

Women and Environmental Justice in German Development Cooperation

I. Introductory remark: Relevance of Side Event

I thank the organizers for inviting me as a member of the German Delegation to CSW to this important side event. We appreciate this **opportunity to jointly measure progress** in the implementation of Beijing's Chapter K "women and the environment" as well as to assess existing challenges, and to **draw lessons for the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development**. It is a very appropriate moment to share experiences, lessons learned and good practices from civil society, the UN and a national government from different regions.

II. Relevance of environmental justice for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's rights

Gender equality and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. Women are important actors in producing and securing food for their families, cultivating land and managing natural resources. However, they often do not possess equal rights to own land and other productive resources. Their interests, needs and voices are rarely considered in decision-making processes.

Women tend to be among those **most affected by environmental challenges** in their daily lives. For example, traditionally women bear the burden of supplying their families with water, firewood and staple foods. As a result of climate change, harvests and income are no longer certain and workloads become heavier due to water shortages and soil degradation. Consequently, women have less time for engaging in paid work or receiving education. Thus, environmental challenges maintain or aggravate gender inequalities.

During the last two decades, countries worldwide have improved legal frameworks to remove gender-based discriminations in order to create better living conditions for girls and women. We are however highly aware that **gender equality is nonetheless not a lived reality worldwide**. Environmental policy is one of the areas where women's voice, leadership and participation are particularly limited, despite the **negative impacts of environmental degradation and environmental disasters on the health, well-being and quality of life, especially on women**.

The **involvement and empowerment of women is essential** to any **effective response to environmental challenges**. Achieving environmental justice must therefore reflect women's and men's different roles, needs and responsibilities in using, managing and maintaining the environment. In this way, the protection and conservation of the world's natural resources provides vital opportunities to redress

gender inequalities and multiple discriminations, such as based on social class, ethnicity, age and education.

III. Approaches/ policies of German development cooperation, incl. practice examples

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is committed to a **human rights-based approach**. Strengthening women's rights and promoting equal opportunities, equal responsibilities and an equal say for women and men remain an **important goal** and **guiding principle** of German development cooperation.

We are dedicated to the implementation of chapter K "women and the environment" of the Beijing Platform for Action. **Climate change, disaster risk management and sustainable development** constitute one of the priority fields of action of our **cross-sectoral strategy on gender equality in German development policy (2014)**.

In our **long-term commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls** we have advocated the integration of gender aspects in programmes and measures in the **fields of climate change, food security and rural development**, as well as **improved access of women to land rights** in various cooperation countries. We will give additional thrust to these commitments by a **new gender action plan** which will be published soon.

German development cooperation is applying a **three-pronged approach** consisting of women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming and political dialogue. This implies that a **gender-sensitive climate and environmental policy** is a central issue for our bilateral policy dialogue.

Moreover, we support our cooperation countries by **implementing bi-lateral projects** which strengthen gender and environmental justice:

- Since 2005, German development cooperation supports the **Bolivian government** to increase **the resilience of small-scale farmers to climate change impacts**, particularly regarding the preservation and fair distribution of scarce water resources. In Bolivia, women assume a significant proportion of agricultural work but have limited access to and knowledge of resources such as land, water, machines and credits. Therefore, the German-Bolivian development cooperation implements capacity development trainings for women and men. Thereby, women's rights were strengthened as women received access to and knowledge of **new technologies and innovative instruments**. More than 1.700 families in the poorest region of the country improved their water availability due to the construction of irrigation systems, which are fed mainly from rainwater.
- In Vietnam, a project to improve the **sustainable management of natural resources** supports the Vietnamese government in land use planning. The

livelihoods of the people living in the buffer zones depend to a large extent on the natural resources in their environment. Except for agricultural yields, only limited sources of income are available. Since 2007, the German-Vietnamese development cooperation is therefore highly engaged in creating **alternative income opportunities** for local people. Special importance has been placed on the support of female-headed households. Moreover, innovative **gender-sensitive approaches** have been introduced which **link nature conservation measures with the development needs and interests of local inhabitants**. For example, a **conservation-oriented socioeconomic development plan** has been elaborated which integrates crosscutting issues such as climate change, gender, poverty and ethnicity.

As laid down in our cross-sectoral strategy on gender equality in German development policy, we are dedicated to **ensure transparency and accountability** through **gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation** of our policies and programmes. The formulation of gender-responsive indicators and the establishment of gender-responsive monitoring systems allow us to review impacts on gender equality as well as the effectiveness of our development programmes and to learn from experience.

For German development policy, the work of independent **civil society actors** at all levels is indispensable for a forward-looking women's rights and gender equality policy. We are conscious of our political responsibility and are committed to funding of associations and projects in order to **empower women in environmental policy decision-making processes**. For example, we have supported the **work of WECF in the context of the Rio+20 summit** for involvement of women in environmental-decision-making at all relevant levels, such as by conducting the women's "Rio+20 Good Practice Award" in cooperation with Women's Major Group core members.

We continued our support in the framework of the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. We highly **welcome WECF's lobbying efforts** in cooperation with the Women's Major Group to raise awareness, advocate and lobby for gender equality and women's rights and to provide capacity building for women's organizations in the field of sustainable development.

III. Importance of gender and environmental justice in post-2015 agenda for sustainable development

The **implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action** is an **important precondition** for the achievement of the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. The efforts by international development cooperation and partner country governments have to be carried forward in order to end gender inequality worldwide. Also we are dedicated to promote a post-2015 agenda for sustainable development **which strengthens women's voice, leadership and participation**,

and which ensures that laws, regulations and policies do not discriminate against women and girls. We support a **human rights-based and transformative** post-2015 agenda for sustainable development which calls for involvement of women in decision-making at all levels.

The **conservation and sustainable use of natural resources** is one of the strategic thematic areas which the German government considers of utmost importance for the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. In this area, we regard the development of **sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the conservation of biodiversity, the preservation of groundwater resources and marine protection** of particular importance.

We are therefore pleased that the **proposal of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals** incorporates important aspects for strengthening women's voice, leadership and participation **in all three dimensions of sustainable development**. We particularly appreciate the integration of a **stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls**. Moreover, we welcome that the proposal contains **stand-alone goals on ecosystems, ocean, sustainable consumption and production** as well as a **stand-alone goal on universal access to water and sanitation *for all***. We highly appreciate that the **stand-alone goal on climate change** recognizes the importance of the participation of women in climate change related planning and management.

To conclude, we want to express our **strong commitment** to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to end gender inequalities in the context of environmental policy. Germany will **proceed to support its cooperation countries to promote environmental justice and gender equality**. We will also work to ensure that the outcomes of this year's Commission on the Status of Women and the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development **will feed into the outcome document of this year's Climate Change Conference**. We do not only need a new climate framework but it must reflect gender equality and women's rights!