



**Women's Major Group**  
**UN Ocean Conference - Position Paper**

**Read by Vivienne Solis, CoopeSoliDar R.L.\***  
**Plenary Session, General Assembly, 7 June, 2017, UNHQ, New York, USA**

As women from all over the world, and represented by the Women's Major Group made up of over 1300 groups and networks from every region, we recognize the importance and timeliness of this meeting. We must join efforts towards the conservation, sustainability and fair use of our ocean resources, defend the Commons, and ensure that we are paying careful attention to social, economic and ecological sustainability in all oceans related decisions arising from this Conference, and in future processes.

This UN Oceans Conference process provides an important venue to broaden UN discussions on oceans through a transformative approach that is sufficient to the unprecedented challenges our planet faces in coming decades. Specifically, such Conferences must serve as a useful political space to raise issues such as ridge to reef approaches, global marine governance, impacts of deep sea mining and nuclear waste, impacts of economic partnership agreements and trade agreements on fisheries, the impact on distant water fisheries on local communities, need to move quickly to fossil free futures, gender justice and women's human rights and universal human rights related to oceans, indigenous peoples' rights to free prior and informed consent, and need to protect long-agreed sustainable principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.

In fulfillment of a key Conference objective, to "Share experiences gained at the national, regional, and international levels in the implementation of Goal 14," delegates must surely articulate linkages both between SDG 14 and other relevant goals especially SDG5 on gender and also on health, economics, climate change, and means of implementation. We especially call for increased clarity on intergovernmental processes following this Conference and coherence with overall HLPF and other multilateral processes, with substantive engagement of civil society, major groups and other stakeholders, especially women and girls from all regions.

Humanity has today the potential of addressing the structural issues rooted in an inequitable world but we sadly do not yet see this clearly and strongly reflected in this first Conference. As Women's Major Group representatives we continue to assert the importance of challenging

structural barriers to really recognize the fulfillment of SDG 14 as a core part of Agenda 2030, and work with all governments and stakeholders to ensure this occurs.

The ocean and its coasts are givers of life, life that provides wealth and richness but as the Ministry of Agriculture of Costa Rica (Minister Arauz) mentioned yesterday, we have both immense wealth in the oceans, and immense poverty in the coast. Ocean wealth is not translating into well-being for coastal communities. A few get most of the profit from the oceans, thus encouraging the overexploitation of the oceans by both large and small-scale fisheries. This is occurring in a context where we have crossed several planetary boundaries, already severely damaged and dying coral reefs, sea level rise and decline of water lens and waterways, major pollution on land and in oceans, and with major changes already to marine biodiversity.

We must clearly convey the rights and responsibility of the people of the seas and ocean, respect all cultures, respect diverse voices and respect their ways of life without placing economic interests as the central or sole concern.

On this planet with one shared ocean nearly half of our population live in poverty and collectively hold the same wealth as just eight men. This horrific fact underpins our urgent demand to tackle systemic barriers and structural inequalities including neoliberal capitalism, fundamentalisms, racism and patriarchy, that cause and exacerbate such unimaginable inequalities. It also requires addressing issues of militarism, corporatisation of governance and their influence of multilateral processes, consumption and production, inequalities within and between states, and shrinking civil society space.

We assert that SDG 14 is indivisible from other SDG goals. Gender inequality (SDG 5) must be addressed in order to change one of the most pervasive inequalities evidenced by predominant extractive industrial agricultural and fisheries models that are not sustainable and favor large agribusinesses and distant water fisheries, while pushing out small farmers and artisanal fisher people, a majority of whom are women who typically employ more sustainable practices.

We need now a quick and just transition towards true democratization and a human rights-based approach to SDG 14 implementation that explicitly recognises the human rights of small-scale fishing communities, including women, to participate in and take responsibility for integrated management of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

While we recognise the number of voluntary commitments coming into the Conference, we still see very little recognition by all stakeholders of the input of women of all ages into this SDG14 approach and few affirmative actions that will re-balance unequal power structures, and unfairly gendered norms relating to oceans.

We urge you, in the name of future generations and “buen vivir” to move on to accountability with strength by defining clear indicators that enable us to sail from today with speed, equity and fairness, and speaking the truth of where we are, and where we must go from here.

In the case of Costa Rica, CoopeSoliDar R.L, the local organization that I represent and as part of our global Women's Major Group network, we recognise and call for more concrete initiatives such as our adoption of the *Small Scale Guidelines for the Sustainability of Small scale Fishers* in the context of food security and poverty eradication as a powerful instrument to advance issues related to human-rights approaches: governance, gender equality, climate change, food and water security and sovereignty, and more just markets.

We reiterate the need to:

- Recognize universal human rights and the rights and free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women in all their diversity
- Ensure safety of environmental and women human rights defenders
- Safeguard bodily autonomy, end violence against women, and enhance respect for girls and women of all ages, including by respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Mainstreaming gender equality and women's human rights
- Recognize the importance of small-scale fisheries and associated coastal communities in integrated management and securing food security and other benefits from coastal areas, and fully implementing the intent of SDG target 14B
- Move urgently to those social, economic and ecological policies and practices including no new fossil fuels leaving the ground, and an end to exploitative and extractivist agriculture and fisheries practices through a just transition to low carbon and truly sustainable economies.

We need to ensure the strongest human rights based approach and that the conservation and truly sustainable management of the ocean, air and land is at the center of all our discussions in this Conference and strongly reflected in all intergovernmental processes.

We call upon all of you to move on towards concrete actions that will recuperate the ocean spirit for all, and especially for those who need it the most. Oceans are our common heritage and we have the common responsibility - within the options in all our hands - to save them for ourselves and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide WMG vision and views to this first and urgent Oceans Conference.

