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**Commission on Sustainable Development acting as  
The preparatory committee for the  
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28 January – 8 February 2002**

**Secretary-General's Note for the  
Multi-Stake Holder Dialogue Segment of the Second Preparatory Committee**

**Addendum No. 1: Dialogue Paper by Women**

*Prepared by the Women's Environment and Development Organization, invited by the WSSD Secretariat as the organizing partner of the Dialogue Segment for Women. The paper has been prepared in consultation with women's organizations worldwide facilitated by WEDO.*

*“We women form a significant proportion of the workforce and sustain the majority of households and communities. We are consumers and producers, and make many relevant decisions. In every corner of the world women are change agents. Women of all ages and backgrounds show commitment, knowledge and skills to build a more sustainable society.”<sup>1</sup>*

## **1. Introduction**

1. Women, who make up half of the global population,<sup>2</sup> are key actors in building sustainable development. Juggling with multiple responsibilities in the home, at the workplace, in the community, women have a unique knowledge of sustainability and a critical influence on the lives of their families, communities, and societies. However, persistent gender inequalities continue to leave women without an equal voice in the decision-making processes that impact their lives and their environment.

2. This paper evaluates progress on gender and sustainable development since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro. It also examines women’s priorities for the future as the preparatory process for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg gets underway. It should be noted that although women are discussed as a major group in this paper, women live in many different contexts and situations and that their position differs depending on region, social status and class, age, caste, and educational background. But in every society, women as a group are disadvantaged as compared to men.

## **2. Gender Concerns At UNCED**

3. The Rio Declaration stated clearly: *‘Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.’* (Principle 20)

4. UNCED was a groundbreaking conference, not only because of its agenda-setting on environment and development, but also because it affirmed women’s critical contributions to environmental management and sustainable development. The outcomes were largely due to the extent of women’s involvement in the preparatory process. Worldwide women organized national and regional forums began to lobby to draw attention to women’s concerns and priorities, and to stimulate a gender focus in the conference.

5. Prior to UNCED two major conferences of women’s organisations were convened in November 1991 in Miami. At the ‘Global Assembly on Women and the Environment: Partners in Life’ organized by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and WorldWIDE Network Inc., case studies on women and development were presented. At the World Women’s Congress for a Healthy Planet, organized by Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), more than 1,500 women from 83 countries came together to formulate and adopt Women’s Action Agenda 21, a blueprint for a healthy and peaceful planet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Armed with this powerful tool, women successfully

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<sup>1</sup> From: Statement by the Women’s Caucus given to Ministerial Meeting, UNECE PrepComm for the WSSD, Geneva, 24 September 2001

<sup>2</sup> “There are slightly fewer women in the world than men – 99 women per 100 men.” The regions where men outnumber women are mostly situated in Asia and Northern Africa. “Of the 22 countries or areas in the world where there are 95 or fewer women per 100 men, all but one are in Asia and Oceania. The deficit in Southern Asia may be in part the result of some forms of discrimination against women and girls.” In all other regions of the world, women outnumber men. Of the world’s near one billion adults, two-thirds are women (UN, The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics, Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

lobbied for sections on gender equality in the official UNCED documents, Agenda 21 and The Rio Declaration.

6. At the UNCED NGO Forum daily panel discussions, workshops and informal meetings were organized in the Women's tent—*Planeta Femea*—organized by the Brazilian women's organization, REDEH (Network for Human Development). These combined efforts not only resulted in the drafting of Principle 20 in the Rio Declaration, but also in the recognition of women as Major Group in Agenda 21. Chapter 24, 'Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development'—which consists of 11 different commitments—is policy and management oriented and contains specific recommendations to strengthen the role of women in sustainable development and to eliminate obstacles to their equal and beneficial participation, particularly in decision-making. In Agenda 21, 145 other references are made to necessary steps to be taken, from a gender perspective.

7. The commitments in Agenda 21 on strengthening the position of women and advancing gender equality, are made in the following nine areas:

- Recognition of the role of women
- Participation of women (and women's groups)
- Women's access to and control of resources
- Women's poverty, education and work
- Women's health and security
- Women's organisation and empowerment for SD
- Women's rights
- Information
- Institutional aspects.

### **3. Progress Since Rio?**

8. This Chapter evaluates progress in implementing gender related commitments in Agenda 21 since UNCED. It is based on information from various sources—women's groups around the world, governments and the United Nations—since no formal monitoring mechanisms are provided in Agenda 21.

