

Putting Words into Action...



Analysis of the Status of Gender Mainstreaming in the Main Multilateral Environment Agreements

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I. Introduction

The main Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) arose in the frame of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Río de Janeiro.

The MEAs constitute an important source of international environment law and contribute to policymaking on this area in each nation. They are based on principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, protection of natural systems (i.e., species, land, air), facilitation of participation, recognition of the role of communities in the

interaction with their own environment, precautionary approach to decision-making, prior consent, and sustainable production and consumption.

Currently there are more than 250 MEAs in effect on different environmental issues. The main agreements include:

- the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

- the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
- the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- the Convention on Biological Diversity
- the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal
- the Convention on Wetlands
- the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
- the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer

In this document we focus on three of these agreements: the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),

and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These agreements bring together over four decades of efforts in environment and sustainable development.

II. Is there a legal referent for the incorporation of gender in the MEAs?

In the past three decades, numerous international instruments such as conventions, declarations, platforms, action plans, resolutions and agreements have been formulated to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination for women, as well as to adopt measures on sustainable development, climate change, conservation of biodiversity, combat of desertification, risk reduction, and other themes. They all reflect the evolution of ideas and trends guiding the thinking and action of both States and international agencies, and academia and civil society within the countries.

Chart No.1 outlines the main agreements, conventions and treaties, divided into four categories: sustainable development and environment, human rights, gender equality and risk reduction.

Note that because the CBD, the UNFCCC and the UNCCD are circumscribed within the frame of the United Nations, decisions of the General Assembly and conventions or treaties dealing with gender issues constitute mandates.

Chart No. 1

Legal Framework in Relation to Gender and Multilateral Environment Agreements

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

WSSD Plan of Implementation

Main Inputs

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation 2002, adopted in Johannesburg, promotes women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels, on the basis of equality with men.

Specific text

It calls for mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the improvement of the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunities, land, credit, education and health-care services.

Millennium Development Goals

Main Inputs

At the 8th plenary session of the UN General Assembly in September 2000, countries adopted the Millennium Declaration, committing themselves to respect the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. The UN also adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are referred as a blueprint for the realisation of the Millennium Declaration.

Specific text

The Declaration identifies certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. To secure their realisation signatories commit to:

- Assure equal rights and opportunities for women and men (Article 6)
- Promote equality between sexes and the empowerment of women as effective means to combat poverty, hunger and diseases, and promote a truly sustainable development
- Ensure that all may take advantage of the benefits of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies

Convention to Combat Desertification

Main Inputs

On June 17, 1994, the Convention was open for signature by national governments; implementation began in 1996.

Of the so-called Rio Conventions, the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD, 1994) most clearly recognizes the role of women in rural livelihoods and encourages the full participation of women and men in the implementation of the convention.

The UNCCD stresses the important role-played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas in developing countries. It instructs national action programs to provide effective participation of women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their organizations.

Specific text

Prologue: Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

PART II: General Provisions

Article 5: Obligations of affected country Parties

- d. Promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of nongovernmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

PART III: Action Programmes, Scientific and Technical Cooperation and Supporting Measures

Section 1: Action Programmes

Article 10: National action programmes

2. National action programmes shall specify the respective roles of government, local communities and land users and the resources available and needed. They shall, inter alia:
 - f. provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes;

Section 3: Supporting measures

Article 19: Capacity building, education and public awareness

1. The Parties recognize the significance of capacity building—that is to say, institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities—in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. They shall promote, as appropriate, capacity-building:

- a. through the full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially women and youth, with the cooperation of non-governmental and local organizations;
- 3. The Parties shall cooperate with each other and through competent intergovernmental organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, in undertaking and supporting public awareness and educational programmes in both affected and, where relevant, unaffected country Parties to promote understanding of the causes and effects of desertification and drought and of the importance of meeting the objective of this Convention. To that end, they shall:
 - e. assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand, as needed, educational and adult literacy programmes and opportunities for all, in particular for girls and women, on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the natural resources of affected areas;

ANNEX I: Regional Implementation for Africa

Article 8: Content of national action programmes

- 2. National action programmes shall, as appropriate, include the following general features:
 - c. The increase in participation of local populations and communities, including women, farmers and pastoralists, and delegation to them of more responsibility for management.

