

# WAVE Belgrade Declaration

### **PREAMBLE**

We, the participants of the WAVE (Women as the Voice for the Environment) events here in Belgrade, come together from 50 different countries in the PAN-European region, 20 years after the publication of the Report of the Commission Brundtland 'Our Common Future' and 15 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, to call for the right to a healthy environment.

We recall the spirit and outcomes of the UNEP WAVE Assembly which took place in Nairobi, October 2004, and brought together more than 150 women and men from different regions in the world, and resulted in clear policy recommendations, project ideas, and the WAVE Declaration.

We pay tribute to the poor worldwide and in particular the 70% women among them who, under difficult circumstances, sustain their livelihoods and communities. In their struggles we recognize their invaluable contributions to preserve the environment and its natural resources, to safeguard the health of their families and communities, to work towards economic independence, and to strengthen social networks.

We gather here to share our concerns regarding the health of our planet, our societies and our children, and to share our practices in the areas of safe water supply and healthy sanitation, secure and sustainable energy use, diverse and healthy food production, promotion of safe products and substances, and sustainable lifestyles. We come together to voice our demands for the recognition of our right to a healthy environment.

### **Right to Biodiversity**

We are concerned about the global decrease in biodiversity so seriously reflected in the deterioration of our PAN-European ecosystems, landscapes, species and, in particular, species varieties. This predicament was so clearly demonstrated in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. We see biodiversity as the fundament of all life on our planet and are not satisfied with the draft Ministerial declaration of the UNECE Ministerial Meeting (10-12 October) and are disappointed by the negative role some countries played in weakening existing commitments to biodiversity protection, hindering urgently needed action.

Agro-biodiversity, consisting of traditional, bio-diverse crops, seeds, fruits, and farm animals, is a living immeasurable genetic pool and the basis of our food production. However, this biodiversity is endangered by agro-industry, economic interests and trade measures.

We call for the promotion of a sustainable, bio-diverse and regional agricultural production, which includes the reduction of subsidies for industrial agriculture, and support for the environmental services of farmers including protecting the environment, water resources, landscapes, and biodiversity. We demand the recognition of the cultural heritage that our (agro-) biodiversity offers, not in gene banks or museums, but in their living environments. We demand the avoidance of the negative effects on biodiversity caused by the promotion of bio-energy production and call for the labelling of bio-fuels.

### **Right to Safe Food**

We see a major danger in the promotion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and products based on nanotechnologies in our agriculture and environment. These technologies are not sufficiently tested for health and environmental effects and also hold the danger of patenting life and basic elements, such as atoms and molecules. We are also concerned with the widespread use of pesticides in agriculture.

We demand the recognition of the right of citizens to safe, diverse, and locally produced agricultural products. We demand the right to be able to protect ourselves, our families, and our environment from GMOs and products based on nanotechnologies and thus call for a moratorium on such products until all health, safety, and even human rights aspects have been thoroughly studied by independent experts, particularly for the EECA and SEE region. We also call for clear targets and timetables for the reduction of pesticides in agriculture in our region.

### **Right to Safe and Affordable Water and Sanitation**

We are deeply concerned about the lack of access to clean drinking water and the absence of safe sanitation for more than 86 million people in the EU, EECCA and SEE region, in particular in rural areas, and the morbidity and mortality this causes, especially for babies and children. We are concerned about privatization and steeply rising water prices in the region, and the lack of measures to compensate the poorest populations, in particular elderly and female-headed households.

We therefore demand the promotion of preventive water source protection, including sustainable and affordable sanitation, water saving approaches in agriculture and sanitation, and the safeguarding of the right to safe and affordable water for all. We demand fair and affordable water pricing policies, the prevention of corruption in the water sector, and the recognition of the right to clean and affordable water in the EU and national Constitutions.

### **Right to Safe Energy**

We are deeply concerned about the detrimental energy situation for poor households and schools in our region. Poverty forces people to burn waste (e.g. plastics, tar, oil, kerosene, traditional biomass) indoors for heating and cooking purposes, emitting toxic fumes and causing major health problems.

We therefore demand major investments in safe and affordable energy devices, energy efficiency technologies and sustainable energy sources. We call for access to affordable, efficient, renewable and clean energy for all in the region.

We are concerned about the effects of climate change and the burdens that climate-related changes and disasters put on women, men and children, and the related health, environmental, and economic impacts in our region and worldwide.

We therefore demand a strong political commitment from every government in the world to ratify and implement the Kyoto protocol. Tools like the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) should be introduced and implemented in a way that local people, particularly those living in poverty, and the environment will benefit. We also demand a major endeavour from our Governments to promote a gender-sensitive and effective post-Kyoto regime in the forthcoming UNFCCC COP, December 2007, Bali.