9. Since 1992 gender has been an explicit part of many key UN conferences, specifically: World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994)<sup>3</sup>; World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996); World Food Summit (Rome, 1996); and the five-year review conferences: ICPD+5 (1999), WSSD+5 (2000), Beijing+5 (2000).

10. Significant among these was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, where the final document, Platform for Action, augmented the shift from a women-specific approach to a focus on gender relations. Six areas were identified in which action was needed: Mainstreaming a gender perspective in sustainable development; participation of women in decision-making for sustainable development; strengthening women's capabilities;

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<sup>3</sup> While recognizing the impossibility of sustainable development without the full participation and empowerment of women, ICPD shifted the debate on population from demographic concerns and targets towards the view that well-being of women and men was at the centre of sustainable development.

involving civil society; gender analysis and research; empowering women economically. The strategies highlighted were gender mainstreaming, a life-cycle approach, partnerships between women and men, a human rights approach, and a holistic approach towards development.<sup>4</sup> The following assessment mirrors the commitment categories in Agenda 21, as listed in the introduction above:

**a) Recognition of the Role of Women**

11. Critical area K of the Beijing Platform for Action ‘Women and Environment’ asserts that “human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development”, and that “women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resources management.”

12. Since women are primarily responsible for sustaining the livelihood of their families, they play a critical role in managing the diversity of the ecosystem. In many regions around the world women are responsible for producing the bulk of domestic food. In Africa alone this figure is as high as 70-80 percent. Worldwide, they make up 51 percent of the agricultural labour force. In most societies in Africa, Latin America and Asia, the care of seeds has traditionally been in the hands of women. Women are also responsible for household consumption. This is true not only in day-to-day situations, but also during and after natural disasters and in situations of severe environmental degradation (DAW, 2001). However, women’s contribution in terms of labour, skills and knowledge, and in the use and management of natural resources—including food, water and energy production—often goes unrecognised, unrecorded and undervalued.

13. Women’s role in consumption has a major impact on development. The choices women make as consumers, tend to consider the long term, social and environmental implications, although this does not by definition mean that women will always make more sustainable choices.<sup>5</sup> While corporations and advertisement firms have clearly recognized women’s role as consumers, it has yet to be recognized by institutions working towards sustainable development.

14. Since 1992 many studies have analysed the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in the use and management of natural resources. However, very few governmental institutions have integrated a gender dimension into their official environment and sustainable development policies. Where governments have tried to incorporate gender it has often been ad hoc in character—for example, commissioning studies and development guidelines that are never used. Gender perspectives stand a greater chance of being integrated into individual field programmes.

15. There are, however, indications that change is on the way. A number of states have taken steps to incorporate a gender perspective in their national environmental activities and plans. In Colombia, the Ministry of Environment supports incorporating gender perspectives in the planning, management and evaluation of projects of the National Environment System. Côte

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<sup>4</sup> As obstacles for implementation of the Platform of Action were identified in the Beijing +5 Review: conflict and human displacement; economic change and instability; discrimination practices; attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes; absence of targets, data and monitoring mechanisms; and resources shortages.

<sup>5</sup> Based upon studies referred to in ‘Gender and Sustainable Consumption. Bridging Policy gaps in the Context of Chapter 4, Agenda 21. report for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, 7nd session, April 1999 (UNED-UK, 1999)

d'Ivoire has developed a National Action Programme on the Environment (PNAE), which takes into consideration gender concerns, and Canada promoted the integration of gender in the texts of international sustainable development agreements.

16. Non-governmental organisations working on environment and sustainable development have tended to focus on gender for short periods of time without mainstreaming it in their overall work. Although no comparative research is available, women's organisations over the past decade appear to have paid much more attention to sustainable development. While mainstreaming sustainable development into women's organisations is usually a success, it is much more difficult to mainstream gender issues into sustainable development organisations.

#### **b) Participation of Women**

*“ No government can claim to be democratic if half of its population is excluded from decision making.”* Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, New York, October 2000

17. Promoting women's leadership and widening women's role in decision-making are key strategies for sustainable development, since production and reproduction requires the full participation and partnership of both women and men. Although a number of countries have reported progress on this front, the overall lack of gender disaggregated data at all levels—international, national and local—does not allow for an adequate assessment of women's participation in sustainable development.

18. Women's networks were actively engaged in the 1990s cycle of UN conferences and summits, and played an important part in monitoring the implementation of agreements but women's participation has in many cases not been a priority. For example, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) stakeholder dialogues since 1998 have not included women as a distinct group. (This only changed in the WSSD preparatory process). At the local level women are not in control of, and rarely able to participate, in decision-making structures relating to, inter alia, water, agriculture and forest systems.

