004.

9. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in the mitigation of disasters.

10. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the policy statement of the Inter-agency Standing Committee for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian affairs of 31 May 1999.

11. The Commission on the Status of Women welcomes the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development²⁹ and takes note of the recognition contained in the draft Monterrey Consensus of the particular needs of women and the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the recognition of the impact of disasters.

12. The Commission on the Status of Women also welcomes the convening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout the process and urges gender balance in the composition of delegations as well as the involvement and full participation of women in the preparations, work and outcome of the World Summit, thus renewing the commitment to gender equality objectives at the international level. The Commission on the Status of Women further reiterates that all States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.