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Gender Perspectives on Climate Change

Written statement*

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Introduction

Despite its status and development within the United Nations international system, climate change policy-making has failed to adopt a gender-sensitive strategy. This failure not only generates concern in terms of respect for gender equity at the international level, it also leads to shortcomings in the efficiency and effectiveness of climate related measures and instruments. Without a gender-sensitive method of analysis, it is impossible to determine the full set of causes and potential effects of climate change. Furthermore, studies have shown that women and men experience climate change differently in terms of their adaptability, responsibility, vulnerability and aptitude for mitigation.

Hence, the international climate change negotiation process – as well as climate policies at regional, national and local levels - must adopt the principles of gender equity at all stages: from research, to analysis, and the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies. This applies in particular to the process towards a post-2012 climate protection regime, i.e. a future system for the protection of the Earth's climate that needs to be ready when the current Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ends.

A multi-pronged strategy, using various entry-points, mechanisms and tools, seems advisable in order to achieve this goal. One key step, and challenge, is to increase the participation of women and gender experts in decision-making on climate change at all levels.

Gender Onto the Climate Change Agenda

Progress on the incorporation of gender concerns in international agreements on climate change has been little and slow. Gender aspects are rarely addressed in climate change policy. This applies – with few exemptions – to the national as well as the international level. Various reasons account for this neglect: gender aspects in climate change are often not self-evident, and there are few data, research, or case studies clarifying and exemplifying the linkages between gender justice and climate change. Gender is not only relevant in its own right but also constitutes an opportunity to introduce a focus on social aspects into the climate change agenda.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): Although gender and women's issues are rather well integrated in Agenda 21, the main not legally binding outcome document from the Rio Earth Summit (also frequently dubbed the 'blueprint for sustainable development'), gender equality or equity and women's issues are not mentioned in the UNFCCC, which was also adopted at the Rio Summit in 1992. One might have reasonably expected that gender would be brought forward for consideration at subsequent UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs), particularly in light of the agreement's overall lack of specificity around targets and rules for mitigating climate change. However, while "some efforts were made in this direction, but these quickly fell to the wayside at later negotiations. It was only with the clarification of the instruments of the Kyoto Protocol, especially the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDMs) that gender aspects began to again attract the interest of gender experts. Since then, the focus of most positions and analyses done from a gender perspective have focussed exclusively on women in developing countries, where CDM projects are carried out and where there are active women's networks in the field of energy (e.g. Skutsch 2004, Skutsch/Wamukonya 2001). No gender analyses have been done for industrialised countries, the financiers of CDM projects. This is also true for all other instruments and articles of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (Röhr, 2006, p1).

UNFCCC COP 13, Bali: The latest COP13, held in Bali in December 2007, has not brought a change in terms of agreed language on gender equity in relation to climate change but it has still been something of a breakthrough in terms of women and gender in the climate process.

Several important bodies and individuals have made public commitments to gender issues and recognized their importance, particularly for the process of developing a climate protection regime beyond 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ends.

For the first time in UNFCCC history, a worldwide civil society network of women, *gendercc – women for climate justice*, was formally established, building on activities during previous COPs and extensive preparations for Bali. UNDP supported the participation of seven of the women from developing countries and countries in transition. The group published several position papers articulating the women's and gender perspectives on the most pressing issues under negotiation. And for the first time a range of activities on women's and gender issues was organized by various organisations and institutions. Several Intergovernmental Organisations, together with WEDO, also launched a Global Gender and Climate Alliance, with the gender representatives of UNDP, UNEP, and IUCN being present at a UNFCCC COP for the first time.¹

These networks, activities and publications were met with interest, increasing awareness, and increased expression of commitment to gender justice from a number of stakeholders. Some 1,500 copies of the *gendercc network* position papers were disseminated, and delegates responded positively to the papers, the women's statement in plenary, and the side events, and the exhibition booth was frequently visited. Network representatives were invited to speak at a range of events to represent gender aspects.