19. Despite this overall assessment, there are some positive examples of women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development. In China, women constituted 38 percent of the staff in environmental protection departments in 1997. In Tunisia women constitute 36 percent of the total staff of the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development, with 19 percent occupying senior management positions. In Canada indigenous women have been fully active in the government's efforts to meet commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

20. Currently, women make up 14 percent of governments worldwide. Among government ministers they make up just over 14 percent, although only 9.4 percent are in the legal areas and less than 5 percent in economic, political and executive positions. There are only 22 women ministers of environment worldwide. Women are also significantly underrepresented in corporate decision-making and in trade organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) where there were only 12 women among the 159 trade policy experts in 1999. More recently there have been some positive actions such as the November 2001 appointment of the first two women ever elected by the UN General Assembly to serve on the 55-year old International Law Commission.

21. Participation of women in natural (and economic) sciences remains limited. In the Pacific Islands, for example, there are no women heads of meteorological services, and most other related governmental agencies—water, agriculture, fisheries, disaster management, planning and health—are headed by men. In natural disasters managing councils in the Middle East, women’s participation is practically non-existent, although the number of female professional engineers, medical doctors, service providers as well as decision-makers in different governmental and NGO organisations in that region has increased.

22. The participation of both women and men in sustainable development policy making brings a higher quality to planning and an important sense of ownership to projects. Sixty percent of cities worldwide involve civil society in formal participatory processes prior to the implementation of major public projects. Engendering Local Agenda 21 (LA21) has been successful in many municipalities. WEDO and the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) worked together to understand the specific roles that women play in LA21 worldwide. LA21 programming at municipal level represents a special opportunity to increase women’s participation in sustainable development. However, few localities have made consistent efforts in this area, although WEDO/ICLEI surveys showed there is ample room for development of such an approach. In the 1996 survey of LA21 projects in 2,500 municipalities, 53 percent reported that women were included in decision-making processes.

23. The survey also found examples of cities that have proactive approaches to incorporating gender concerns. The Trinidad and Tobago Network of NGOs developed a project called ‘Engendering Local Government’ that trained more than 300 women in political skills, and local government representatives and administrators in gender analysis and planning. Some of these activities focussed on environmental planning and concerns. UNED-UK has developed very useful toolkits to promote the full participation of women in sustainable development.

### **c) Women’s Access To and Control Of Natural Resources**

24. Women’s access to and control and management of natural resources are crucial aspects of sustainable development. Where they have access to land and resources women play an important role in conservation. A study conducted by ITDG showed that women living in the very fragile *charlands* of Bangladesh are very particular about preserving the natural vegetation, which they consider to be a valuable resource and necessary for the stability of the land. However their access to the abundant open-water fish resources, which represents a huge livelihood potential, is restricted since fishing is considered a male occupation or the job of a low caste.

25. Women, however, are often not permitted to own land, and even in countries where women have ownership rights, huge inequities in access still exist. Case studies in the working paper, ‘Rights of Women to the Natural Resources Land and Water,’ of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1997), highlight the importance of land and water rights, and how having these rights strengthens other rights.

26. The current magnitude of land degradation poses an added threat to the livelihoods and survival of many families. Prolonged dry seasons aggravated by climate change, and clear-cutting due to agriculture development and urban settlements, create a great loss of forest and the natural green cover on which women and their families depend. Manmade small-scale natural disasters, which are occurring at a more regular rate, have a major impact on people’s

lives in general, but particularly increase women's workload and responsibilities. More and more people are obliged to use land and other resources that are unsuitable or of poor quality, which increases the rate of environmental degradation and further damages livelihoods.

27. In the past decade, access to water and adequate sanitation has barely kept pace with population growth, even in urban areas where low water pressure is a regular phenomenon. The impact of increasingly scarce fresh water supplies has obliged women water carriers to travel longer distances—up to 8 hours per day—and spend many hours waiting to fill their pails. In many cases girl children have to assist their mothers to fulfil these and other related tasks, such as the necessary environmental control measures to deal with water-borne diseases.

28. UNEP estimates that 1.7 billion people lack access to safe water and expects this number to reach 2.3 billion by 2025 if present trends continue.<sup>6</sup> Polluted water is one of the most common causes of disease and death worldwide. Women are the hardest hit by limited quantities and poor quality water. In Latin America women have kidnapped water officials to force authorities to provide sufficient water for the needs of their families.