Convention on Biological Diversity

Main Inputs

The 1992 Convention on Biodiversity Diversity (CBD) recognizes the role of women in conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation. Only recently have steps been taken to ensure gender mainstreaming in the convention's implementation. Since 2007, a more focused approach to gender mainstreaming has been undertaken at the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Secretariat has appointed a Gender Focal Point and a new Plan of Action on Gender has been elaborated.

Specific text

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) mentions women's practices, knowledge, and gender roles in food production, as do various decisions of the Conference of the Parties, including:

- a. **SBSTTA recommendation II/7**, on agricultural biological diversity and the role of women in managing practices and knowledge;
- b. **COP decision III/11, para.17**, on promotion of women's knowledge and practices in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the agricultural sector;
- c. **The annex to COP decision III/14 on Article 8(j)**: gender balance in workshop organization;
- d. **Annex I to SBSTTA recommendation IV/7**, on potential impacts of tourism on cultural values, including gender;
- e. **SBSTTA recommendation V/14, para. 2 (i) and annex and annex III to COP decision VIII/10**, on gender balance in the composition of ad hoc technical expert groups, subsidiary body and roster of experts;

- f. **COP decision V/16 – element 1 of the programme of work of Article 8(j)** on promotion of gender-specific ways in which to document and preserve women’s knowledge of biological diversity;
- g. **COP decision V/20**, on gender balance in the roster of experts;
- h. **COP decision V/25**, on socio-economic and cultural impacts of tourism: the fact that tourism activities may affect gender relationships (through employment opportunities, for example);
- i. **Annexes I and II to COP decision VI/10, annex to COP decision VII/1: Gender as a social factor that may affect traditional knowledge**

Decision V/16: Article 8(j) and related provisions states: “Recognizing the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and emphasizing that greater attention should be given to strengthening this role and the participation of women of indigenous and local communities in the programme of work”.

Under the “General Principles,” the programme of work on the implementation 8(j) of CBD calls for: “Full and effective participation of women of indigenous and local communities in all activities of the programme of work”. Task 4 of the programme of work calls on Parties to develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work, taking into account the need to:

- a. Build on the basis of their knowledge,
 - b. Strengthen their access to biological diversity;
 - c. Strengthen their capacity on matters pertaining to the conservation, maintenance and protection of biological diversity;
 - d. Promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge;
 - e. Promote culturally appropriate and gender specific ways in which to document and preserve women's knowledge of biological diversity
- Element 2. Status and trends in relation to Article 8(j) and related provisions.

At its **second meeting, held in July 2007, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group** on the Review of Implementation on the Convention recommended that the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting should urge Parties in developing, implementing and revising their national biodiversity strategies and action plans to, inter alia, promote the mainstreaming of gender considerations (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/4, annex, recommendation 2/1, annex, paragraph 8 (d)).

COP 9: Welcomes the development by the Executive Secretary of the "Gender Plan of Action under the Convention on Biological Diversity," as contained in document UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/12, and invites Parties to support the Secretariat's implementation of the plan.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Main Inputs

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) failed to recognize the gender aspects of climate change and omits the issues of gender equality and women's participation entirely. Also, its Kyoto Protocol, which outlines reductions in greenhouse gasses until 2012, fails to integrate a gender perspective in its operationalization and mechanisms, such as the Clean Development Mechanism.

Women's *caucuses* since COP-11 in 2005 have strongly lobbied for a gender approach in all these critical areas. At the last COP13 in Bali, the gendercc - Women for Climate Justice network of women's organizations and individuals, as well as the Global Gender and Climate Change Alliance of UN organizations, IUCN WEDO and other international organizations, were established.

IUCN has been working with the Secretariat of the UNFCCC. There is a new Gender Focal Point and a series of steps will be carried out.

Specific text

Gender equality is a guiding principle in NAPA design and it was advised to include gender expertise in NAPA teams. Many of the national reports submitted by signatory nations to the UNFCCC Secretariat emphasize the vulnerability of women and the importance of gender equality- albeit in broad terms.

Most countries include some reference to the MDGs or national commitments to empowering women, but few detail how urgently women are affected by climate change, much less how they might be identified as powerful actors and agents for change.

Agenda 21

Main Inputs

Agenda 21 establishes a blueprint for sustainable development. It was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, 1992. Agenda 21 is to be achieved through government policies, national guidelines, and plans to secure equity in all aspects of society, including women's key involvement in decision-making and environmental management.

Specific Text

Chapter 24, entitled "Global Action for Women towards Sustainable Development", calls upon governments "to make necessary constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, social, and economic changes in order to eliminate all obstacles to women's full involvement in sustainable development and in public life" (24.2 (c)).

