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Rural and Indigenous Women's Statement on Climate Change

A Submission to the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

We, rural and indigenous women from Asia, the Pacific and other parts of the world, face enormous threats and damage to our lives and rights as a consequence of climate change including the unbridled manner by which measures are being proposed and undertaken to adapt to and mitigate this phenomenon and its impacts. As women farmers, fisherfolk, herders, farm workers, indigenous food producers and natural resource managers, we rely heavily on primary resources, which are being negatively affected and destroyed by climate change.

We assert our important roles in and contributions to the effective, appropriate, integrated and sustainable use of land, biodiversity and natural resources that have enabled the survival of generations of people for many millennia through our traditional knowledge.

We are concerned that rural and indigenous women are being affected more severely and are more at risk during all phases of natural disasters and extreme weather events including the post-disaster reconstruction processes mainly due to prevailing discrimination based on gender, caste and ethnic identities.

We believe that climate change is a result of the historical and unsustainable exploitation and concentration of access to global natural resources by the northern countries and transnational corporations (TNCs) in the name of development.

We recognise that the intense levels of production for trade and speculation purposes, which have been sustained and amplified by the globalisation system – free market chauvinism facilitated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and international and regional financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have led to the relentless exploitation and exhaustion of natural resources, destruction of forest and water sources in developing countries resulting in more carbon emissions. All these have occurred at the cost of the already marginalised rural and indigenous communities.

We are alarmed by the fact that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognises states' "common but differentiated responsibility" as one of its principles, yet industrialised countries are reluctant to fulfil their obligation to cut emissions at source while their commitments are not sufficient to curb climate change and its impacts.

We are wary of false solutions which have been used to address climate change, natural resource management and other environmental issues. We believe that the market-based mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol, such as emission trading, clean development mechanism, and joint implementation, are not enough to make a dent in addressing the real cause of climate crisis while threatening to undermine rural and indigenous women's roles and contributions to sustainable livelihoods, ecological health and human security including food sovereignty.

We take the position based on our experiences that biofuels, large scale hydro-electric power and nuclear power are not clean, safe, or sustainable alternative sources of energy. On the contrary, they increase threats and damages to the environment and to the lives and livelihood of rural and indigenous women. Construction of large scale hydro-electric power dams and the establishment of monocrop plantations for biofuels have been causing destruction of forest, biodiversity degradation, forced evictions, displacement and landlessness of hundreds of thousands of rural and indigenous women and their communities. The highly toxic chemicals used in these so-called alternative sources of energy particularly affect women's reproductive health.

We are concerned about the financing instruments under the WB's Climate Investment Funds (CIF). Loans add more burden to indebted and already fragile economies of developing countries. This contradicts the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility". Developing countries are instead, made to pay for the effects and impact of climate change caused by industrialized countries. Further, the donor-beneficiary relationship the CIF promotes erodes industrialised countries' obligations to emissions reduction.

We confirm that mitigation and adaptation measures detached from the context and development aspirations of rural and indigenous women renege on commitments to biodiversity and sustainable development, poverty reduction and human rights. We believe that any long term solution to the escalating climate crisis should acknowledge historical responsibility and ecological debt, be grounded on the respect and protection of life and diversity, and promote and fulfill justice and social equity between and within nations, peoples and sexes.

We call on all countries which are Parties to the UNFCCC to be guided by and adhere to the following principles in their "long-term comprehensive action" at all levels:

1. Respect, promote and integrate into all mechanisms, policies and action plans on climate change the specific situation, right and needs of rural and indigenous women as well as their critical role in and contribution to society, which is recognised in various human rights frameworks including Article 14 of CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and General Assembly Resolution 62/136.
2. Recognise and protect the economic, social and cultural rights of rural and indigenous women, specially their right to land, adequate housing and food to eradicate poverty among rural and indigenous women.
3. Ensure the recognition and protection of the particular rights of indigenous women reiterated by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to non-discrimination, collective ownership, traditional knowledge, free, prior and informed consent and self-determination.

We call on governments who are Parties to the UNFCCC to:

1. Recognise and address the gender-differentiated impact of climate change on women and especially the most marginalised sector, rural and indigenous women.

1.1. Collect disaggregated data according to sex and ethnicity and carry out gender analysis on the socio-economic impact of climate change on rural and indigenous women on which all policies and action plans to address climate change should be based.

1.2. Ensure policies and measures on disaster risk management and reduction strategies, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction processes are gender responsive.

1.3 Provide for the informed development of appropriate disaster response and reconstruction strategies with full and effective participation of rural and indigenous women in all stages and processes of governance and decision making from design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

2. Ensure and support the full and effective participation of women, especially rural and indigenous women, in discussions, consultations and decision-making processes on policies, action plans and laws with regards to climate change, sustainable development and environment and natural resource management, which have the effect on rural and indigenous women's rights, lives and livelihood.

2.1. Create an enabling environment for rural and indigenous women's participation in consultations, discussions and decision-making by providing sufficient information and adequate technical and logistical support.

2.2. Recognise and address obstacles which prevent rural and indigenous women from participating in decision-making such as discrimination against them in socio-economic and cultural spheres.

2.3. Establish a permanent global civil society consultative forum on climate change within the UN which should ensure the full and effective participation of rural and indigenous women from Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Latin America: the global regions which stand to be heavily impacted by global warming and climate change.

2.4. Ensure that indigenous women are represented in the demand for an Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Body to the Conference of the Parties by the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change.

3. Provide sufficient funds and technical assistance to rural and indigenous women to build and strengthen their capacity to cope with climate change.

3.1 Ensure rural and indigenous women's access to information, technology and other resources to adapt to climate change.

3.2. Promote and support genuine sustainable development, sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity-based ecological agriculture which empower rural and indigenous women, transform the existing power structure into more equitable relationships and realise people's sovereignty and self-determination over natural resources.

3.3. Ensure that funds be made available directly to rural and indigenous women's organisations and those representing rural and indigenous women.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

www.apwld.org

Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)

www.asianruralwomen.net

Asian Peasant Women's Network (APWN)

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Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN)

www.asianindigenouswomen.org

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

www.aippnet.org

People's Action on Climate Change (PACC)

www.climatechangeaction.net

Signatories:

Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC)

Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)

Asia Pacific Students and Youth Association

ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKANS IN HONG KONG

ATIK- Yeni Kadin (Confederation of Workers from Turkey in Europe- Women's Commission)

ATKI Indonesia

BAI, national network of indigenous women's organizations in the Philippines

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)

BOMSA

Calvince Mbeo

Campaign for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law-Nepal

Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability

Center for Environmental Concerns-Philippines, Inc. (CEC)

Civic Bangladesh

Cordillera Women's Education Action Research Center (CWEARC)

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS' UNION - HONG KONG (FMWU-HK)

FIMI/IIWF - International Indigenous Women's Forum

Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan

Foundation for Women, Law and Rural Development (FORWARD)

GABRIELA-Australia

Gabriela Hong Kong Chapter

Gabriela Women's Party - HK

GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice

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