This regime can only be successful if the perspectives of women are fully taken into account. Women give greater priority to safe, renewable energy and will support measures needed for the implementation of this regime. We believe renewable energy has to be produced in a regional, fair and ecologically sound manner.

### **Nuclear energy is no option**

We are deeply concerned about the promotion of nuclear energy as a solution to climate change, especially as evidence shows the whole cycle of nuclear energy consumes a great deal of resources and produces a great deal CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Uranium as an energy source is limited and will be exhausted in 65 years at the current level of use. With the planned increased number of nuclear plants it will only last 30-40 years. This is, according to the German Ministry of Environment, a resource even more limited than oil and coal supplies. In 2005, nuclear energy only contributed 2-3% to the worldwide consumption of energy while renewable energy already accounts for 20% of the energy supply.

Nuclear energy production can never be safe; any material defect or human error can lead to immense consequences, not to mention the security threats nuclear facilities pose. We know the devastation this technology has caused in our region and worldwide, and the disastrous, everlasting impacts it has on the lives of women, men, children and future generations.

We therefore demand our Governments reallocate funding from nuclear power to safe, efficient, sustainable energy resources and the promotion of these technologies.

### **Right to Safe Chemicals**

We are concerned about the effects of chemicals in our food, environment, and everyday products on our health and that of our children and families. We are particularly worried by the deficient action regarding the substitution of hazardous chemicals and the lack of sound implementation of existing chemicals agreements.

Scientific insights show that even very low levels of hazardous substances can negatively impact the health of a child with lifelong effects.

Pregnant women can transfer hazardous substances accumulated in their bodies to their child. We are also concerned about the strong increase of breast cancer in our region, and the scientific evidence that links this disease to environmental pollution.

We therefore call for the phasing out and mandatory substitution of all carcinogenic, mutagenic, repro-toxic, persistent, bio-accumulative and toxic, endocrine disrupting and neuro-toxic substances, all which can harm the health of children. As a first step, we call on governments to ban all hazardous chemicals in children's products (e.g. toys, clothing, food), and link this to their national Children Environmental Health Action Plans (WHO Europe Region).

Furthermore, we ask for the effective implementation of REACH in the EU so that it leads to the protection of humans and the environment from hazardous chemicals. We also call on governments in the EECA and SEE region to take the initiative to adopt similar measures as those stipulated by the REACH legislation in their national policies. SAICM and particularly the IFCS, are needed mechanisms whereby governments can discuss effective chemicals policy measures and we thus call on them to uphold their commitments to this forum, along with more political support and funding.

We also demand much stronger investment in the prevention of breast cancer by recognizing the environmental links and call for the urgent reduction of contaminants linked to breast cancer.

#### **Right to Information, Participation and Justice**

Research shows that the poorest suffer most from environmental pollution in all countries of our region. The voices of minority and marginalized groups are not heard sufficiently and their possibilities to partake in policymaking are often very limited.

Among the poor and marginalized groups, women suffer most. There is yet no balanced influence of women on decision-making and policy implementation. Women's voices reflect half of the region's population and are essential to ensure gender equality and to build sustainable and just development.

We therefore demand the increased participation of all citizens in environmental policy making. In particular, we call for the full participation of women in policy development and implementation in the region at

every level. We also demand the rights of all citizens, women in particular, to have easy and full access to environmental information and environmental justice. This needs to be guaranteed through the full implementation of the Aarhus Convention and we call on those governments in our region who have yet to ratify this Convention to urgently do so, particularly the annex on access to information on GMOs. We also call upon all governments to promote the Aarhus Convention at an international level, bringing its principles into other international forums and processes, fulfilling Rio Principle 10.

#### **Right to a Healthy Environment**

It is our vision that our environment is the foundation and sustainer of our economies, our societies, and our lives.

Therefore we demand the full respect of our environmental rights as an integral part of our human right to life. We call upon governments to work towards the establishment of a right to a healthy environment and incorporate this in national, regional, and international human rights treaties.

#### **Our Commitment**

We commit ourselves to work together, exchange information and lessons learned, to share ideas and impulses, and cooperate with scientific and technical experts and socially responsible businesses. We will dialogue and build partnerships to demonstrate and implement sustainable lifestyles and practices and bring together our unique and diverse strengths for our common goal: a just and healthy planet.

We participants of the WAVE conference in Belgrade call on all governments and stakeholders in the region and worldwide to join our efforts to promote the right to a healthy environment for all!