Agenda 21 recognizes the importance of the knowledge and traditional practices of women, and underscores the contribution women have made to biodiversity conservation (Section 24.8 (a)). Agenda 21 calls for the adoption of measures to translate its objectives into clear strategies (Section 24.2 (f)).

In the rest of the text there are 159 cases of specific references to women.

HUMAN RIGHTS

UN Human Rights Council

Main Inputs

At its seventh session in March 2008, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change, in which the concern was expressed that climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has implications for the full realization of human rights.

The Office of the High Commissioner was encouraged to execute an analytical study of the relationship between climate change and human rights.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Main Inputs

On the 13th of September 2007, after more than 20 years of negotiation the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DECRIPS) was finally adopted.

Specific Text

DECRIPS specifically prohibits discrimination against women (Article 22.2), providing that all the rights and freedoms recognized in the declaration be guaranteed equally to male and female indigenous people (Article 44). This sets a standard, which should inform the implementation of the Declaration.

World Conference on Human Rights

Main Inputs

At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 171 states adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

Specific text

Article 11 of the Declaration states, "The right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations." The outcome documents urge treaty monitoring bodies to include the status of women and the human rights of women in their deliberations and findings, making use of gender-specific data. It also urges governments and regional and international organizations to facilitate the access of women to decision-making processes.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Main Inputs

The principal instrument for the protection of women's rights is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN).¹ An Optional Protocol to CEDAW, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1999, came into effect December 22, 2000.² The Optional Protocol establishes procedures whereby women may file complaints requesting investigation of violations of rights.

CEDAW, commonly referred to as a bill of rights for women, seeks to promote adoption of measures to secure elimination of different forms (and levels) of discrimination against women.

Specific Text

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as: "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (Article 1).

A provision of much relevance to UNFCCC obliges States Parties to take "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development" and "participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels", and "in all community activities" (Article 14.2 (a) and (f)).

¹ As of April 2007, CEDAW had been ratified by 185 countries. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>

² As of July 2007, 88 countries had ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

CEDAW also recognizes that women should have equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property (Article 15.2).

GENDER EQUALITY

52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Main Inputs

The 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2008) has identified gender perspectives on climate change as its key emerging issue.

Specific text

Resolution 21(jj) on Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2008/L.8), governments are urged to: “Integrate a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of national environmental policies, strengthen mechanisms and provide adequate resources to ensure women’s full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues, in particular on strategies related to climate change and the lives of women and girls”.

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2005/31

Main Inputs

In 2005, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted a resolution with a view to ensuring the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all the policies and programs of the United Nations system.

Specific Text

The ECOSOC resolution calls upon “all entities of the United Nations system, including United Nations agencies, funds and programs, to intensify efforts to address the challenges involving the integration of gender perspectives into policies and programs, including:

- Developing action plans with clear guidelines on the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming;
- Fully incorporating a gender perspective into program budgets;
- Ensuring continuous awareness raising and training on gender issues for all staff;
- Requiring gender analysis for both policy formulation and programmatic work;
- Ensuring commitment by senior management to gender mainstreaming;
- Strengthening accountability systems for gender mainstreaming;
- Incorporating a gender perspective into operational mechanisms, such as those relating to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals;
- Continuing to support governments and to work with civil society in their efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action;
- Development and institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation tools and gender impact analysis methodologies, promoting the collection, compilation and analysis of sex-disaggregated data;
- Promoting mainstreaming of gender perspectives into key macroeconomic and social development policies and national development programs.”

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Main Inputs

Two documents emanated from the IV World Conference on Women: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These documents establish a strategy and responsibilities for State Parties. The Platform for Action warns that: “the human rights of women, as defined by international human rights instruments, will only be dead words unless they are fully recognized, protected, applied, and effectively enforced, at national legal and practical levels...” (Paragraph 218).

Strategic Objective K of the Beijing Platform for Action commits to securing the active involvement of women in environmental decision-making; integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and strengthening or establishing mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

Specific text

Strategic objective K.1.

Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels

Strategic objective K.2.

Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

Strategic objective K.3.

Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

RISK REDUCTION

Hyogo Framework for Action

Main Inputs

Includes the principal mandate in relation to gender equality and empowerment of women in the context of disaster risk reduction. Evolved from the World Conference on Disaster reduction in Kobe, Japan (2005).

