

Statements for Women as a Major Group at CSD 15

1. Multi-stakeholder Dialogue – Monday, April 30, 11:30am

Women as a Major Group would like to thank the governments that have encouraged the Chair to address the particular roles of women in sustainable development within the draft outcome document for CSD 15. In many countries, especially in Africa and Asia, cultural traditions make women responsible for collecting and managing traditional biomass fuels, and in many cases they provide a large proportion of the national energy supply. Therefore, it is time for national energy and development policies to acknowledge the existing contributions of women in the energy sector. New policies and investments in basic energy infrastructure are urgently needed so that women can manage their energy supplies, their businesses and their lives more effectively and productively.

With regard to **climate change**, we were pleased to see that the Chair took into account the issues raised by Ghana and other delegations concerning women's particular vulnerability to climate variations, with text urging countries to involve women in all aspects of decision-making relating to adaptation and mitigation. We also welcome additions made to the section on **industrial development** that emphasize the need to promote entrepreneurship opportunities for women and easier access to credit for small-scale entrepreneurs. We would also like to see greater attention to strategies for sustainable industrial development within the countries in transition, where heavy health and environmental damages are associated with the current emphasis on economic growth.

It is crucial, however, that national development policies choices work towards reducing long-term reliance on fossil fuels for transportation, electricity generation and industrial development. Emissions from industry, power plants and motor vehicles present major threats to women and families throughout the world, in addition to their impacts on the earth's atmosphere. Climate change policies also need to take into account potential social and environmental impacts that may negatively affect women and their families, and avoid new hazards, such as radiation from nuclear power facilities, environmental degradation from mining operations, or biofuel production programmes that adversely affect food crops, biodiversity and water resources. In addition, consideration should be given to ways in which existing financing mechanisms such as the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism can be made to work for the benefit of the millions of women currently collecting biomass fuels.

On the topic of **indoor air pollution**, the European Union, South Africa and a number of other delegations have cited recent studies by the World Health Organization showing that burning biomass fuels for household energy presents major health threats for women and children in developing countries. This concern is well reflected in the Chair's draft text. We urge governments at CSD 15 to go a step further and endorse the WHO target put forward at this meeting: 'By 2015, to reduce by half the number of people without access to modern cooking fuels and to make improved cooking technologies widely available.'

The hardships associated with use of traditional fuels go well beyond indoor air pollution, however, and include the drudgery of gathering, transporting, and processing these fuels. Lack of access to modern fuels, electricity, and motorized equipment damages women's health and limits their time and capacity to care for their families, educate themselves and their children, earn income, and engage in social and political affairs.

We are concerned, therefore, that the Chair's text does not strongly enough reflect the points raised by Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Fiji and other delegations at the IPM and CSD 14 regarding the need for mainstreaming of gender issues into **energy** policy formulation, planning, and decision-making processes. It is important for governments to move beyond just talking about involving women in energy programs, and to consider how to better engage women as active participants in designing and implementing energy solutions.

Particular strategies that should be highlighted include:

- investments in capacity building, technical and business training, scientific education and enterprise development for women;
- capacity building for government officials and development practitioners to assist them in integrating gender considerations into energy policies, projects, programmes;
- gender budgets, audits and gender disaggregated data to inform national energy and development policy and implementation strategies;
- innovative measures that enhance women's access to financing for energy-related equipment and enterprises
- institutional arrangements to ensure women's representation in designing and implementing energy policies, programmes and projects; and
- gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation based on gender indicators.

Women, and women's organizations, stand ready to work with governments as partners on mainstreaming gender in energy and invite government delegations to actively engage with Women representatives here at the CSD as well as in national discussions on energy policies and programmes.