

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-second session
New York, 25 February – 7 March 2008**

EMERGING ISSUES PANEL

Gender Perspectives on Climate Change

Written statement*

Submitted by

Minu Hemmati

Gendercc – Women for Climate Justice

Introduction

Despite its status and development within the United Nations international system, climate change policy-making has failed to adopt a gender-sensitive strategy. This failure not only

change issues in the international policy process and arena: new connections between different issues have been made, and new alliances have been established.

Climate Justice: Entry Points for Gender Justice: It seems that ‘gender equality’ is finally beginning to be accepted as one of the core principles of mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts. This may be due to the importance of climate justice in the future climate regime and the increased understanding among at least some of organisations forming the UNFCCC constituencies that the discourse on climate change needs to be widened beyond its current main focus on technologies and economic instruments. Root causes of climate change, like consumption patterns and lifestyles in industrialised countries and quickly developing societies must be brought onto the agenda immediately. Women and gender activists have been pointing out for some years that we need to question the dominant perspective focusing mainly on technologies and markets, and put caring and justice in the centre of measures and mechanisms. The notably increased attention paid to climate justice and gender mainstreaming is certainly the outcome of many, many conversations with individual delegates, the increasing presence, and other aspects of the multi-track advocacy strategy that a small group of women and gender experts has engaged in at the COPs over the years. It seems that these patiently continued activities, including through tough times, are finally paying off.

Some countries, and not least the UNFCCC Secretariat, are also appearing more open-minded towards gender equality. During the side event “Integrating gender into climate change policy: challenges, constraints, perspectives” and in various smaller debates they expressed their concerns about the lacking gender dimension and assured their support for future activities. And they asked for very concrete suggestions, in particular regarding language, to be used in upcoming negotiations. This will be one of the tasks, and challenges, for further collaboration in the *gendercc network*: to pay very close attention to the negotiations and work closely with like-minded parties towards appropriate agreements. The network is committed to doing engaging in this way without compromising the independent, and sometimes radical, stance that it has developed. Taking gender aspects into account implies a radical move away from dominant, market-based to *people-centred* mechanisms. This is a message that is not warmly welcomed in most of the climate change community. Hence, while there has been a step-change at COP13 in terms of awareness of and public commitment to gender sensitivity, really integrating gender into climate protection will remain a big challenge.

United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): The COP process of the CBD has been picking up on climate change issues, and it has been picking up on gender issues – however, not in conjunction, and with climate clearly being addressed to a very limited extent.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): UNEP operates climate change related activities in several of its centres around the globe ²; and UNEP has been working on issues such as climate, finance and business; mitigation of energy-related emissions; carbon sequestration and land use, land use change and forestry; vulnerability and adaptation to climate change; technology transfer; capacity building; and climate change and development. UNEP’s annual Governing Council Meetings provide an important forum for high-level deliberations among environment Ministers.

United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD): The CSD 14/15 cycle mainly dealt with energy, and – to a limited extent – with climate change issues. Women were particularly successful in their advocacy, and the draft CSD15 decision indeed con-

² http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/Climate_Change_Centre/index.asp

tained a number of strong paragraphs on women and (access to) energy, and a few references to climate change. However, this draft decision was never adopted.

Other international or regional fora, such as regional Economic Commissions, or bodies like EU, AU, OECD, OAS and others have not addressed gender and climate change issues, but they may provide very important entry-points for building up capacity and awareness, including on regionally specific challenges relating to gender and climate.

Strategies to Increase Gender Responsiveness to Climate Change

The international climate change negotiation process – as well as climate policies at regional, national and local levels - must adopt the principles of gender equity at all stages: from research, to analysis, and the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies. From other policy processes we know very well that only if gender aspects are integrated in the documents, there will be a chance to refer to them and hold governments accountable to their commitments.

The climate change debate in

perts, such as in the *gendercc network*, will be crucial. Furthermore, it will not be sufficient to participate in the annual COPs and SBSTA/SBI meetings. In order to succeed in integrating gender in climate change policy, it will be even more important and more promising to actively participate in the growing number of workshops organised in the context of pursuing the Bali Plan of Action. Four to five additional annual meetings will be held in order to discuss and negotiate the future climate regime. In addition, there is a significant number of related workshops, for example addressing the review of articles and conventions, or methodological issues.

Yet in order to prepare substantial input into the workshops, it is necessary to increase the available amount of data and research on gender and climate topics, and to link discussions at local levels to those at the international level – feeding local realities and experiences into the general and abstract discussions at the global level, as well as ‘translating’ global changes and international policies so as to communicate what these will, or may, mean for local communities. Providing capacity development opportunities for women and gender activities who are prepared to raise their voices in the international policy arena will be key, so that they can become effective advocates on policy and effective communicators to communities and networks around the world. Preparing training materials, tools, and lessons learned will be as important as facilitating learning platforms for exchange and mutual capacity building among the women and gender experts.