It was already at the SBSTA/SBI meeting in Bonn in May 2007, half a year before the COP, when the *Indonesian Ministry for the Environment*, preparing to host the COP, expressed their commitment to support women's involvement in the conference as well as the desire for integrating gender equality in the deliberations. Furthermore, the president of the conference, *Indonesians Minister for the Environment Rachmat Witoelar*, expressed his commitment to mainstream gender into the Bali Outcomes during a meeting with Indonesian NGOs. Although he did not succeed doing this, his statement constitutes a strong message. Some days after the conference, the Bangkok Post published an article referring to *Thailand's Minister of the Environment* expressing his disappointment with the Bali outcome and calling on governments to support women's roles in combating global warming. In a meeting with NGOs, UNFCCC Secretariat Director Yvo de Boer explicitly requested support for gender mainstreaming in climate policy making.

Beyond such statements, there were also a great variety of activities addressing women's and gender concerns going on around the Bali COP, including six side events held by development organisations, women's and women ministers' networks, and governmental departments addressed women's / gender issues as their main focus or integrated them in a broader framework (forestation/deforestation, adaptation, financing, energy, biodiversity, and future climate regime).

The *Women's Caucus* was cooperating closely with the *Climate Justice Caucus*, which was newly established at the COP. Issues of climate justice are proving to be excellent entry points for highlighting gender issues. Indeed, it seems that climate justice is one of the upcoming and may play an important role the debates over the next years.

Trade Unions, traditionally a partner for campaigning on gender equality, were approved as a constituency to the UNFCCC for the first year. They expressed their interest in cooperation and included a paragraph on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, suggested by the Women's Caucus, in their lobbying document.

The described activities and developments mark a step change in terms of gender and climate

¹Also see www.unep.org/gender_env/media_advisory/

change issues in the international policy process and arena: new connections between different issues have been made, and new alliances have been established.

Climate Justice: Entry Points for Gender Justice: It seems that ‘gender equality’ is finally beginning to be accepted as one of the core principles of mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts. This may be due to the importance of climate justice in the future climate regime and the increased understanding among at least some of organisations forming the UNFCCC constituencies that the discourse on climate change needs to be widened beyond its current main focus on technologies and economic instruments. Root causes of climate change, like consumption patterns and lifestyles in industrialised countries and quickly developing societies must be brought onto the agenda immediately. Women and gender activists have been pointing out for some years that we need to question the dominant perspective focusing mainly on technologies and markets, and put caring and justice in the centre of measures and mechanisms. The notably increased attention paid to climate justice and gender mainstreaming is certainly the outcome of many, many conversations with individual delegates, the increasing presence, and other aspects of the multi-track advocacy strategy that a small group of women and gender experts has engaged in at the COPs over the years. It seems that these patiently continued activities, including through tough times, are finally paying off.

Some countries, and not least the UNFCCC Secretariat, are also appearing more open-minded towards gender equality. During the side event “Integrating gender into climate change policy: challenges, constraints, perspectives” and in various smaller debates they expressed their concerns about the lacking gender dimension and assured their support for future activities. And they asked for very concrete suggestions, in particular regarding language, to be used in upcoming negotiations. This will be one of the tasks, and challenges, for further collaboration in the *gendercc network*: to pay very close attention to the negotiations and work closely with like-minded parties towards appropriate agreements. The network is committed to doing engaging in this way without compromising the independent, and sometimes radical, stance that it has developed. Taking gender aspects into account implies a radical move away from dominant, market-based to *people-centred* mechanisms. This is a message that is not warmly welcomed in most of the climate change community. Hence, while there has been a step-change at COP13 in terms of awareness of and public commitment to gender sensitivity, really integrating gender into climate protection will remain a big challenge.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): The COP process of the CBD has been picking up on climate change issues, and it has been picking up on gender issues – however, not in conjunction, and with climate clearly being addressed to a very limited extent.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): UNEP operates climate change related activities in several of its centres around the globe ²; and UNEP has been working on issues such as climate, finance and business; mitigation of energy-related emissions; carbon sequestration and land use, land use change and forestry; vulnerability and adaptation to climate change; technology transfer; capacity building; and climate change and development. UNEP’s annual Governing Council Meetings provide an important forum for high-level deliberations among environment Ministers.

