

Industrial Development, Sustainable Production and Consumption

Women as a Major Group would like to call attention to the fact that the contributions of women in national economies are often unrecognized and unpaid. In many countries, women face limited employment options and economic opportunities due to social constraints and lack of political and legal rights. Governments should therefore adopt right-based strategies designed to benefit women, who are often the ones most affected by poverty, unsustainable industrial development, and lack of access to affordable energy.

Sustainable industrial development must include consideration of environmental and health factors as well as attention to social and gender equity concerns. Governments should promote women's participation in productive activities, with adequate remuneration and security, and without overexploitation of women's labor. This is essential for improving women's quality of life and addressing their disproportionate poverty levels. In this respect, vocational training, marketing skills, financing, and provision of cleaner energy at affordable prices are some of our key priorities.

An emphasis on investments in small and medium scale enterprises and locally-based markets will help stimulate women's entrepreneurship as well as environmentally sustainable chains of production. Additionally, introduction of large scale industries and new technologies should be carefully assessed to consider potential threats to communities, food security, biodiversity and natural resources.

Women also play a key role in a transition to more sustainable consumption patterns, through their roles in family-level decision-making as well as through increased participation in national economic policies and international forums such as the Marrakech process.

We would like to emphasize that increased access to energy is a critical factor for women's economic advancement. We encourage policy-makers to broaden their perspectives on 'energy' beyond technology, profit and supply issues, and to take into account the social aspects of energy as a carrier of services needed for implementing sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.