

**EVERYBODY'S CONTRIBUTION WILL COUNT FOR INFLUENCING CLIMATE CHANGE;
ACTION AGENDA FOR STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

Climate change is a most serious threat to sustainable development and it will endanger the basis of achieving the Millennium goals, unless we do not succeed in combating it. Influencing climate change is directly linked with eradication of extreme poverty, creation of decent jobs and income. It is also an integral part of promotion of sustainable development and livelihoods. Therefore the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed last December that they will cooperate for achieving a comprehensive new arrangement on climate change before the end of 2009.

Role of women in influencing climate change

International analyses of the climate change indicate that the impacts will affect most seriously the poor regions and poor people, who have least resources for combating the changes or adapting to them. 70 per cent out of these poor are women and these women will carry the hardest work in meeting the increasing droughts, floods or storms related with climate change. These increasing nature catastrophes will bring increasing problems for agriculture and food security, availability of water and household energy; they also increase malnutrition and health problems.

Women will be obliged to face the burden of adaptation, whatever their wish may be, as all the above mentioned sectors are traditionally taken care by women in the developing countries. Women will continue to take care of the food, shelter, water and fuel even in the growingly difficult circumstances. Women's care will be decisive for the children's and whole families' well being. If the necessary understanding, knowledge and resources are not made available for women they may enter even into a deeper vicious circle of poverty, as more time is needed for obtaining the food, water, fuel and shelter. Girls and women may not have time for education; longer distances for walking will require more energy and lead to malnutrition. Climate change will also increase health problems which may be gender related.

However, women should be empowered to participate in community decision making and have the necessary knowledge of adaptation measures and resources, in particular access to land. By participating more actively in the development of sustainable agriculture either in case of increasing droughts or rains (drought tolerant crops, tillage, etc) food production and water management women can make a significant contribution to adaptation measures.

Women can make a difference in the mitigation at the local level as well. They should be involved in the development and increasing the local renewable energy sources (solar, water, soil, wind as well as bio fuels), maintenance of nurseries and reforestation and thus making a difference in the mitigation work. By strengthened women's participation, the local climate work can come more effective.

Thus, we are not considering climate related activities as separate phenomenon, but as an integral part of poverty eradication, job and income generation where women's empowerment and participation in their community development and decision making as well as access to resources, in particular to land will be strengthened. Sustainable forest management, increasing renewable energy sources, sustainable water management, rural development and agriculture as well as gender mainstreaming are the established priorities of the development cooperation of OECD-countries. At the same time they are the basic cornerstones of influencing the climate change as well.

Even though we can make progress in combating the climate change, it will be already on its way and continue to cause its adverse impacts. Therefore it will also be most important to develop atmospheric observation systems as well as early warning and training to meet the natural catastrophes. Recent observations indicate that women will be more vulnerable in case of the natural catastrophes, this Conference's background paper indicates that the number of deaths of women may raise as high as 75%. However, we have also positive indication that with advance training lives have been able to be saved. These facts speak for supporting developing the training activities and taking the gender approach into account.

How to enhance the women's participation

1. Negotiations on the new climate regime

It will important to consider how to strengthen the role of women in the negotiation process on the new climate regime. Sofar this issue has not yet been comprehensively considered. However, the Convention on Biodiverisity (CBD) has a short reference to role of women and the Convention Secretariat developed a Gender Strategy, which was welcomed by the Conference of the Parties last June. UNDP and UNEP have also gender strategies and UNEP's new draft programme and budget has mainstreamed the active contribution of women in the work on climate change and environmental management in an excellent way. UNDP, UNEP, IUCN and WEDO have also established a Global Gender and Climate Change Alliance which will seek active cooperation with interested parties.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC decided last December that the new regime should be ready for signing by the COP in December 2009. When the negotiations proceed further, we could consider together how to include the gender approach best.

Finland will include women in her negotiation delegations and invites other Governments to act accordingly. Finland will also support financially the participation of female delegates of the developing countries in the negotiations and support their capacity building activities in co-operation with the Global Gender and Climate Change Alliance (GGCCA). GGCCA will organize training for the female delegates in connection of the next Conference of Parties to the Climate Convention in December in Poznan and following meetings of the subsidiary bodies next June as well as Conference again in December 2009.

