



## **Women's Major Group Statement -Opening Session**

### **Final Preparatory Committee meeting**

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**Distinguished co-chairs, state delegates, major groups, civil society and other stakeholders.** Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Women's Major Group as the SIDS cluster focal point, in solidarity with other Major Groups here, and Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, and DAWN. At this final SIDS preparatory meeting I am also privileged to speak on behalf of wider specific Pacific and SIDs constituencies, working collectively to strengthen SIDS concerns and proposals into the upcoming 3rd Global SIDS Conference process, and particularly on the question of what constitutes effective, ethical and meaningful partnerships for sustainable and just development in small island states.

Firstly, raising input from a week-long dialogue two weeks ago that culminated in a historic High level meeting in Nadi, Fiji, bringing together 65 representatives of 11 Pacific governments including National women's machineries, and diverse Pacific civil society and women-led organisations including grass-roots women's groups and regional NGO networks, from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, to advance interlinkage-based approaches to Gender equality and women's human rights, Climate Change Response, and Sustainable Development.

Two outcome statements emerged, one on 'Equitable, effective, and meaningful partnerships to address Gender Equality and Climate Change in the Pursuit of Sustainable Development', and the other a MG and CSO statement highlighting some specific concerns related to gender, climate change and sustainable development, both affirming where they are strongly addressed in the SIDS zero draft, and where as yet partially, insufficiently or omitted.

Secondly, at another recent 2 day meeting of MG, CSO and OS in Apia, Samoa from 4-5 June, CSO representatives and other groups from the Caribbean, AIMS and Pacific discussed core substance and process concerns toward the Conference in Samoa in September. Participants finalised plans for Pre-conference activities in Samoa, and provided detailed interregional SIDS feedback on core concerns of civil society, major groups and other stakeholders. We are encouraged to hear today from the Co-chair affirming the plenary inclusions and speaking roles of Major groups and other stakeholders, and specific channels to raise content from pre-conference spaces, into the main Conference.

The meeting in Apia reflected input from women's groups, youth-led groups, persons with disabilities, regional CSO networks, environmental groups, faith-based groups, and more. A small group of SIDS based gender equality and other sustainable development advocates are also here this week and working collaboratively.

Copies of the Outcome statements will be made available to you all tomorrow in this room, as most of us are just now arriving in NY. Our position statements during this week are informed by this critical regional work, and longtime WMG work across several multilateral tracks including the OWGs, SIDS, CSW and UNFCCC. So this initial intervention please allow me to highlight just a couple of key points, as WMG members and other MGs will be speaking thematically in response to your discussions, from tomorrow.

The theme of the SIDS +20 Conference as we know is "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". However, it is asserted by SIDS CSOs and MGs that while governments have embraced and applied the idea of public-private partnerships, much more work must be done to clearly articulate the

work and roles of civil society and social movements in partnerships with government, and with each other.

Both meetings also stated that useful partnerships recognize from the outset that sustainable development requires genuine facilitated discussion and dialogue of key transformative ideas and concepts to inform work; Secondly, that there must be more multi-stakeholder policy development space on human rights centred development. Thirdly there must be more consistent, transparent and resourced channels of formal engagement for civil society, fourthly and overall, the aim for SIDS states must be to create and sustain enabling conditions with a strong grounding of social inclusion and justice, human security and sustainable peace, environmental sustainability, and gender equality, women's human rights and empowerment.

In these meetings, there was also much discussion on how to adequately articulate and measure 'loss and damage' in wider than economic terms; And there was general agreement on the need for alternative/heterodox indicators of inequalities and wellbeing. Also calls for SIDS climate change financing options to include specific attention to women-led initiatives; AND specific MOI for social adaptation measures as much as for preferred so-called 'hard' or infrastructural focused adaptation initiatives;

There was also agreement on the need for increased and robust regulatory practices at national, regional and global levels including on finance and trade fairness, ending land grabbing, moving away from extractivist economic practices, toward social floor and social protection policies, progressive tax regimes, and much more.

Women in these meetings clearly articulated that the wellbeing and sustainability of individuals, communities and societies is always multidimensional and linked, as are human rights. So there is the recognition that we cannot just increase gender equality work, but continue these old siloed approaches on various dimensions of development. Rather, we require interlinkage approaches and practices, each impacted by work in multidisciplinary areas, with interlinkage analysis, policy and development practices influencing the overall development outcome, and providing new ideas, strategies and policy options.

As a concrete example, work on climate change often includes recognition of rising king tides and seawater intrusion as overall sea-levels rise. But who is considering the influence of rising salinity in the water table on overall health and wellbeing outcomes, on the health of women and children, and in particular on the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls? There are rising incidences of 'blue baby syndrome' in island states and coastal communities of the economic south due to insufficient oxygenation of the blood of babies caused by hypertension of mothers, and this brought on by higher salt content in drinking water. In a second example raised from the Pacific, women in PNG and elsewhere are telling us about the increase of vector borne diseases such as malaria and dengue, with rising mosquitoes caused by changes in climate.

So there is urgent need in the outcome document to make more gender and development links clear, and to adequately reflect gender and climate change causality factors in political will, funding and programming for social adaptation measures, as much as for favoured 'harder/infrastructural measures' proposed as adaptation strategies. Are SIDS health services identifying gender equality, climate change and sustainable linkages, and responding to new and emerging needs?

We do not think the zero draft yet adequately reflects these realities for all Pacific women, and call for stronger gender equality and women's human rights in the text overall in preamble and operational text, as well as mainstreamed throughout all sections. Why? Because the state of gender equality and human rights achievement in SIDS; the level of access to public services of everyone including marginalised groups and minorities; the level of democratisation of social, economic and environmental decision-making, and the extent to which diverse women's views are reflected in national, regional and global legislation, policy and practice, ALL profoundly affect our ability to respond to the urgent questions of our time. They determine the extent to which our strategies are of adequate scale and effectiveness to address global crises of human rights violations, climate change, environmental degradation, finance, fuel and food.

These regional and SIDS meetings of Major Groups, civil societies and other social movements envision the 3rd SIDS Global Conference outcome document as a chance to clearly signal global transformative change, that must also be reflected in the Post 2015DA/HLPF process, and leading into UNFCCC in Paris next year. These calls will be

further articulated as the week progresses, and through various distributed outcome statements. Thank you for your time and attention.

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