29. Current processes, such as privatisation of land and other resources, population pressure and the dissolution of customary land tenure are undermining women's ability to use and conserve scarce land and water resources. Land is moved away from food production and into corporate control for large-scale industrial monocultures, tourism, shrimp cultivation. This has further marginalised and impoverished women and men farmers, and intensified food insecurity.

30. The transformation of agriculture to meet the needs of a globalised market economy is also contributing to the gradual erosion of women's biological resources and knowledge systems. Trade liberalisation in agriculture and privatisation of water bodies and forest resources has weakened the ability of small farmers to compete in the world market and to access critical resources such as water, fuel and fodder. Privatisation also means that people have to pay high prices for formerly free resources on which they depend. Women's access to seeds and other living resources is threatened both by patenting of life forms and their own lack of knowledge about their intellectual property rights.

#### **d) Women's Poverty, Education and Work**

31. Poverty eradication is both a complex and a multidimensional issue, and fundamental to promoting equality between men and women. Still women comprise 70 percent of the 1.5 billion absolute poor—living on one dollar a day or less—resulting in limited access to public services and limited access to/control over public resources, including adequate shelter.

32. In Africa, poverty levels now stand at an average of 41 percent and as much as 51 percent in sub-Saharan countries; between 1987 and 1998 the number of poor in South Asia increased by 10 percent.<sup>7</sup> In Central and Eastern European countries the collapse of socialist economies has contributed to the sharp rise of poverty and an increasing gap between rich poor. China reported that the poverty-stricken population had dropped from 65 million in 1995 to 42 million in 1998, with the decrease in the number of poor women accounting for almost 60

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<sup>6</sup> 'World Day for Water', UNEP and United Nations University news release, 22 March 1999.

<sup>7</sup> World Development Report 1999-2000, World Bank

percent of that reduction.<sup>8</sup> Poor women are disproportionately found as heads of single parent families (female headed households) and among people of pensionable age.<sup>9</sup> In Canada the poverty rates for female-headed households rose from 57.2 percent in 1995 to 61.4 percent in 1998, with declining employment as a key factor.

33. More than one billion of the world's urban residents live in inadequate housing, in sprawling slums and squatter settlements in developing countries. In cities in developed countries more than 16 percent of all households live in poverty, while in developing countries more than 36 percent of all households and 41 percent of all women headed households have an income below the locally defined poverty lines. In the North there is a growing divide between the rich and poor that has a distinct gender perspective—approximately 15.4 percent of women compared to 12 percent of men are living below the poverty line in the USA and in Italy 12.8 percent of women 10.6 percent of men. The higher levels of poverty among women despite their significant contribution to the economy, is linked to the fact that they are viewed as marginal workers and consumers, rather than producers or managers.

34. The gender effects of economic globalisation have varied in different countries according to the socio-economic structure and extent of integration in the world economy. These have resulted in falling fertility rates, rising educational attainment of women, increasing urbanisation and changing family structures. Privatisation, one of the engines driving economic globalisation, has intensified existing gender, class and race-based inequalities to which poor women are subjected. Globalisation increases women's multiple responsibilities in paid and unpaid work. Intergovernmental organisations have failed to formulate and evaluate trade policies from a gender perspective, exacerbating women's economic inequity.

35. Generally speaking, women's employment has increased during the last two decades around the world. However, huge differences persist with respect to the quality, conditions and pay of female and male work. Governments have generally failed to integrate women's unpaid work in national accounting systems.

36. Education is an important strategy for poverty eradication. High rates of illiteracy clearly affect women's economic opportunities and civil engagement. Women are 65 percent of those without basic reading skills worldwide. There are 900 million illiterates in the world and 130 million children unable to attend primary school. Illiteracy has been declining but the rates remain high in Africa, and in some parts of the world such as South Asia, illiteracy is reportedly increasing among women. Education also has an important effect on population trends: A woman with at least seven years of education has 2.2 fewer children than a woman with no schooling. In some regions in the world, such as the Middle East, women are participating in planning, implementation, and evaluation of different education projects. As a result their knowledge of sustainable life styles is increasing.

## **e) Women's Health and Security**

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<sup>8</sup> UN DAW, Beijing+5, 2000

<sup>9</sup> Nine to 42 percent of all households in all regions of the world are female headed; for example 42% in Southern Africa, 36% in Caribbean, around 30% in developed regions of the world. (UN, The World's Women 2000. Trends and Statistics. Department of Economic and Social Affairs.)