Specific Text

III. Priorities for action 2005-2015

A. General considerations

d. A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training;

B. Priorities for Action

ii) Early warning

d. Develop early warning systems that are people centered, in particular systems whose warnings are timely and understandable to those at risk, which take into account the demographic, gender, cultural and livelihood characteristics of the target audiences, including guidance on how to act upon warnings, and that support effective operations by disaster managers and other decision makers.

3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

ii) Education and training

m. Ensure equal access to appropriate training and educational opportunities for women and vulnerable constituencies; promote gender and cultural sensitivity training as integral components of education and training for disaster risk reduction.

As set out by Lambrou and Laub (2004), the multiplication of international instruments, sources of both “hard” law (such as the Rio conventions, the CEDAW...) and “soft” law (such as Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action...), make the monitoring process increasingly difficult. A harmonization of procedures and approaches between international instruments would facilitate the monitoring of these instruments from cross-sectoral perspectives, such as gender, sustainable development, and fight against poverty.

Added to this situation is the fact that, within the United Nations System, none of the structures designed to oversee implementation of international agreements on gender (UNIFEM, INSTRAW) monitors or insists on implementation of these guidelines in the MEAs.

Perhaps one of the most important points to stress is that compliance with international mandates on gender should not occur simply because “we have no other choice,” as this leads to isolated and very low impact actions. Instead, it is essential that the Secretary of the Parties of MEAs recognize that gender mainstreaming is a means to increase effectiveness in the implementation of these conventions.

III. How are the MEAS doing in terms of mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment?

Unquestionably, a retrospective analysis of the declaration of some of the most important international conferences and events in environment reveals the rising importance of the gender theme, a development that is particularly apparent at the semantic level.

To illustrate, at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Development representatives of 113 countries declared that “Man” has a basic right to “a quality environment,” but in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 104 heads of state voiced their commitment to women’s empowerment, emancipation and gender equality to ensure sustainable development.

This advance not only reflects a growing understanding of the connection between a sustainable development and equality between women and men, suggesting that gender equality is a basic requisite for achieving sustainable development, but also underscores the comprehension that effective management of the environment and natural resources requires the active participation of all actors.

Unfortunately, agreed concepts and texts are not always implemented and much of the discourse remains forgotten. The analysis below examines gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in the so called “Rio Conventions.”

³ Lambrou, Y. y Laub, R. “*Gender Perspective on the Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification*”. Natural resource Management and Environment Department. FAO. 2004.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee (INCD), which at the start of the 1990s prepared the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), established that to combat desertification effectively both women and men should participate fully in the preparation and implementation of dryland development activities. The INCD also recognized that participation does not materialize just by a decision but requires special support activities that will promote women's opportunities for participating including awareness raising, training and capacity building, and education.

This convention is one of the few international instruments that established a link between the environmental situation, gender equality and social participation. This was largely because the UNCCD was always tied more with local development and the eradication of poverty (in comparison to other MEAs), given that it was driven by South countries.

In the initial years of its execution, the commitment to push for equality among men and women was an important element in many of the related activities carried out by the UNCCD in the local, national, regional and global sphere. In the convention's implementation, governments as well as NGOs and international organizations provided financial and technical support for programs directed specifically at women. Further, UNCCD was characterized by its efforts to strengthen the role of women in all areas of its implementation.

The Convention also made great progress in internalizing equality between men and women in UNCCD governance, and over the years experienced women's growing participation in governing entities. However, there is still a long way to go before women and men are represented equally, and several delegates to each Conference of the Parties (COP) continue calling for the rectification of gender inequality, especially with respect to women's low participation in the Roster of Experts, the Ad-hoc Open-ended Working Groups, and in processes of preparing the national action programs.

However, during the COPs held to date, deliberations about the role of women and gender mainstreaming have not played a significant part in the plenary discussions of the COP or Commission on Science and Technology. An examination of the decisions at the different sessions shows that issues concerning gender and women's role are mentioned in only a limited way; conclusions and general recommendations need considerable work before they can be translated into operational activities.

The launching of this initiative is still pending, and indeed, many of the people interviewed by Knabe and Poulsen (2004) stated that gender and the role of women is frequently viewed as no more than rhetoric, and there appears to be a vacuum in terms of concrete activities. This could be interpreted as a result of limited capacity, and should be analyzed and addressed in future UNCCD initiatives.

