

Statement delivered on May 3 on behalf of the WMG.

Women's Major Group Statement

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

3 May 2012

Vice President of the Council, distinguished delegates and major group colleagues. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Women's Major Group. I am Noelene Nabulivou from Fiji in the Pacific and a member of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

We congratulate the Council for recognizing the vital role of civil society toward Rio+20 and beyond, as well as providing a space for this frank exchange of views. Allow me to highlight four concerns given the current state of negotiations leading up to Rio+20, which is now less than 50 days away.

First, we agree with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the imperative of a rights-based approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development. I quote: "*A human rights-based approach compels a fuller appreciation of the political dimensions of development. Programming is thus directed to supporting States in identifying the root causes of the non-realization of human rights...and in addressing them.*"[\[1\]](#)

This inter-linkage of human rights and development is critical in crafting coherent, ambitious and rights-based policies and programs. Accordingly, we call for a re-affirmation of the Rio Principles including the right to development alongside global agreements to gender equality and women's human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. These rights are enshrined in the Cairo and Beijing agreements and are essential in realising a rights based approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

We also acknowledge that a central underpinning of sustainable development is the right to education, and specifically human rights centred lifelong learning programmes to ensure equal participation of women in all spheres of education. In this way sustainable practices will become embedded in learning and action.

Second, we note with alarm the lack of multilateral and national regulations governing transnational corporations, given their role in the commodification of land, seas and oceans at the expense of social and environmental agreements. Thus, we call for strong regulatory mechanisms that will rein in transnational corporations and hold them accountable.

We call for urgent action by governments to halt dangerous marketised technologies including geoengineering, fracking, experimental seabed mining, black sands mining, REDD and REDD plus mechanisms[\[2\]](#). These misguided practices are deepening impoverishment, inequities and causing irreversible environmental damage. This manifests in increased food insecurity, soil degradation, land alienation, and long term socio-cultural impacts on affected communities including indigenous and migrant peoples, fisher and forest peoples, pastoralists, and many other marginalized communities.

We urge governments to recognize alternative pathways to development that will ensure our livelihoods, food sovereignty and protection of the commons through appropriate institutional policies and regulatory frameworks both international and domestic. Only in this way will women's work burdens in social provisioning be relieved, especially for those living in poverty.

Here the precautionary principle and the principle of prior informed consent in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are critical to protect ecosystems. Sustainable development must be firmly founded on subsidiarity and self-determination for people, communities, and nations. Community rights over the commons must be respected and key biodiversity areas must be protected. This requires strong state positions against unregulated corporate practices, unrestrained extraction and commodification of natural resources.

Third, the institutional framework for sustainable development must enjoy adequate means of financing and implementation, and be informed by the Rio Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Governance of all three pillars of sustainable development must integrate economic, social and cultural rights. ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies can play a significant role in this by framing their deliberations and policy recommendations within an economic, social and cultural rights framework. For example, Commission on the Status of Women conclusions on financing for gender equality provided very useful analysis and policy options but these were not integrated into the financing for development process. Surely ECOSOC has the mechanisms to share these insights better across the system.

Finally, as a Pacific Islander I must call attention to the urgency of political response in these final weeks of negotiations. Climate change and global warming is threatening our territorial integrity and our very existence. This requires urgent action, above and beyond business as usual approaches. It is time for the highest levels of political commitment to ensure that Rio+20 is truly groundbreaking and makes a difference in the lives of women and girls, and their communities.

I close with the words of young women activists organizing around the nexus of gender, economic and ecological justice across the global South. I quote

“We reject models based on extractivism and current production and consumption patterns that do not contemplate an integral vision of development ... We need policies and programs that empower communities and individuals, rather than exposing us to market assault and the changes in climate that affect land, livelihoods, handicrafts, indigenous medicines, staple food, symbolic wealth and our caring social relationships that include women’s informal networks of mutual support.”^[3] End quote.

I thank you.

[1] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2006), *Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation*, Geneva, p. 20.

[2] REDD+ supports the merchandising of forests and carbon foot-prints, allowing some states to continue emissions through its large industries and multinational corporations, in an appearance of support for climate change reduction.

[3] http://www.dawnnet.org/uploads/documents/GEEJ%20Statements_Combined_PacAfLatC_2011-Jun-23.pdf