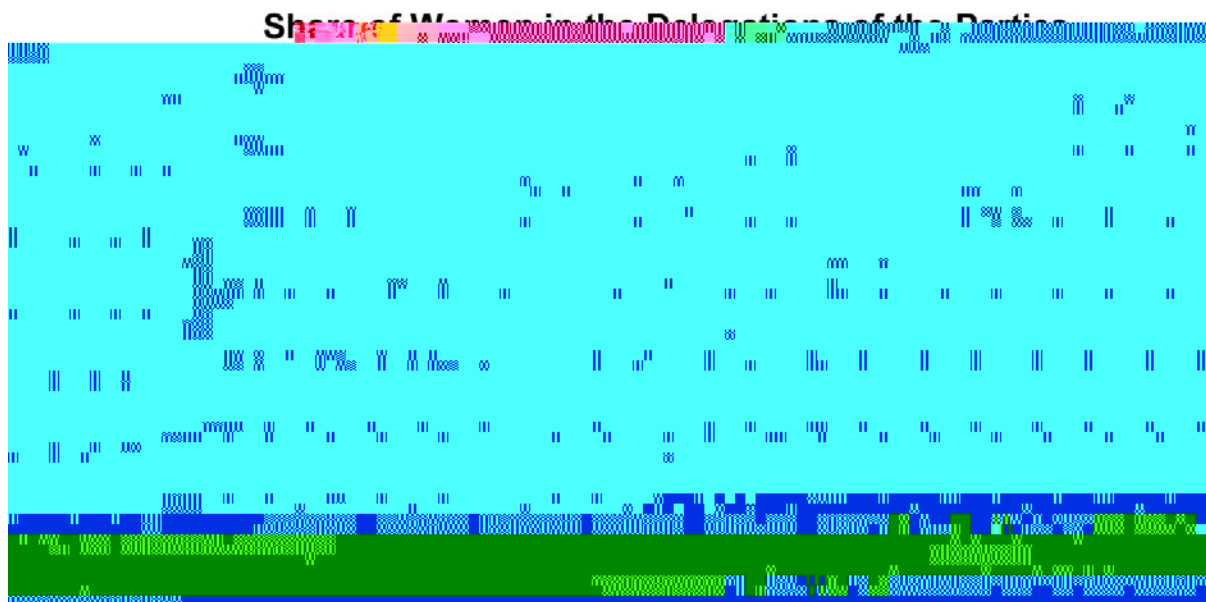
In order to be able to meet said requirements, the *gendercc network* agreed to further developing its structure and activities by establishing regional focal points and a global; and *raising funds to cover the costs of participating* in the UNFCCC process for a number of women from around world. This will also serve the women’s goal of being recognised as a constituency in the UNFCCC process. This recognition, in turn, will facilitate invitations to participate in workshops, give statements and submit positions.

The topic of climate change is not yet well established within *the international women’s movement*, and there is a need for information about the issues as well as the political processes. As has been demonstrated in recent years, it is particularly important to increase the participation of women who have expertise both on gender and on climate. The general advocacy for women’s rights and gender equity is crucial, but so is the ability to argue in detail, why and how gender should and can be integrated into climate related policymaking. Such expertise is hardly available within the process right now, and the participation of gender and climate experts – from the governmental or other constituencies’ side - will help formulate policies that are avoiding to put women at a disadvantage but rather be gender neutral or help to further gender equity.

Participation of Women in Decision-Making on Climate Change

Quantitative analysis of women’s participation in the UNFCCC process: In general, besides the parties there are five different groups (“constituencies”) of observers at UNFCCC: industry representatives, environmental organizations, municipal/regional networks and local governments, indigenous peoples, and the research community. Delia Villagrasa, who for many years directed the non-governmental organizations Climate Action Network-Europe and e5 (European Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future), reflects on the role of women in the negotiations: “ Women were able to play a strong and generally positive role for climate protection based on their networking and interpersonal skills, and their ability to think and plan for the long term, even though they were generally underrepresented in the decision-making positions in their respective communities” (Villagrasa 2002:41).

Constituencies and Delegations: Governmental delegations are composed of senior staff from research, industry, and associations, in addition to state ministerial representatives. Most often the host country's delegation is remarkably large, also including many representatives from the non-governmental sector. The following graph shows the progression of women's representation in governmental delegations at UNFCCC COPs:



At the highest level - heads of delegations - women are substantially less represented. For example, in 2006, the percentage of female heads of delegations was 15.7; in 2007 it was 12%.

The constituency of *business and industry* (BINGO) representatives is still an almost exclusively male club. The BINGO group has the smallest percentage of women as compared to all other constituencies, especially among their decision-making lobbyists. BINGOs also form the group with the least geographical diversity: the vast majority of representatives are from the USA and less than 5% are from developing countries.

While, on average, men dominate *environmental NGOs* (ENGOS) as well, some of the biggest ENGOS are or were in the past led by women. This is certainly the case within the global network of climate organizations, the Climate Action Network (CAN). Within CAN, for a long time “women power” has prevailed: some of the largest and most active regional nodes were led by women. Women have ensured that NGOs were working together, so (...) that strong messages went out to the world” (Villagrasa 2002:42,43).

Women are not yet a separate constituency in the UNFCCC. At ten COPs from 1997-2006, there were a total of only 23 representatives explicitly representing women's organizations, half of them as members of the larger NGO delegation and the others as small women's delegations unto themselves. There are four women's organizations accredited to the UNFCCC as observer organizations, at most one or two of them are taking part in the annual conferences with their own delegations. The unusually low le

experts. Therefore, governments should aim to

- Röhr, U. & Hemmati, M. 2008 (in press). *Solidarity in the Greenhouse: Gender Equality and Climate Change*. In: Grover, V. (ed.): Kyoto: Ten years and still counting. Oxford & IBH
- Skutsch, M. 2004. CDM and LULUCF: what's in for women? A note for the Gender and climate change Network. Enschede, Netherlands
- Skutsch, M. and N. Wamukonya. 2001. Is there a gender angle to climate change negotiations? Position paper
Indigenous Rainforest Peoples, 2005. Gender