Here another aspect of importance arises and should be emphasized. It involves the leadership that certain governments, UN agencies and NGOs have exercised in this area, almost as a personal agenda, working tirelessly to ensure that women in zones affected by desertification benefit from the

⁴ This section has been prepared based on the document of Knabe, F. and Poulsen, L. "How the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought Has Promoted the Role of Women in Decision-Making" IUCN 2004.

UNCCD. However, this also means that when these people are transferred to other positions, a leadership void is created resulting in the discontinuation of important programs and activities.

It is precisely this phenomenon that has been extremely evident in relation to the UNCCD, where the strength and leadership demonstrated in other years in relation to the other MEAs has dwindled almost entirely. Currently different governments and international organizations are promoting the reestablishment of a gender focal point within the Convention.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Biodiversity (CBD) was open for signature at the Earth Summit in R o de Janeiro, in 1992. The CBD is an international frame for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and equitable benefit sharing. To date it has been ratified by 190 States.

It should be noted that the CBD is the only environmental agreement mentioned in the Beijing Platform of Action, in its point K: *“Encourage, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the effective protection and use of the knowledge, innovations and practices of women of indigenous and local communities, including practices relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies, and endeavour to ensure that these are respected, maintained, promoted and preserved in an ecologically sustainable manner, and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge; in addition, safeguard the existing intellectual property rights of these women as protected under na-*

tional and international law; work actively, where necessary, to find additional ways and means for the effective protection and use of such knowledge, innovations and practices, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity and relevant international law, and encourage fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovation and practices; (Strategic Objective K.1, 253 c.).

With respect to the theme of gender or women, in the text of the CBD, Paragraph 13 of the Preamble states: *“Recognizing also the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation...”*. No other reference is made to the theme anywhere in the rest of the Convention text.

Other provisions exist in different Conferences of the Parties (COP) and work groups regarding this point. Most have occurred thanks to the efforts proposed by indigenous and community groups under article 8(j):

- **Decision V/16: Article 8(j) and related provisions:** “Recognizing the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and emphasizing that greater attention should be given to strengthening this role and the participation of women of indigenous and local communities in the programme of work”.
- **Work program for the implementation of 8 (j) CBD General Principles:** “full and complete participation of women from indigenous and local communities in all activities of the work programme.”

- Task 4 of the work program asks “Parties to develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work, taking into account the need to:
 - a) Build on the basis of their knowledge;
 - b) Strengthen their access to biological diversity;
 - c) Strengthen their capacity on matters pertaining to the conservation, maintenance and protection of biological diversity;
 - d) Promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge;
 - e) Promote culturally appropriate and gender specific ways in which to document and preserve women’s knowledge of biodiversity.”

All of these provisions refer specifically to women’s participation in CBD activities and do not deal directly with the promotion of equality. However, and particularly since 2007, the CBD has initiated a process focused on promoting gender mainstreaming in its regular activities.

For example, in a decision made at its second meeting in July 2007, the Ad Hoc Open-ended **Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention** (WGRI-2) urged Parties: “in developing, implementing and revising their national and, where appropriate, regional, biodiversity strategies and action plans... [to] Promote the mainstreaming of gender considerations (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/4, Annex, recommendation 2/1, Annex, paragraph 8 (d)).

In regard to National Strategies and Action Plans on Biodiversity (NBSAPs), article 6 of the CBD establishes that each Party should develop its own NBSAP or equivalent instrument. The NBSAP or equivalent instrument must reflect the way in which the country intends to comply with the objectives of the CBD and present plans, programs and policies at the sector or multi-sector level.

A basic characteristic of the NBSAPs should be that all social groups participate actively in its preparation. Genuine representation, however, requires a recognition of the stakeholders’ diversity in terms of sex, age, ethnic group, income, occupation and marital status, among others.

While it is true that there were no clear guidelines or mandates on the incorporation of gender in the NBSAPs (until the 2007 meeting of the WGRI-2 in Paris), some countries have begun to incorporate the theme, whether by presenting clear gender strategies or through the inclusion of gender considerations in some parts of their NBSAP.

In early 2008, as part of preparations for the COP 9 in Bonn, Germany, the office of the IUCN Senior Gender Advisor in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat conducted an analysis of the NBSAPs. It was determined that up to April 4, 2008, 160 of the 190 parties to the CBD had presented their NBSAP; of the 141 examined, 77 mentioned gender or aspects related to women.

Based on the analysis by Quesada-Aguilar, A and Mata, G (2008) , some examples of how countries have addressed gender issues are presented in Chart 2, below.

