

Statement by Women at COP11 & COP/MOP1 (Dec 9, 2005)

Mr President,

I am speaking on behalf of women who gathered here at the Montreal Conference to discuss gender perspectives on climate change – a diverse group from women's organisations, environmental organisations, youth groups, local governments, faith communities, and others.

We came together because we want to put gender onto the climate change agenda. We are very aware that there are still many gaps in the research on gender and climate change. But there is no reason to wait! We feel very strongly that this process should embrace gender as a crucial element.

We are here because we seek justice. We yearn for a world of peace. We long for all of us coming together in unity – not a forced unity under the exploitation of many by a few, not a unity under the domination of some over others. But a unity in diversity – as embodied in the core principles of the United Nations and the Rio Declaration.

United Nations processes are mandated to embody the principles and practices of gender analysis and gender equality. Deliberations and decisions within the UNFCCC framework should therefore, as a matter of course, integrate considerations of the different roles, vulnerabilities and strengths of women and men.

Shaping climate policy from the gender perspective would signify an important step both towards gender justice, and towards a global society in which climate protection is not merely a vision but a practical reality.

We need to improve climate protection – what is being discussed is not enough. Sure, it is important to target the economy with market instruments aimed at companies, investors, insurers, and so on. However – you will excuse the paraphrase - "it's NOT just the economy, stupid"!

It is as important not to forget that greenhouse gases are emitted by technologies used by PEOPLE. Therefore, we need to work with people – women and men - and their behaviour, their life styles. We need to educate everybody about all aspects of CO2 emissions and offer climate-friendly choices accessible to all.

Relating to the different roles they fulfil in society, there are significant differences in energy use between women and men. For example, men more often drive cars, and bigger ones, and more often use them for work outside the home and for leisure. We are not saying this in accusation. We are saying this because if you want to impact behaviour, you need to take note of *who* is behaving *how*, and *why*.

The relevance of gender to climate change is even more obvious when looking at adaptation: It is the poorest people in the poorest countries who will be hit hardest by the negative effects of climate change. Because women constitute the majority of the poor in developing countries and communities highly dependent on local natural resources, they are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change. And even in the developed world, increasing costs for energy, transport, healthcare and nutrition are likely to affect women, including single mothers, more than men.

At times, more women than men die in natural disasters - because warning information does not reach them, they have never learned to swim, or are not allowed to leave their homes by themselves. In other cases, more men than women lose their lives because they engage in 'heroic', risky action to save others.

Successful mitigation and adaptation will have to be context-specific, and participatory. When developing adaptive measures, all members of the community must be part of the planning and governance process. Only the full participation of women in planning and decision-making will deliver effective results.

Women around the globe are more concerned about environmental risks than men as they are the ones responsible for the well-being of their families. They are more convinced that behavioural changes will need to be part of the solution. And they are responsible for transmitting values and cultures to the next generations. They are the most obvious 'natural ally' for everybody concerned about climate change – and the biggest possible constituency to the cause.

Therefore, women urge parties to take action: Implement Kyoto. Design gender sensitive adaptation policies and measures, and fund them. Build the post-2012 'regime' that is broader and more effective, while taking gender into account at every step along the way.

Climate change, in all its aspects, is a truly global challenge. We need to address it with the utmost urgency, in solidarity, and doing justice to all people – young and old, South and North, East and West, women and men, girls and boys. We can only achieve this bold goal if we come together as a global community, learning from each other and with each other how to protect our climate within the framework and under the core principles of the United Nations - peace, justice, and sustainable development.

Finally, we wanted to use this opportunity to remember Joke Waller Hunter. She always encouraged us and supported our activities. We thank her.