37. Women increasingly want to be involved in identifying, characterising and solving problems impacting their lives. However, women have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health. These include unequal access to basic health services, disproportionate responsibilities in the family and society, discrimination and experiences of violence and unsafe pregnancies. Women weakened by environment-related health problems are more vulnerable in pregnancy and childbirth. They are particularly vulnerable, especially in female-headed households, to environmental pollution and high prices for energy, food, and water, due to their reproductive roles and household responsibilities.

38. Although gender differences in susceptibility to the risks of various toxic substances are still poorly understood, it is clear that these differences exist and are a particular threat to women's health. This is especially so in urban areas and in low-income areas, which are more likely to have a high concentration of polluting industrial facilities or agricultural industries. With respect to agro-chemicals, farmers seldom receive adequate information regarding occupational health and safety or the proper management of these chemicals.

39. A variety of chemicals are associated with cancer in women, pregnancy failures and childhood development difficulties. Cancers of the reproductive system affect growing numbers of women. Poverty and accompanying malnutrition are also associated with reproductive health problems. There has been special concern about the effects of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and endocrine disruptors on human reproduction, and development.<sup>10</sup>

40. In the past decade women worldwide have organised to advance their reproductive rights. They have showed that proper pre-natal and obstetric care, safe and reliable contraception, HIV/AIDS prevention and care, and other aspects of health for women are inseparable from such basic amenities as reliable transportation, hygienic conditions and clean water. While these provisions are required for women's health and rights, and for stabilising rapid population growth, the world recognises that many other factors contribute to decisions about childbearing.

41. Recent examples of women organising to change government policy include WEDO's public hearings for the Action for Cancer Prevention Campaign, which gave women an opportunity to tell their stories about environmental health hazards in their communities, while laying out concrete proposals for policy changes to respond to rising cancer rates. In Argentina the Biological Conservation Regional Economy Pilot project involved participation and input of local women in data collection related to pesticide use in tobacco production, and related birth defects and cancers. And in 1998 in Malaysia PAN-AP and Farm Worker Women's Leadership Network compiled information and personal stories to document pesticide related health problems faced by women workers

#### **f) Women's Organisation and Empowerment for Sustainable Development**

42. Worldwide women have organised and launched countless initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development. This paper allows for only a few to be mentioned. In the document

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<sup>10</sup> Among the POPs are phalates, PCBs, dioxine and at least 84 pesticides.

‘Women Transform the Mainstream,’<sup>11</sup> 18 case studies show women activists challenging industry, demanding clean water and calling for gender equality in sustainable development. Many more examples exist on women’s role in forest conservation, river management, land recovery, waste control, awareness raising, local planning—from the United Kingdom to Uzbekistan to Uganda.

43. These cases demonstrate that it is not only necessary for women to organise they must be empowered to do so. For example, in Guatemala activities in a forest conservation project organised by FUNDAECO (Foundation for Eco-development and Conservation)<sup>12</sup> were designed to solicit greater input from women. Early activities engaged women in drawing community resource maps, and as the community became comfortable with the process, more formal tools were used, such as Community Evaluation Cards, to identify the most critical areas of concern to women about the environment.

44. Governments have reported on a range of activities from awareness building to training programmes and seminars for women in natural resource management and environmental protection. Numerous reports show training as the strategy of choice for increasing women’s capabilities in sustainable development. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran organised workshops on women’s participation in environmental protection in order to increase the proportion of women engaged in preserving natural resources. The government of Jamaica, with support of CIDA, launched a ‘Trees for Tomorrow’ project involving women in agro-forestry extension activities, and Germany initiated a project called ‘Girls for an Ecological Europe’, which motivates and supports girls who want to become active in the field of ecology. Costa Rica created an ‘International Eco-Peace Village’ to train women and youth about ecological issues and sustainable development and Congo, Malaysia, Mali and the Republic of Moldova embarked in environmental awareness training programmes for women.

45. In several regions prone to conflicts or natural disasters, women have been empowered through the creation of a Women’s Neighbourhood Team. These teams have strengthened women’s capacity and also proven to be a strong tool against domestic violence. Elsewhere, women have been active in peace building, for example, Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace, Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe in Rwanda, the Soldiers Mothers Committee in Russia, Saturday Women of Istanbul in Turkey, Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, National Union of Guatemalan Women.

#### **g) Women’s Rights**

46. The basic principle of human rights affirms the dignity of every individual. Rights also empower people in the fight against poverty and for sustainable development. There is a growing recognition that protecting and promoting women’s and girls’ human rights not only improves their political, social, and health status, but also contributes to the well being of family, community and society.