Chart No. 2

Examples of how gender and women's issues have been addressed in the NBSAPs

- Nepal, Swaziland, and Uganda recognize that rural women depend greatly on the diversity of natural resources. Moreover, Swaziland mentions that even though this dependence exists, women are often excluded from the management of these resources. Nepal recognizes that they could have a vital contribution and proposes that women's roles should be fully recognized, as they are often the most knowledgeable about patterns and uses of local biodiversity. All the countries' documents mention that women should be included in all decision-making processes related to biodiversity.
- Women in many countries use specific resources and accumulate unique knowledge. Examples of this recognition could be found in the NBSAPs from Mali, Germany, Bhutan and El Salvador, among others. In Mali, for example, women tend to be the ones that use the shea tree, edible tamarind and fonio. Additionally, certain vegetable species are valued because women use them for basket making, weaving, and pottery making. Bhutanese women are often the ones who manage or harvest underused species that could contribute to food security, agricultural diversification, and income generation. In several communities in El Salvador, women are usually the ones that have a greater knowledge of the diversity of plants and animals for medicinal purposes due to their traditional role as carers.
- Women play a key role in biodiversity conservation and, in particular, agrobiodiversity conservation. For example, in Yemen women select seeds with specific characteristics and are in charge of growing "women's crops" such as groundnuts, pumpkins and leafy vegetables. This has the effect of raising biodiversity and food security on their farms. Additionally, in Mali it has been recognized that the calabash tree's maintenance and development is due to the uses women give to it.

- Women's economic freedom and security depends largely on agricultural activities and the use of natural resources. Bhutan recognizes that women could benefit greatly if the activities on which their livelihoods depend are supported and a sustainable use of the resources is promoted. An example that illustrates this can be found in Benin, where mushrooms are an important food supply for rural populations. Actions taken by an NGO created opportunities for marketing mushrooms, which resulted in increased incomes for women.
- NBSAPs from Guinea, Mauritius and Mali recognize that some resources used by women are collected in a way that compromises their development and regeneration. If these practices are improved and women are included in the process, conservation strategies could be more effective. In Guinea, for example, loss of soil fertility is associated with traditional techniques of smoking fish carried out by women that use large quantities of mangrove trees (*Rizophora* sp.). Many fisherwomen in Mauritius depend on octopus fishing even though the maximum sustainable yield has been exceeded because they collect female octopus before they reach maturity.
- Nepal recognizes that one of the major weaknesses of community forestry is that not all forest users were equally represented in community forestry management. They suggest that adequate attention should be paid to identify all users, to inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and to involve disadvantaged groups and women in community forestry management.
- There is a link between women's education and the preservation and conservation of natural resources. In Togo, women are responsible for the exploitation of natural resources but they have less access to education than men, e.g. the proportion of men taught to read and write is higher (69%) than that of women (38%). The lack of education hinders women's understanding of sustainable practices, which could lead to the further degradation of the resources they depend on.

- Kenya, Liberia and Zimbabwe mention that gender imbalances exist in land access and ownership. Kenya identifies land as the country's most important natural resource, and recognizes that although their statutory laws do not prevent women from owning land, women still face numerous difficulties in relation to land tenure.
- Malawi's NBSAP mentions that both HIV/AIDS and gender are key issues that affect their country's biodiversity and should be included in the biodiversity programmes.
- Some Parties, like Belize, Benin, Maldives, and Marshall Islands, have included women's groups in participatory consultation processes to formulate their NBSAP. In addition, Nepal's NBSAP proposes the formation of separate groups for men and women to ensure active participation by women. The effective inclusion of women and their issues in many local and international processes is truncated because, in many countries, men are still the ones who are in charge of public spaces, and in many workgroups, there is the misconception that men guarantee the vision of "the community".

In 2007, as mentioned above, CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlafla launched a process for the promotion of gender equality within the Convention. As part of the celebration of International Women's Day (March 8, 2007), the Executive Secretary designated a Gender Focal Point in the CBD Secretariat.

This decision was made in the frame of demands established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in its 23rd meeting during 2005 and actions outlined in the UNEP Gender Action Plan .

With support and technical direction from the IUCN, at the end of 2007 and early 2008 the CBD Secretariat carried out an internal process aimed at developing the Convention's first gender strategy. The plan was approved by the CBD Bureau in February 2008 and approved by the COP 9 in June of that same year: *"the COP welcomes the development of a Gender Plan of Action under the CBD as presented in the document UNEP/CBD/COP/9/L.4 and invites parties to support the Secretariat in its implementation."*

In this way, the CBD established a historic milestone by becoming the first MEA with a strategy to promote gender equality among women and men. Thanks to this effort, the

Executive Secretaries of the other conventions have expressed interest in carrying out similar processes.

