

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The Women's Caucus originated in 1991 to ensure that the *vital role of women* in the conservation and preservation of our environment, our societies and the very health of the planet and human society was recognized in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration. We have worked with creativity and commitment to meet our promises in the face of an increasingly globalized economy that undermines efforts to sustain human life in a just and equitable way. Globalization, in particular the rapid expansion of large-scale, export-driven unsustainable agriculture, drives the widening gap between rich and poor, malnutrition, deforestation, and biodiversity degradation. All of these problems affect women the most.

Agriculture is the sphere of human productive activity in which the fight for control of production involves the highest stakes. After all, once there are human beings on this planet, they must eat. Agriculture represents the most sustained and expanding market in the world. Women therefore understand why there is a heightened urgency on the part of global corporations to appropriate our knowledge and our indigenous seeds. Women have tended the farms, fed families, cooked food and eaten last in all cultures. But never have we been so threatened by a market – a market that is based on a system of trade that speaks only to profits, a market that is eons away from those in which the majority of the world's women buy and sell food. We need to focus on the very essence of the threat to sustainable development.

Trade liberalization is not gender-neutral. While some women gain from the opening of trade, the majority of women are adversely affected by unequal power relations created at national, regional and international levels. We firmly believe that trade policies should ensure gender equality and equity and people-centered sustainable development.

We recommend a comprehensive gender, social, and environmental assessment of the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements at the local, national and regional levels before undertaking a new round. Such a review should:

- address the negative impacts, especially with respect to small and medium-sized enterprises that affect women in particular;
- involve consultations with women's and other non-governmental organizations;
- correct the deficiencies and imbalances in the agreements.

Appropriate measures would include capacity building schemes for women to understand impacts and how to deal with them.

Current financial flows, both private and public, are the engine of destructive globalization. Many of the statements we have heard until now have emphasized the quantity of financial flows. However, we need to examine the *quality* of financial flows in terms of the kind of development they are actually supporting. Investment liberalization should be scrutinized under the gender, social and environmental assessment we have proposed. We need support for our own community-initiated projects and access to micro-credit without excluding women from macro-economic decision-making processes.

Meaningful participation through consultations with *all* stakeholders is essential. At the moment, women and other major groups are only being invited to participate in mega-projects designed by large bureaucracies in far-away countries.

To achieve sustainable outcomes, women need to be fully and equally involved in all developments. This also applies to all preparations towards a Global Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

A more detailed paper from the Women's Caucus is available on the tables outside this room.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.