United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD): The CSD 14/15 cycle mainly dealt with energy, and – to a limited extent – with climate change issues. Women were particularly successful in their advocacy, and the draft CSD15 decision indeed con-

² http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/Climate_Change_Centre/index.asp

tained a number of strong paragraphs on women and (access to) energy, and a few references to climate change. However, this draft decision was never adopted.

Other international or regional fora, such as regional Economic Commissions, or bodies like EU, AU, OECD, OAS and others have not addressed gender and climate change issues, but they may provide very important entry-points for building up capacity and awareness, including on regionally specific challenges relating to gender and climate.

Strategies to Increase Gender Responsiveness to Climate Change

The international climate change negotiation process – as well as climate policies at regional, national and local levels - must adopt the principles of gender equity at all stages: from research, to analysis, and the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies. From other policy processes we know very well that only if gender aspects are integrated in the documents, there will be a chance to refer to them and hold governments accountable to their commitments.

The climate change debate in general, and the development of future commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, needs to be set firmly into the context of *Sustainable Development* and its inclusion of social/equity aspects in environmental issues. The Principles of the Rio Declaration should serve as the overall framework for developing fair and effective policies for mitigation and adaptation. Therefore, the preparations for the 2nd commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol need to draw upon experiences, indicators, and other tools developed in international sustainable development processes as well as regional and national sustainable development strategies.

Actions should include setting up a process or mechanism that ensures that all suggested commitments, and mechanisms to help meet them are checked for their environmental, social and economic impacts, with a particular attention to gender specific impacts. When preparing contributions to the post-2012 process, inputs should be requested from relevant international bodies such as the UN CSW, UN DAW, UNIFEM, and women's organizations and networks as well as gender experts should be invited to comment on draft documents.

Actions to be undertaken should also include ensuring gender mainstreaming in all mitigation and adaptation policies, drawing on experiences with gender mainstreaming in environmental policy, eg regarding gender impacts assessment tools, affirmative action policies, etc. There is a need to invest in research to obtain more comprehensive data on gender aspects of climate change, relating both to mitigation and adaptation (e.g. in what ways women and men are vulnerable to climate change? What are the strengths and skills of women and men that we need to build on?). Finally, gender analysis should be included in all preparations of commitments and mechanisms to help meet commitments, addressing questions such as: What do climate policies mean for women and men? Are there differences? And how can such differences be addressed to ensure gender and climate justice? Established methods such as gender impact assessments, gender budgeting, and the like should be used.

Women's organisations and the gendercc civil society network will have to invest in developing further positions and suggestions and to provide necessary background information will therefore be essential for further developing a gender sensitive climate regime, including on mitigating climate change through emissions reductions needs to be addressed, focussing on the gender dimension of the most important sectors for the implementation of climate protection policies: energy, transport, agriculture; CDM and the carbon market in general.

In the future, efforts similar to those before and at COP13 must be undertaken related to the process and institutional arrangements. *Continuous representation of women and gender ex-*

perts, such as in the *gendercc network*, will be crucial. Furthermore, it will not be sufficient to participate in the annual COPs and SBSTA/SBI meetings. In order to succeed in integrating gender in climate change policy, it will be even more important and more promising to actively participate in the growing number of workshops organised in the context of pursuing the Bali Plan of Action. Four to five additional annual meetings will be held in order to discuss and negotiate the future climate regime. In addition, there is a significant number of related workshops, for example addressing the review of articles and conventions, or methodological issues.

Yet in order to prepare substantial input into the workshops, it is necessary to increase the available amount of data and research on gender and climate topics, and to link discussions at local levels to those at the international level – feeding local realities and experiences into the general and abstract discussions at the global level, as well as ‘translating’ global changes and international policies so as to communicate what these will, or may, mean for local communities. Providing capacity development opportunities for women and gender activities who are prepared to raise their voices in the international policy arena will be key, so that they can become effective advocates on policy and effective communicators to communities and networks around the world. Preparing training materials, tools, and lessons learned will be as important as facilitating learning platforms for exchange and mutual capacity building among the women and gender experts.