The Action Plan is based on four strategic objectives :

- Incorporate a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and related work of the Secretariat;
- Promote gender equality in achieving the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and in the 2010 goal on biological diversity;
- Demonstrate the benefits of the gender perspective for conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use and sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, and
- increase the effectiveness of the work of the Biodiversity Convention Secretariat.

Another element of importance are joint actions already underway by the IUCN and CBD to build women's capacity to participate in decision-making processes in the Convention. For example, prior to COP 9, 30 women from local and indigenous communities had the opportunity to participate in a workshop helping them develop abilities to participate effectively during the COP discussions. The results of this training made a difference in the quality and quantity of the women's interventions. In addition, the women's caucus held each day made it possible for women to have greater representation and visibility during the debates of work groups and plenaries.

⁶ Decision 23/11 requested governments and UNEP to incorporate gender perspective in their environmental policies and programs in order to assess the effects on women of the environmental policies and further integrate gender equality and environmental considerations in their work.

⁷ The UNEP Action Plan was developed thanks to the effort of the IUCN Senior Gender Advisor's Office and the Women, Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). It can be found at http://www.unep.org/civil_society/PDF_docs/Unep-Gender-Action-Plan-5Feb07.pdf

⁸ The CBD Gender Plan of Action is found at: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-09/information/cop-09-inf-12-rev1-en.pdf>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

By the mid-1980s, the increase in scientific evidence regarding human interference with the global climate system, along with growing public concern about the environment, placed the theme of climate change on the international political agenda. In 1988, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Two years later, in 1990, the IPCC published a report concluding that climate change is a global threat and recommended the preparation of an international treaty addressing the problem, a recommendation echoed by the Second Global Conference on Climate that same year. Negotiations to formulate an international global climate treaty began in 1991 and concluded in May 1992 with the approval of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Unfortunately, this convention neither mentions nor refers in any way to gender aspects and their relation with climate change. Indeed, of the three conventions examined, the UNFCCC is the least advanced in terms of promoting gender equality.

A similar fate has befallen the Kyoto Protocol and discussions and agreements to date under the new 2012 post-Kyoto regimen. Neither integrates gender perspective in its operationalization and mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism.

The only reference to the theme is found in the guides for preparing the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA). Gender equality is one of the principles in the design of the

NAPA, and it is advised that experts in gender issues be included in the NAPA teams. Many of the national reports presented to the UNFCCC Secretariat place special emphasis on women's vulnerability and the importance of equality, albeit in very general terms.

Most of the countries include some reference to the Millennium Development Goals or to national commitments for women's empowerment, but few detail how climate change affects women, much less how they can be identified as powerful change agents.

Since COP 11 in 2005, the Women's Caucus has been pressuring hard for a gender perspective in and all of the convention's critical areas. At COP 13 in Bali, new groups and alliances were established to push for equality in the frame of the UNFCCC. Of note among these is the gendercc network—Women for Climate Justice, as well as the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), whose founders include UNDP, UNEP, and WEDO.

The main objective of the GGCA is to drive processes to ensure that global, regional and national policies, decisions and initiatives on climate change are gender-sensitive.

The GGCA work plan includes the following:

- Support UNFCCC and its bodies to guarantee that United Nations mandates on gender equality are fully implemented;
- Assure that United Nations funding mechanisms for mitigation and adaptation to climate change consider in an equitable manner the needs of women and men living in conditions of poverty;

- Establish standards and criteria for strategies of climate change mitigation and adaptation that incorporate principles of gender equality and equity;
- Build capacities at the global, regional and local level to design and implement gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programs; and
- Establish a network for advocacy, learning and sharing of knowledge about gender and climate change.

At the same time, GGCA has initiated joint work with the World Bank to define criteria of equality for funding mechanisms promoted by the bank.

In 2007, the IUCN initiated a process of convergence and support for the Convention Secretariat. As a result, the Executive Secretariat designated a gender focal point and negotiations are underway to define a series of steps leading to strategy for incorporating gender in the convention.

IV. What are appropriate ways to push for gender equality in the MEAs?

Based on the analysis of the status of gender in the MEAs, below is a list of recommendations or actions that can help energize mainstreaming of gender equality.