47. However, lack of equal property rights is still a major cause of the feminisation of poverty. Women own less than 1 percent of the world’s land property. Land title deeds are the

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<sup>11</sup> Background Paper prepared by WEDO for the Commission on Sustainable Development, Sixth Session, New York, April 1998.

<sup>12</sup> The project title is Allies in Conservation Environmental Education with a Gender Perspective in the Tropical Rain Forest.

main form of security used to secure loans and credit. Security of tenure is amongst the most important of all housing rights. The growing awareness of the relationships between human rights and sustainable development has led to a decline in human rights abuses in settlement, such as mass forced evictions. In 1996 the government of Tunisia introduced new legislation expanding women's rights with respect to accessing housing credit.

48. At the same time, women's rights to liberty, security of the person, and development are unattainable without comprehensive, accessible and affordable sexual and reproductive health services and the freedom to make decisions about sexuality and fertility. It has been recognised that human rights as well as needs, both individual and social, and specifically those of women and girls, must be at the centre of population and development policies. The human rights approach adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and re-affirmed since then, should be a guarantee that these rights and needs remain central to the way reproductive health policies, services, and programs are developed and delivered.

49. Increasingly there is a need for clarification between the Convention on Biodiversity and conflicting international law regarding the appropriation of women's knowledge of, and control over, genetic resources. The recent interest in indigenous knowledge coincides with the growth of the biotechnology industry and a rush to develop and enforce intellectual property rights laws under the auspices of the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and other trade policy negotiations. Such regimes further undermine women's autonomy and their access to, and control over, vital resources. TRIPs and other intellectual property right regimes provide no safeguard against the pirating of genetic material from indigenous and traditional societies.

50. The consequences of conflicts are enormous—for communities, the environment and society at large, especially women, children, the elderly and disabled. Civilian victims, mostly women and children, often outnumber casualties among combatants. During the last century the burden of armed conflict on civilian populations has increased substantially. (Civilians accounted for 5 percent of World War I casualties, 52 percent of World War II casualties and approximately 90 percent of casualties in conflicts during 1991 alone.) The after-war consequences for communities are also grave. For example, there are more than 100 million anti-personnel landmines scattered in 64 countries in the world.

51. Among the increasing numbers of refugees and involuntarily displaced persons, the majority are women, adolescent girls and children. As a result of conflicts, women often become the sole managers of households, sole parents, and caretakers for elderly or injured combatants. In the midst of conflict and collapse the role of women in preserving social order is crucial. Notwithstanding their roles and tasks, women's priorities in countries suffering from armed violence continue to be largely marginalised. In general violence against women in all its forms is still pervasive and under-reported.

52. CEDAW,<sup>13</sup> the most comprehensive women's human rights instrument in international law binds countries to advance women's social, economic and political rights. Thus it should be further developed as a mechanism to protect women's rights, including equal participation

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<sup>13</sup> As of 1 April 2000 ratified by 165 States parties; as of April 2000 34 States had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention. (Division of Women of the UN Secretariat)

in decision making. The monitoring mechanisms of CEDAW, both the regular reporting process and the Optional Protocol are important for advancing women's rights in sustainable development.

#### **h) Information and Knowledge**

53. Women are producers as well as users of information. Women's indigenous knowledge and practice of environmental management increases the coping capacity of communities in environmentally fragile and hazardous areas and thus contributes to their survival. They have an inherent technological capacity: using technical skills and knowledge in their daily activities. Women's scientific knowledge, innovations and adaptations are demonstrated in many areas. Case studies have illustrated that women quickly adapt techniques, skills, organisation, management and behaviour to minimise the effects of hazardous circumstances, and that they often are not confined to a single technical area or sphere of knowledge. However, the recognition and integration of this knowledge is still rare.

54. Unequal access to technologies in different geographic regions and social groups contributes to the widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots, reinforcing the existing marginalisation in development and technical resources. Women particularly those from less developed regions and from marginalised groups, tend to be under-represented in terms of access to these technologies. For example, the Global Internet gender ratio has remained static at 63 percent male and 37 percent female.

