



**GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS:
ESSENTIAL IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES, AND GLOBALLY**

This statement is therefore made by Small Island State women advocates participating in this important 2013 SIDS Interregional Preparatory Meeting in Bridgetown, Barbados from 10-12 June 2013, and as part of the Women's Major Group of over 430 organisations, social networks and indigenous women's groups from all global regions.[1]

Women from small island states possess complex and layered knowledge and skills that are fundamental to social, economic and ecological sustainability. We affirm that women and girls from SIDS states play critical roles in all areas of sustainable development; and are already at the centre of all work to address climate change adaptation and mitigation; indebtedness of SIDS; land insecurity, need for food sovereignty, community sustainability and livelihoods and other priorities as identified by SIDS during the regional preparatory meetings in Seychelles, Fiji and Jamaica.

We therefore call for the acceleration and integration of SIDS initiatives to recognize and redistribute the unequal and unfair burdens of women and girls in sustaining societal wellbeing and economies, and intensified in times of economic and ecological crises:

Calling on SIDS Governments to recognise the heightened social, economic and environmental risk factors of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) which are confronting the diverse peoples of the Caribbean, SIDS and AIMS regions, and recommending strongest State and SIDS South-south corporation to strengthen prevention and attention to the root causes of these diseases;

Relatedly, recognising the need for strongest action on SRHR related health challenges faced by women and girls in SIDS states, including the need for universal access to quality, comprehensive, integrated sexual and reproductive health services, commodities, counselling and information for women, youth and adolescent girls, with respect for their human rights, and with an emphasis on equity and respect for diversity;

Strongly affirming the Moana Declaration (2013)[2] and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2013)[3], including the establishment of Parliamentary groups and strong strategic partnerships with CSOs, young people, and development agencies on the advancement of gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights for all SIDS people without discrimination; and ensuring this is an integral part of national sustainable development strategies with clearly identifiable allocations and expenditures and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

The recognition by SIDS governments that health is a basic human right and calling for allocation of funds in national budgets towards women's health, including reproductive cancers and specifically cervical cancer, the Caribbean ranks in the top four highest sub-regions in the World with respect to incidence of Cervical Cancer and has the highest burden in the Americas; and is also the second leading cause of death among Caribbean Women;

Additionally, in regions that suffer from natural disasters, SIDS must also take greater steps to ensure that in the aftermath of natural disasters, women and girls are protected against violence including sexual violence, and with full access to sexual and reproductive health services;

We acknowledge the increased capacity and awareness on the need to comprehensively address sexual and gender based violence, as it continues to be a major and complex issue requiring coordinated approaches. We therefore call for:

Strengthening of compliance with existing legislation with special attention being paid to women and girls, and marginalised and vulnerable groups;

Action to address causation, including teacher and social care-giver training;

Macroeconomic policies to reduce socioeconomic inequalities and removal of all laws which restrict women's complete sexual autonomy;

Development of a coordinated and multi-faceted approach to all forms of sexual and gender based violence;

Develop protocols for health care services and delivery as well as mandatory reporting;

A coordinated and harmonized surveillance/data collection system between all state agencies and other service providers;

Intervention with perpetrators which do not increase risk to victims.

On the issue of economic, trade and financial policies impacting on SIDS, We call for the urgent re-framing of development policies toward food and water sovereignty and security, sustainable production and consumption systems, and also affirmation of individual and collective rights of indigenous and urban poor, rural and remote communities to determine their own development priorities;

Sustainable development policies must be reoriented to identify specific sources of economic growth, evaluating them carefully for their re-distributional effects, and ensuring respect for human rights and ecological limits.

Therefore also urgently calling for SIDS Constitutions, legislation, policies and programmes to recognise and (re)distribute to women, equitable shares of decision making and access to food, water, land, agriculture, fisheries, livelihoods, crafts, indigenous and other natural medicines, and other forms of wealth.