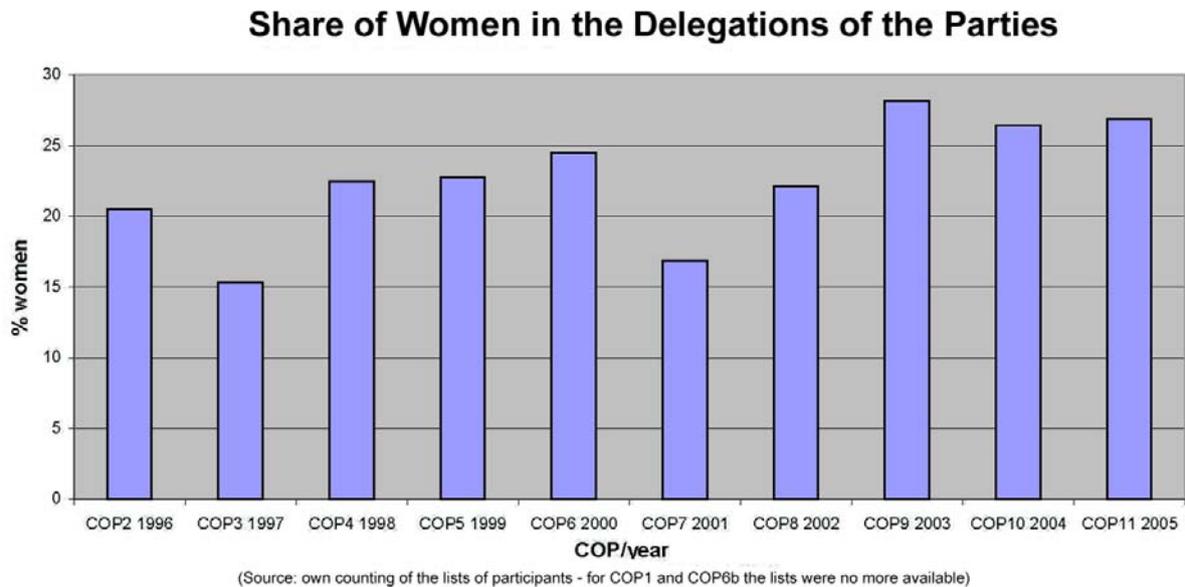
In order to be able to meet said requirements, the *gendercc network* agreed to further developing its structure and activities by establishing regional focal points and a global; and *raising funds to cover the costs of participating* in the UNFCCC process for a number of women from around world. This will also serve the women’s goal of being recognised as a constituency in the UNFCCC process. This recognition, in turn, will facilitate invitations to participate in workshops, give statements and submit positions.

The topic of climate change is not yet well established within *the international women’s movement*, and there is a need for information about the issues as well as the political processes. As has been demonstrated in recent years, it is particularly important to increase the participation of women who have expertise both on gender and on climate. The general advocacy for women’s rights and gender equity is crucial, but so is the ability to argue in detail, why and how gender should and can be integrated into climate related policymaking. Such expertise is hardly available within the process right now, and the participation of gender and climate experts – from the governmental or other constituencies’ side - will help formulate policies that are avoiding to put women at a disadvantage but rather be gender neutral or help to further gender equity.

Participation of Women in Decision-Making on Climate Change

Quantitative analysis of women’s participation in the UNFCCC process: In general, besides the parties there are five different groups (“constituencies”) of observers at UNFCCC: industry representatives, environmental organizations, municipal/regional networks and local governments, indigenous peoples, and the research community. Delia Villagrasa, who for many years directed the non-governmental organizations Climate Action Network-Europe and e5 (European Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future), reflects on the role of women in the negotiations: “ Women were able to play a strong and generally positive role for climate protection based on their networking and interpersonal skills, and their ability to think and plan for the long term, even though they were generally underrepresented in the decision-making positions in their respective communities” (Villagrasa 2002:41).