55. There continues to be a general lack of gender-specific data and benchmarks to evaluate women's situation at the local and global level and shed light on their specific concerns. Effective gender analysis does more than assure women's participation in sustainable development; it also provides information on how resources are allocated to women *and* men, highlights constraints imposed by women's socially constructed and confined roles, and proposes women-empowering policies. There is an urgent need to engender existing environmental tools, such as the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

56. The body of knowledge on gender, environment and sustainable development is still developing and systematic analysis and knowledge about area-specific factors is rare. There is a lack of good case studies on gender roles in sustainable development—although many interesting examples exist. Several show processes of women's empowerment by information exchange, for example use a scorecard to track and display implementation of governmental commitments at UN conferences. Important efforts have also been made to allow women to utilise the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as a mechanism for women's communication to governmental policy makers, including the organisation of dialogue sessions with delegates around gender concerns and the publication of alternative reports organised by NGOs.

57. Women's groups have been producing information as a way of keeping their governments accountable and challenging the status quo. In Brazil women's NGOs have used radio to disseminate gender sensitive information and increase women's participation, and in Egypt women working in television have conducted gender analysis of programming. Women at the grassroots level have disseminated information widely using adaptations of WEDO's Community Report Card.

58. The development of indicators for sustainable development should include participatory dynamic and interactive processes, involving full participation of community members. There have been some innovative initiatives in that area, such as that of the Crossroads Resource Center, USA. The organisation developed an approach using lay people to develop indicators for sustainable development, public roundtables were held, long-term thinking was encouraged. The current CSD indicators for sustainable development include only one gender related indicator (ratio female wage to male wage). In the original list however, there were some more useful gender-disaggregated indicators, as has also been developed by other development partners, such as those used in the Human Development Report (UNDP). See also UNIFEM's Women 2000 report and WEDO's primer, Women and Sustainable Development: A Local Agenda.

### **i) Institutional Aspects**

59. In the area of sustainable development, commitments towards a gender approach have been limited, and there is a general lack of institutional gender capacity and national machinery. Some organisations—for example, Netherlands Committee for IUCN (International Conservation Union)—have introduced gender training for staff. In the Multi-stakeholder Dialogues in preparation for WSSD, the CSD Secretariat requires gender equality among delegations, but even so men still far outnumber women. Such initiatives are too often ad hoc in character and therefore less likely to achieve gender balance.

60. Particularly at the local level in some countries real efforts were made to engender sustainable development. In the Philippines along with adoption of the Plan for Sustainable Development in 1989, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources created a Technical Working Committee on Women to respond to the needs of women. This resulted in the integration of gender in the review and modification of environmental laws. In 1999, a detailed framework for integrating gender into a national conservation strategy included training and monitoring of key staff, the development of rapid appraisal techniques and guidelines for program planning. A key aspect was regular consultations with women's groups. The Brazilian National Council for the Rights of Women, started nation-wide consultations, resulting in a national plan aimed at mainstreaming gender policies in the government as a whole.

61. Although Agenda 21 mentioned that all UN agencies should promote international policies and programs that engender sustainable development, this has not been a priority for most.

### **j) Obstacles and Challenges**

62. Major obstacles for the implementation of Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 and other gender-related commitments were:

- Lack of recognition of the role that women play in sustainable development and lack of awareness about the benefit of gender equality considerations in sustainable development policies.
- Under-representation of women in decision making and absence of strategies to ensure women's participation in formulating, planning, decision-making and implementing sustainable development.
- Predominantly male leadership of environment and sustainable development-related organisations and institutions.

- Insufficient number of women in responsible positions and under-representation of women in research and teaching.
- Shortage of gender-sensitivity in policies and programmes.
- Lack of gender specific information on sustainable development.
- Low level of education, management and technical skills among women.
- Lack of women's access to resources and insufficient financial and human resources.

63. It is important to:

- Ensure the full and equal participation of women in sustainable development decision-making, starting with the WSSD process itself.
- Design and support programmes that contribute to developing the capabilities of women and men to enable women to participate fully in sustainable development policy-making and implementation.
- Mainstream gender in all sustainable development policies and programs, and make policy-makers accountable for that.
- Develop and disseminate gender-specific data and information.
- Improve the position of women living in poverty.

#### **4. Looking Forward: Women Identify Priorities**

64. This chapter outlines priorities for future action on sustainable development. These priorities will receive specific attention in the document of Women as a Major Group to be submitted to PrepCom IV and the Women's Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2002-2015 that is being developed by a wide group of women's organisations and networks and will be available by the end of May 2002.

##### **a) Globalisation, Governance and Sustainable Development**

65. The root causes of the striving for dominance and privilege, disregard for the needs of others, unwillingness to change, and short sightedness, are barriers to good governance and sustainable development. Existing dominance structures, which so often form the negative sides of globalisation, need to be overcome. Equal participation and partnerships of all citizens, interest groups, stakeholders, creeds, cities and nations is key to good governance and gender justice.