We reaffirm SIDS responsibility and political influence in the global development agenda toward sustainable development within ecological boundaries, and on climate change with particular attention to critical biosphere thresholds or 'tipping points'[4]:

The commitment to reduce and eliminate impunity by States and private sector who cause environmental degradation with full and robust state regulation of extractive industries and the insistence that the costs of remediation should be borne by those who cause the problems;

The need for quantitative and qualitative sex disaggregated information for evidence based policies in relation to sustainable development targets.

In closing, women in SIDS States reaffirm that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and our regions continue to be vulnerable;

We note in particular the deleterious impact of drought on women and girls in remote, rural and urban situations;

We call for increased focus on building capacity and on the development and implementation of clear contingency plans to address matters related to mitigating the impact of natural disasters and associated risks;

Additionally calling for natural disaster risk management to be integrated into all facets of national development planning, starting from the policy formulation and development level to the budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes;

SIDS must ensure in the context of climate change, that mechanisms are provided to alleviate the impact of natural disasters especially hurricanes and earthquakes such as the one which devastated Haiti in 2010. This includes implementing provisions to mitigate the impact of the displacement of populations and the availability of a social safety net such as re-location expenses, compensation, access to credit and loans;

We strongly affirm the strong language of the regional preparatory meeting outcome documents, and especially the Pacific Preparatory Outcome Document on 'Accelerating integrated approach to sustainable development' to ensure that the global community recognises the political will underlying this joint response from all SIDS, and the expectation that this is also a global call for urgent action.

The WMG advocates at this meeting affirm the inclusion of gender equality in the regional outcomes statements and call for further strengthening in the Interregional statement, calling for the inclusion of gender equality and women's rights as one of the explicit goals of the Outcome statement. We call for political, financial and technical strengthening of national and regional women's machineries; and consistent global, regional and national gender equality human rights based policies toward gender equality;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our substantive comment into this critical Interregional Small Island Developing States preparatory meeting toward the Third International Conference on sustainable Development in Samoa, in September 2014.

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DAWN is an Organising Partner for the Women's Major Group (WMG) on Sustainable Development

More information: Women's Major Group Website: www.womenrio20.org

SIDS women's organisations that are co-coordinating WMG input at the Barbados meeting include as follows:

- **Crystal Christine Brizan**, Deputy National Representative, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, Trinidad and Tobago (CAFRA T&T)
- **Marilyn Rice-Bowen**, President, Barbados National Organisation of Women; President, Caribbean Women's Association
- **Flavia Cherry**, Chairperson, Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, Regional and St. Lucia
- **Noelene Nabulivou**, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). DAWN is an Organising Partner (South) for the Women's Major Group on Sustainable Development

References:

[1] The Women's Major Group: Includes over 400 organisations, social networks and indigenous women's groups from all global regions including SIDS, working for gender equality, social justice and human rights. More information here: <http://www.womenrio.org>

[2] Moana Declaration – Outcome Statement of Pacific Parliamentarians for Population and Development, August 2013

<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/drive/PACIFICCONFERENCEOFPARLIAMENTARIANSFORADVOCACYONICPDBEYOND2014OutcomeStatement.pdf>

[3] Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, August 2013

http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/documentosdetrabajo/9/50709/2013-596-montevideo_consensus_pyd.pdf

[4] Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F. S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, T. M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C. A. De Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P. K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R. W. Corell, V. J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J. Foley. 2009. 'Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity.' in *Ecology and Society* **14**(2): 32. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32/>

The planetary boundaries framework visibilises the role of biosphere support as essential to all dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental. Nine biosphere processes referred to in the initial 2009 research on safe planetary boundaries includes as follows: Climate Change; Rate of biodiversity loss; Nitrogen cycle (Part of a boundary with the phosphorus cycle); Phosphorus cycle (Part of a boundary with the nitrogen cycle); Stratospheric ozone depletion; ocean acidification; global freshwater use; change in land use; atmospheric aerosol loading; and chemical pollution.

More information: <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-programmes/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research.html>