Constituencies and Delegations: Governmental delegations are composed of senior staff from research, industry, and associations, in addition to state ministerial representatives. Most often the host country's delegation is remarkably large, also including many representatives from the non-governmental sector. The following graph shows the progression of women's representation in governmental delegations at UNFCCC COPs:



At the highest level - heads of delegations - women are substantially less represented. For example, in 2006, the percentage of female heads of delegations was 15.7; in 2007 it was 12%.

The constituency of *business and industry* (BINGO) representatives is still an almost exclusively male club. The BINGO group has the smallest percentage of women as compared to all other constituencies, especially among their decision-making lobbyists. BINGOs also form the group with the least geographical diversity: the vast majority of representatives are from the USA and less than 5% are from developing countries.

While, on average, men dominate *environmental NGOs* (ENGOS) as well, some of the biggest ENGOS are or were in the past led by women. This is certainly the case within the global network of climate organizations, the Climate Action Network (CAN). Within CAN, for a long time “women power” has prevailed: some of the largest and most active regional nodes were led by women. Women have ensured that NGOs were working together, so (...) that strong messages went out to the world” (Villagrasa 2002:42,43).

Women are not yet a separate constituency in the UNFCCC. At ten COPs from 1997-2006, there were a total of only 23 representatives explicitly representing women's organizations, half of them as members of the larger NGO delegation and the others as small women's delegations unto themselves. There are four women's organizations accredited to the UNFCCC as observer organizations, at most one or two of them are taking part in the annual conferences with their own delegations. The unusually low level of participation of women's organizations at UN Climate Conferences might have been due to the different mechanisms of participation, but also to the lack of recognition of women and gender aspects in the negotiations (see Röhr & Hemmati 2008).

Women's Participation in the Post-2012 Process: In order to ensure gender mainstreaming in the post-2012 discussions, it is important to draw upon the expertise of women and gender

experts. Therefore, governments should aim to ensure their involvement when they prepare their contributions for the international process, and ensure women's participation at international meetings.

As stated above, governments should draw on the expertise of international institutions, such as the UN Division for the Advancement of Women; UNIFEM; the CEDAW Committee, INSTRAW, FAO, UNDP, UNEP, and others, through inviting and supporting their active participation in the UNFCCC process. They should also draw on the expertise at national level, through including gender departments and experts within national environment / energy ministries and agencies, and inviting other relevant cabinet ministries (e.g. Women's / Gender Affairs) to actively participate in the work on the UNFCCC process, and consider inviting representatives of women's organizations and gender experts to join national delegations to international meetings. National governments can set important examples of taking the gender dimension into account in their own climate policy, of supporting initiatives that work towards gender justice in climate change policy, and of strengthening the debate on gender issues in the international climate negotiations.

Furthermore, governments – particularly donor governments – should provide funding for supporting the contributions and participation of women and gender experts in the international climate change process. Finally, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the Chair and Bureau of international meetings relating to climate change should be advised to ensure that women can actively participate. The Secretariat can also serve governments by providing information and supporting capacity development for integrating gender into climate negotiations.

It is urgently required to make women's involvement in international climate policy consistent and continuous. This includes close collaboration in the periods between COPs, in order to ensure longer-term preparation, attendance of UNFCCC workshops and the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies, preparation of submissions, and exchange with other groups (NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, Trade Unions, Research Organisations).

There are not many data on women's participation in climate related decision-making at the *local level*. Proxy indications would suggest that participation is very low. For example, women's participation in the energy sectors (beyond household biomass) is very low as this has traditionally been a very male dominated sector. A project undertaken by the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples, "Climate for Change"³, found that women's participation was indeed lower than expected, even in Scandinavian countries where women's participation is usually higher than elsewhere.

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³ See www.climateforchange.net

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Some networks & websites

Gendercc network – women for climate justice: www.gendercc.net

International network on gender and sustainable energy: www.energia.org

Gender and disaster network: www.gdnonline.org

Gender and climate change group founded at COP9 (not updated anymore): www.gencc.interconnections.org

Mailing list on gender and climate change: gender_cc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com