66. Mobilisation of women in different areas of representation has substantially increased with the growth of the global women's movement. However, participation of women as a distinct stakeholder group needs to be ensured, with a goal of 50/50 representation, based on a critical analysis of the gender aspects of the issues.

67. The process of globalisation has given greater impetus to women's participation in the market economy, a trend that should also be stimulated and expanded. However, working women, whether formally employed or self-employed, often end up with a multitude of tasks inside and outside the home, creating working hours of more than 70 hours per week.

68. Gender mainstreaming policies and procedural rules as well as gender balance need to be integrated into the work of all government departments, international institutions, private sector and NGOs. In all policies and plans effective gender analysis is a prerequisite.

## **b) Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods: Environmental and Human Security**

69. Human security and that of the planet are at stake. The events of September 11 in the U.S. illustrate the interconnectedness of the world and the vulnerability of society as well as the destructive possibilities of technology. At the local level securing access to and control of resources is a necessity. Human security should be a priority area for the Earth Summit on sustainable development.

70. Peace building and peace education should be recognised as major elements of sustainable development. Women want to be appropriately involved in decisions that affect them and represented in decision making on issues related to conflict resolution, peace and nation building.

71. Natural disasters, often man-induced such as floods, landslides, and drought, pose another threat to people's lives and livelihoods. Therefore much more attention is needed for the gender aspects of natural disasters. Here a strong partnership between CSD and the Commission on the Status of Women is feasible.

72. Governments, international organisations, and NGOs fail to give adequate attention to securing access to and control of good quality resources—and related gender aspects—in policies, planning and programs. Women's full participation in these at the community, professional and decision-making level is a prerequisite for sustainable development. The UN Millennium Declaration links gender equality to the eradication of poverty, with governments resolving to promote gender equality and women's empowerment "to combat poverty, hunger and disease, and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable."

## **c) Sustainable Production and Consumption**

73. Meeting the basic human needs of all the world's people is essential to achieve sustainable development. There is an urgent need to make production all over the world safer, cleaner and more effective, and socially accountable.

74. In general consumers' awareness on the impacts of consumption patterns is limited, and even if people are aware of these they find it difficult to act without an enabling environment, established by government, in which producers are held accountable for their advertising campaigns.

75. No new WTO Trade Round<sup>14</sup> should be initiated without evaluating the impact of present trade agreements on developing countries' women and men and the environment.

## **d) Human Health and Sustainable Development**

76. Women's and men's health differ in significant ways, including how they are exposed to disease, how susceptible they are to diseases, how they are treated for diseases and what their outcomes are. There is a marked lack of gender focused health studies examining possible

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<sup>14</sup> In the Caribbean the WTO decision in the banana dispute hit women, who comprise 70% of the workforce in banana production, especially hard. The Caribbean countries had previously benefited from a specific agreement with the EU (through the so-called Preferential and Differential Treatment agreement). Now they have lost market shares and subsequently employment and income; the women lost the basis for existence. (Press release, KULU – Women in Development, Qatar, 13 November 2001)

hazardous exposures. The gender-specific consequences of climate change on the health of women and children should receive special attention.

77. HIV/AIDS also affects sustainable development and the position of women. In many communities the human capacity for development is threatened, children are orphaned and women forced to assume an enormous care-taking role.

78. The principle of voluntary and informed choice in the provision of sexual and reproductive health services should be recognised as a basic human right. ICPD and ICPD+5 formed important frameworks for such an approach and need further implementation in the future.

#### **e) Biodiversity and Knowledge Systems**

79. The ecosystems of the world and its biodiversity form the backbone of people's health, security and sustainable development. There is an urgent need to develop a global peoples' consensus to fully express the rights and responsibilities of all nations and peoples towards stewardship of the Earth's biological resources. The role of women in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources needs wide recognition, as is their knowledge of these resources.

80. The depletion of biodiversity and pollution of its environment is a major concern of many women around the world. Genetic modification of live forms can also form a threat to original species and ecosystem health.

#### **f) Education, Information and Communication**

81. Education, formal and informal, is essential for sustainable development. Although enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased in almost all regions of the world, in some parts of the world access to basic education has stagnated, as governments have reduced spending on social services. There is a challenge in further closing the gender gap.

82. Analytical research, including case studies, should provide better insights in gender and sustainable development inter-linkages. Gender-disaggregated data, both qualitative and quantitative, need to be made available.