*\*Check on delivery : 3 minute statement delivered in Plenary and full statement will be made available on the Oceans Conference and WMG websites.*

Ends.

As read in Spanish:

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Como mujeres de todo el mundo y representantes del Grupo Mayor de Mujeres, que integra a más de 1300 grupos y redes de diversas regiones, reconocemos la importancia y urgencia de esta reunión. Debemos de unir esfuerzos hacia la conservación, sostenibilidad y uso justo y equitativo de los recursos de nuestros océanos. Así mismo, debemos estar atentos para garantizar en todas las decisiones que deriven de esta Conferencia y de los futuros procesos que se desarrolle, se incluyan los temas la sostenibilidad social, económica y ecológica de los océanos.

Específicamente, esta conferencia, debe de brindar un espacio político útil para la discusión de gobernanza marina global, enfoques de manejo costero arrecifal, impactos de minería de profundidad, basura nuclear entre otros.

Con igual importancia se deben discutir y tomar decisiones con relación a los impactos de los acuerdos económicos y de mercado en las pesquerías; el impacto de las pesquerías en aguas de profundidad en las comunidades locales; la justicia; el cumplimiento los derechos de las mujeres y los derechos humanos universales relacionados a los océanos; los derechos de los pueblos indígenas al consentimiento informado previo y la necesidad de proteger los acuerdos ya realizados sobre los principios comunes de sostenibilidad y de una responsabilidad diferenciada.

La humanidad tiene hoy el potencial de reestructurar la forma en la cual se han hecho las cosas. Consideramos, que los retos que enfrentamos en la actualidad no han sido todavía discutidos a profundidad en este plenario. Los temas estructurales enraizados en un mundo inequitativo deben de ser también el centro de esta discusión.

Vemos el mar, los océanos y sus costas como dadores de vida, vida que provee bienestar y riqueza pero, como bien lo dijo ayer el Ministro de Agricultura de Costa Rica ( Ministro Arauz), “...tenemos una *inmensa riqueza en el mar y una inmensa pobreza en la costa. La riqueza de nuestros oceános no se traduce necesariamente en bienestar a la comunidades costeras...*”.

“*Unos pocos se llevan la riqueza de los océanos y esto promueve la sobreexplotación de los recursos del mar, tanto por parte de las flotas de pequeña escala como las de gran escala*”. Necesitamos asegurar un enfoque fuerte basado en los derechos humanos para la conservación del océano y colocar esto en el centro de nuestra discusión.

Debemos de reconocer los derechos y responsabilidades de la gente del mar y el océano, respetar sus culturas, respetar las voces diversas, y respetar las formas de vida, sin colocar los intereses económicos como nuestro único punto de interés.

Como representantes del Grupo Mayor de mujeres, nosotras reconocemos la importancia de retar las barreras estructurales para el cumplimiento del Objetivo 14 al centro de la Agenda 2030.

Urge nuestra demanda para enfrentar las barreras sistémicas y inequidades estructurales, incluidos el capitalismo neoliberal, los fundamentalismos, el racismo y el patriarcado que causa y exacerba estas inequidades inimaginables. También se requiere discutir temas como el militarismo, la gobernanza de las corporaciones, y su influencia en los procesos multilaterales, el consumo y la producción, las inequidades dentro y entre países y la reducción del espacio para la sociedad civil.

Necesitamos movernos hacia una verdadera democratización y un enfoque basado en derechos humanos para la implementación del objetivo 14, esto necesariamente pasa por reconocer los derechos de las mujeres y de las comunidades de pescadores de pequeña escala ( hombre y mujeres) para participar en y tomar responsabilidad para el manejo integrado de las pesquerías de pequeña escala.

Instamos a los honorables delegados, reconociendo la indivisible unión del objetivo 14 a otros objetivos del desarrollo sostenible a:

- Reconocer los derechos humanos y el derecho a un consentimiento libre, previo e informado de las comunidades de Pueblos indígenas, comunidades locales y mujeres en toda su diversidad.
- Asegurar un ambiente sano y los derechos humanos de las mujeres que defienden esta visión.
- Asegurar la seguridad de la autonomía, el fin a la violencia contra la mujer y mejorar el respeto a las mujeres y niñas a sus derechos sexuales.
- Transversalizar la igualdad de género.
- Reconocer la importancia de las pesquerías de pequeña escala asociadas especialmente a formas de gobernanza comunitaria o compartida, seguridad alimentaria y otros beneficios de las zonas costeras.

Vemos todavía poco reconocimiento del trabajo de la mujer hacia la implementación del objetivo 14, pocas acciones afirmativas que puedan balancear la estructura de poder en las principales discusiones relativas a los océanos. Los instamos en el nombre de las futuras generaciones y el “buen vivir” a definir una clara rendición de cuentas y definir los indicadores que nos harán partir hoy con equidad, justicia y diciendo la verdad.

En el caso de mi país, Costa Rica, CoopeSoliDar R.L., organización local a la que pertenezco, hemos adoptado la implementación de las Directrices Voluntarias para la sostenibilidad de las pesquerías de pequeña escala en el contexto de la seguridad alimentaria y la erradicación de la pobreza como un poderoso instrumento para avanzar en temas medulares relativos a los enfoques de derechos humanos en la conservación marina: gobernanza, equidad de género, cambio climático y la búsqueda de mercados más justos entre otros.

Hacemos un llamado a movernos a acciones concretas que recuperen el espíritu del mar para todos y especialmente para aquellas que mas lo necesitan.

Gracias por permitir expresar la visión del grupo mayor de mujeres en esta primera y urgente reunión de oceános.

Muchas gracias.

**ends.**