2. Implementation of the new regime

The Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC has nominated a focal point for gender issues and the Secretariat has started to consider elements of a gender strategy. It would be necessary that this strategy would be ready at the latest by the COP in 2009. Likewise it would be most important that the strategy would be integrated in the activities of the Secretariat supporting the implementation of the new regime. Important elements will include adaptation measures, but also mitigation, long term activities and cooperation, financing and capacity building as well as risk management.

3. Financial arrangements

The new regime will also cover financial arrangements needed for the implementation of the commitments. Negotiations for the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, GEF will start this autumn. In connection of the GEF we have four climate funds. The new Adaptation fund will also develop its modes of action and criteria for financing. It will be most timely to consider how the gender approach could be integrated. E.g. gender specific criteria or some specific programmes could be developed.

The Climate Funds may only act as catalysers and therefore it will be even more important to cooperate with other global and regional financing institutions and UN and its specialized Agencies and Programmes supporting the implementation of the climate regime. Also the cooperation with the private sector will be decisive. Earlier it was emphasized that combating and adapting to climate

change will not be separate activities but be integrated with society's sustainable development and poverty eradication

4. Next steps

It will now be important to work actively for the accomplishment of the new climate regime. In this work we will draw attention to empowerment of women and their potential to make the process more effective. We believe that we can achieve a comprehensive understanding on this.

We need to seek the cooperation with all main partners in the negotiations. Cooperation concerns the biggest emitters as well as the most vulnerable states including the least developed countries and the small island states.

Cooperation with and supporting the existing networks like the Network of the Female Environment Ministers and Leaders, Global Gender and Climate Change Alliance, Council of World Women Leaders and others will be important. We will organize in cooperation with them the Next Meeting of the Network of the Female Environment Ministers as well as a side event to discuss the women's contribution on climate change next December in Poznan.

5. International awareness rising

The Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance will focus on Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction 19-22 October 2008 in Manila and will help to raise the awareness, knowledge and understanding on the relationship of gender and climate change. Even more important is to understand the difference women can make in combating and adapting to the change.

Likewise the Presidents of Liberia and Finland H.Exc. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and H.Exc. Tarja Halonen have understood the need to act and called upon international women leaders to a major colloquium 7-8 March in Monrovia. Women's empowerment, Leadership, International Peace and Security will be considered. One main theme of the Colloquium will be Gender and Climate Change.

Proposed Agenda for Action

Finland will actively promote women's participation in influencing climate change and invite you to participate in this cooperation as follows:

- to nominate female delegates to climate meetings, in particular to negotiations on the new regime;
- to develop and support information activities and understanding on the relationship with gender and climate change;
- developed countries to support financially the participation of the developing countries female delegates and their capacity building;
- to draw actively attention in the climate negotiations both on the gender related impact of the climate change and to the potential of the women's participation making the adaptation and mitigation work more effective at the local level;
- to draw attention to the positive role of women in adaptation and mitigation in the financial arrangements for supporting the new regime on climate change, in particular in negotiations on the replenishment of the GEF and working modalities of the Adaptation Fund;
- to support the UN and its specialized agencies and programmes as well as international financial institutions' work promoting the women's contribution to adaptation and mitigation

(sustainable water management and agriculture and food security, increasing renewable energy sources and reforestation);

- to support atmospheric surveillance and early warning systems;
- to support risk reduction programmes and women's active training for natural catastrophes;
- to draw in the bilateral cooperation with the developing countries attention to women's role in climate change and support financially gender specific programmes.

Further information:

Aira Kalela
Special Representative
Climate and Gender
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
aira.kalela at formin.fi
Tel 358-40-5061175

Tiina Jortikka-Laitinen
Director
International Environmental Affairs
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
tiina.jortikka-laitinen at formin.fi
Tel 358-40-7408945

Päivi Kannisto
Gender Advisor
Department for Development
Cooperation, Ministry for For.Aff.
paivi.kannisto at formin.fi
Tel 358- 400-328016