Political Will

By political will, we refer to the public enunciation of a political intention. This enunciation is fundamental since it

demarcates the path to follow and clarifies the position and commitment of the upper echelons. In the context of the MEAs, those where advances have been made are the ones in which the Parties or Executive Secretariat of the convention have made it a priority.

In this sense, it is vitally important for countries that have been at the vanguard in other international forums to articulate and demand that the convention secretariat make the promotion of equality one of the principles of the convention's regular activities.

Political will should also be accompanied by the search for and appropriate allocation of monetary and human resources. To a large degree, the translation of an expression of will into the execution of a commitment depends on this.

Preparation and operationalization of action plans

The construction of equality requires a practical instrument that guides the convention's ongoing activities. The preparation of a strategy or action plan should involve the participation of all the executors and decision makers within the secretariat.

It is also advisable to integrate a wide range of stakeholders, such as government representatives, NGOs and other representatives of civil society, development agencies and other UN agencies.

A gender focal point in each convention

Each convention secretariat should have a person in charge of gender. As some of the characteristics of a functional focal

point, that person should have: a top executive position with capacity for influencing the organizational structure, a suitable budget, and no other responsibilities other than facilitating the incorporation of gender equality.

One possibility worth studying in order to strengthen the convention focal points is to have a global gender adviser for the three conventions. This would be in keeping with efforts now underway to complement and generate synergies and coherence among the conventions.

It should be noted that the Executive Secretariat of the CBD will present this suggestion to the *Joint Liaison Group* of the three conventions.

Identify, develop, and promote implementation methodologies and instruments that are gender-sensitive

To move from concepts and expressions of will to action, the conventions require tools for incorporating gender perspective in their activities. All of the conventions have already developed and adopted a series of work programs, principles and guidelines orienting the work of the Parties and other entities. A first step is to review these existing instruments as a means of establishing a linkage with promotion of equality. Based on these points of entry, other priority areas can be determined.

One of the priorities in this sense is the incorporation of gender considerations in funding mechanisms or instruments. For example, it is necessary to ensure that gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are principles embedded in all phases and aspects related to funding mechanisms and

instruments associated with climate change. Proposal design, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring and evaluation systems are vital areas.

Some suggestions as to how this can be achieved:

- Adaptation funds should guarantee the incorporation of gender considerations and the implementation of initiatives meeting women's needs (e.g., make gender assessments obligatory for all projects proposed for funding)
- Women should be included at all levels of the design, implementation and evaluation of afforestation, reforestation and conservation projects that receive payments for environmental services, such as carbon sinks.
- Women should have access to credit, commercial carbon funds and information that allows them to understand and decide which of the modern biomass resources and technology meets their needs.
- The Clean Development Mechanism should finance projects that place renewable energy technologies within women's reach and can supply their domestic needs.

Capacity-building within the MEA secretariats

Differentiated training protocols are needed for the staff of the convention secretariats. All program staff, policy advisors, and top directors should build their capacity to promote gender equality. One possibility for study is to develop a basic training program for all of the MEAs.

Lay the foundations so that national points in charge of the MEA can incorporate gender perspective in national planning processes

Convention implementation is primarily carried out at the country level through national planning processes and the development and execution of national strategies and action plans. While national planning processes provide a rationale of easy access as the basis for incorporating gender considerations, the usefulness of linking gender may not be evident for MEA national focal points.

It is therefore necessary to design a sensitizing process for national focal points regarding the importance of gender issues. Note that in many countries, monitoring of all three conventions is by the same person.

Influence policies and take actions at the national and local level

The national and local governments can:

- Translate international commitments adopted on the international agenda into national actions; this means integrating the treaties, conventions, conferences, declarations and international resolutions into domestic policy.

- Develop strategies to improve and guarantee women's access and control of natural resources
- Utilize women's specialized knowledge and skills
- Create opportunities for women's education and training
- Provide measures for capacity building and transference at the technological level
- Assign specific resources aimed at helping women benefit equitably and with equal opportunity from the measures that conventions implement

Promote a more active role of women's organizations and mechanisms

Organizations, ministries and women's affairs offices and UNIFEM should take a more active role in the MEA discussions and decisions. This means, for example, that gender and environment specialists are incorporated in the restructuring of UNIFEM.

Other international forums, as in the case of the group of OECD gender focal points, should develop a joint strategy together with women's entities working in the sphere of the MEAs, so they can push from their countries for equality in the environmental sector at the international level.

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