

Women as Major Group.

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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. However, the socio-economic positions of women are not equal to those of men; and our perspectives, knowledge and visions are not adequately taken into account. Therefore the implementation of the measures articulated in chapter 24 of Agenda 21: 'Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development' is still relevant. This includes ratification and implementation of all legal frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its additional Protocols, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing +5 Document, as well as the provision of equal access to and equal participation of decision-making and resources.

In every corner of the world women are change agents. Women of all age and background show commitment, knowledge and skills to build a more sustainable society. We want Johannesburg to be a success, and are preparing for the World Summit - in organisations and networks, developing coalitions in countries and regions, and working together with other major groups. For example: in 2002 after a worldwide consultation process the Women's Action Agenda 2002 will be presented, in which our concerns and priorities for a Healthy Planet will be outlined.

We express our deep concern about the lack of implementation of Agenda 21, as has been shown in the Regional Assessment Report. For that governments hold the main responsibility. There is an urgent need to act now!

Our priorities are the following:

- Gender balance should be guaranteed in the (preparations for the) World Summit on Sustainable Development. The proportion and participation of women in all decision-making bodies related to sustainable development is of key concern.
- Gender specific analysis should be part of all decisions and legislation in the area of (sustainable) development. In the implementation of sustainable development at (inter)national and local levels, gender impact analysis is essential. The process of engendering Local Agenda 21 initiatives should be widely supported. Gender budgeting is a promising methodology that should be promoted. Gender disaggregated data need to be generated at all levels. Indicators for sustainable development should be gender sensitive. We expect our governments to include a strong gender perspective in the Ministerial Statement of this meeting, and in the further preparations for the summit.
- Peace and justice are prerequisites for sustainable development. In a world that faces many local, regional and global conflicts, and in which lack of understanding among people is growing, the fundamental basis for future development and well-being is fading. Every person has the right to live in freedom of war and all kind of violence. We stress the need to build awareness and respect among people of all ages for the values of cultural diversity. Peace and world citizenship education which focuses on the local, regional and global situation should be part of any form of education. We commit to work towards a respectful and just society, and urge our governments to support us in that endeavour.
- Military production and consumption are not only a serious impediment to sustainable development, but the world's military systems are capable of destroying humanity itself.

We denounce the increase in military spending and programmes, and call for a shift in favour of goals that strengthen sustainable and humane development.

- A world economic and political system that perpetuates poverty and even widens the gap between the rich and poor, is not sustainable. All discussions and decisions preparing for the World Summit, should work towards limiting that gap and eradicating poverty, and should give people living in poverty better social, economic, as well as environmental security. The rich countries have a major responsibility in providing opportunities and resources. There should be a major focus on women's poverty in all these efforts, as women make up the majority of the poor. Major shifts are needed in the dominant economic and financial system in order to favour sustainable development for all. We support the 20/20 initiative as agreed at the Copenhagen. The agreed objective of 0.7 % of GNP ODA should be guaranteed by our governments and they should meet up to the UN development goals for the year 2015, including women's full access to education of all kinds. We support the development of a Global Partnership for addressing poverty and inequality as proposed by Minister for Environment and Tourism of South Africa, and urge our governments to contribute to that initiative. All stakeholders need to be part of developing implementation mechanisms.
- Globalisation has many faces. It has offered people new opportunities and perspectives. At the same time, it has forced all countries and people to become part of the dominant neo-liberal economy, that is ruled by trans-national companies, financial institutions and the push for profit. People, in particular women, and governments lose their control over means and systems of production and distribution of resources. Poverty increases. We strongly oppose the privatisation of public resources, such as water. Global governance for sustainable development is urgently needed. At the World Summit a mechanism should be put in place that reviews the social and environmental consequences of globalisation, and that introduces reforms that benefit the poor and other vulnerable groups and that promote sustainable development.
- Health and environment are closely connected. Women's health is particularly affected by environmental pollutants in the home, workplace and neighbourhood. We stress the need to ban toxic chemicals affecting the most vulnerable stages of human life. Women have the right to live, conceive and give birth in an unpolluted environment. Policies and monitoring strategies must protect all, especially the most vulnerable in society. These are un-negotiable rights.
- Everybody has the right to a fair share of natural resources of good quality. We call on the WSSD to launch the negotiation process for a global convention on environmental rights, based on Rio Principle 10. The ecological footprint of many of the rich societies is far beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth, and much larger than that of poorer countries. We must make our production and consumption processes more energy- and resource efficient, less polluting and safe – both in relative as well as in absolute terms. For that clear targets should be set and worked upon. Research and technology, as well as education and awareness raising should enhance these efforts.
- Food security implies food sovereignty. People must have the choice to decide what kind of food to produce, to consume and to import. We reject the genetic modification of food products and patenting of life. Food security for all is not possible within a global market system based on a free trade market system, with its focus on permanent growth, comparative advantages, competition and profit making. People, especially women, within their local and regional economies should be empowered to obtain control over land and other resources.

- Much more support should be given to the promotion and development of sustainable land-use and agricultural systems that are environmentally sound, preserve cultural and biological diversity and offer a sustainable living to rural families. Subsidies on unsustainable systems should be stopped. Governments have a duty to promote actively the production of sustainable and environmentally sound food products so that these become amply available in the market at competitive prices.
- The conservation of biological diversity and wise use of natural resources should not only be supported at global level, but also in our own countries and region. Information on the status of ecosystems' health should be made available to the wide public. We would like our governments and all major groups to endorse the Earth Charter and to identify means of implementation.
- Our governments should ratify and implement all international environmental conventions and protocols, as well as national regulations, as soon as possible. Monitoring and control systems should be an explicit part of the implementation. The role that local communities play in monitoring the local environmental situation, should be recognised. The precautionary principle should direct any decision with a potential socio-environmental effect.