



Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 Presents a Bold Vision for Women and Girls *Advocates Gear Up for Work to Come*

UNITED NATIONS—The Women's Major Group, made up of more than 600 women's organizations and networks from around the world, recognizes the historic agenda for global sustainable development that 193 governments agreed to on Sunday. At the center of this broad and ambitious plan are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be formally adopted by Heads of State in September at the UN General Assembly. The SDGs chart out global development across social, environmental and economic areas for the next 15 years, and if fully implemented could be transformative for women and girls everywhere.

The Women's Major Group has been actively participating in negotiations on the SDGs for the last several years, pushing for gender equality to be a priority and for a greater emphasis on human rights. The Women's Major Group has also called for unequivocal action to transform global political and financial systems that disadvantage developing countries and cause economic, environmental and climate crises that disproportionately affect women. Unlike with the Millennium Development Goals—which expire this year—civil society groups have been actively involved in negotiations around developing this new global agenda, which is universal and involves all countries.

The new global development agenda includes commitments to expand women's economic opportunities; recognize and value the burdens of unpaid care work; eliminate gender disparities in schools; end discrimination and gender-based violence; eliminate child marriage and female genital mutilation; and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health care and women's and girls' reproductive rights, among other key actions. The Women's Major Group was able to ensure that the political declaration for the new agenda contained language committing to realize human rights for all people.

Governments also committed to address a range of social, economic and environmental issues that impact women and girls, including economic inequality, agriculture, energy, biodiversity and climate change, and peace and security. "One key success of the SDGs is that many 'environmental' Goals recognize that they have a gender dimension," said Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future. "Indeed, women's access to land, water, sanitation and energy are strongly defined in the targets of the 2030 Agenda," commented Priscilla Achakpa of Women Environmental Programme.

"The 2030 Agenda addresses climate change, which is already rolling back development gains and exacerbating gender inequalities," said Eleanor Blomstrom of Women's Environment and Development Organization. "We have a climate goal and a threshold for temperature rise, but it's still not ambitious enough, for women and girls, and for the world, to tackle the drivers of climate change and launch a transformation toward energy sources that are not only sustainable but also safe and gender-responsive."

There are several weaknesses to the plan, according to the Women's Major Group. "The Agenda 2030 fails to address the concentration of wealth from a progressive redistribution approach, and therefore it addresses the symptoms of extreme poverty, while leaving aside its true causes: the fact that almost half of the wealth in the world is in the hands of 1% of the population, and, the fact that 60% of the value that circulates in the world is generated by women's unpaid work. This means that due to a lack of rights, women subsidize the entire economy with their unpaid work. The 2030 Agenda does too little to rectify this injustice, missing a historical opportunity to

make a shift towards a new macro-economic approach”, said Emilia Reyes, from the gender organization “Equidad de Genero”.

Further, Tessa Khan of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development stated that “to implement the SDGs, governments are relying on the extremely weak outcome of the recent Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, so there is a huge shortfall in the financing necessary to bring the goals and targets to fruition.” She also argues that the new global agenda ultimately does not redress a deeply flawed and inequitable global economic system. “The agenda is not ambitious enough to shift the global trade, finance and taxation arrangements that entrench inequalities and have caused multiple global financial crises. Further, it puts the private sector at the center, despite its negative role in creating and profiting from many of the crises that we currently face,” according to Tessa Khan.

Isis Alvarez of Global Forest Coalition is greatly disappointed by the last-minute weakening of target on ‘Access and Benefit Sharing’ (Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity), “this came completely unexpected, as this target had not been submitted for technical proofing and thus was not part of the intergovernmental negotiation process. We can only suspect that such an un-transparent last minute change has been forced by a powerful country, and this might be the reason why to date, we have not received the latest and final version of the negotiated text of the Agenda 2030!”

According to the Group, moving forward the next priority will be ensuring that the ambitious agenda is fully funded, countries develop effective plans and measurements of their progress, and governments are held accountable.

The success of sustainable development is closely linked to dedicated funding for women's rights organizations and strong participation of women's organizations both in implementation and monitoring processes at global, regional and national levels, says Nurgul Djanaeva of the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan “we call for institutional engagement of women from civil society organizations at all stages at all levels”.

“The 2030 Agenda is a major accomplishment and could be a major turning point for women and girls,” said Shannon Kowalski of the International Women's Health Coalition. “But the commitments require action by governments at all levels, effective financing, and a continued role for women's and feminist groups in planning and decision-making. Our work is just beginning.”

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Notes:

Transforming our World - 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations website
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/negotiationsoutcome3>

The role of the Women's Major Group is to assure effective public participation of women's non-governmental groups in UN policy processes on sustainable development and environmental matters, <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org> a role recognized by the United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/women>