



## **ANALYSIS OF THE OUTCOME OF RIO+20**

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While the leadership of the United Nations and governments are calling the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development a success and a historic achievement, to the people of the world, civil society and women, Rio+20 was a missed opportunity and a failure. This mismatch in assessment could not be more visible both at Rio and now in the weeks that follow. In truth, Rio+20 outcome “The Future We Want”<sup>1</sup> is historic and successful in that it launched the process to establish the post 2015 development framework focused on sustainable development. The criticism of the Rio+20 outcome is that it fails to meet the pressing environmental and social challenges that the world faces today and it fails to deliver immediate much needed action reflecting the real sense of urgency, scale, and ambition necessary for successful implementation and financing on sustainable development. To this effect, NGOs at Rio did not endorse the outcome, and in one day, over 1,000 organizations and individuals signed the petition “The Future We Don’t Want” to remove the words “in full participation with the civil society” from the first paragraph. While the Rio+20 outcome includes many references to gender and women, compared to previous draft agreement text, the end result includes significantly lesser references, weaker language, and lack of commitments on gender equality. Listening to the negotiators taking away and weakening language on gender, the women at Rio were outraged, disappointed, and exhausted. However, little progress the Rio+20 outcome text on gender and women represents, it is recognized as one of cross cutting thematic areas and has a position in the text that can be used and build upon in future work. Similar outlook can be applied to the Rio+20 outcome in general, while no immediate action or financing for sustainable development was set in place, what is set in place is a concrete process to move forward. Considering that in previous year 2011 19<sup>th</sup> Commission on Sustainable Development reached no agreement, and earlier this year 56<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women reached no agreement, a negotiated and agreed Rio+20 outcome reaffirming political commitment and establishing a process to advance sustainable development is an encouraging result.

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

One of the most important deliverables of Rio+20 is the process to draft an agreed set of universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build on the advances under the MDGs, and will be an integral part of the post 2015 development framework. An open working group will be convened no later than the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly and will comprise of 30 representatives nominated by Member States from the five regional groups. The working group will decide on its modalities and how to involve relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, scientific community, and the United Nations system. It will submit a report to the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly with a proposal for SDGs for consideration and appropriate action. The process includes the regional economic commissions collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Rio+20 Outcome “The Future We Want” <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf>

The SDGs section in the Rio+20 outcome document does not include any mention of gender or any indication on what the goals would be. However, at the preparatory meetings for Rio+20 in New York, states discussed their initial preliminary positions on the SDGs. The EU supported five focus areas of water, oceans, resource efficiency, land management, and sustainable energy. The United States favored water, food security and energy nexus. The G77 focused their negotiating positions on defining modalities of work on the way forward and did not include any specific proposals on the priorities. The IAW and the women's major group will continue to follow the process closely to make sure that gender equality targets are reflected in the goals and sex-disaggregated data and gender specific indicators and tools for measuring progress are used. It is imperative that women's groups are included in drafting the national inputs for the SDGs process. Furthermore, there is a need for transparency and participation of the women's major group, as observer to the SDG open working group, as well as, gender parity in the working group composition.

### **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

Another crucial result of Rio+20 was strengthening of the institutional framework by launching a process establishing an universal intergovernmental high-level political forum on sustainable development, building on the Commission on Sustainable Development and subsequently replacing the Commission. The negotiations will be conducted under the General Assembly to define the format and organizational aspects with the aim of convening the first high-level forum at the beginning of the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly. The Rio+20 outcome on institutional framework for sustainable development does not include any specific references to gender equality considerations. There may be an opportunity to consider clearer linkages between the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, and more explicitly involving the national Ministries of Women in the national sustainable development policymaking and implementation.

### **United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)**

To further improve international governance, Member States have agreed to strengthen the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) with an agreement on universal membership. Several countries were opposed to converting UNEP into the UN Organization for Environment, concerned that might establish new environmental conditionalities for receiving sustainable development funds and might open a door to new trade barriers.

### **Financing for Sustainable Development**

On financing for sustainable development, Member States agreed at Rio to establish an intergovernmental process under the auspices of General Assembly, to assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks, and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives. An intergovernmental committee, comprising of 30 experts nominated by regional groups, with equitable geographical representation will implement this process, concluding its work by 2014, at which time, the General Assembly will consider the report and take appropriate action. There is no reference to women or gender equality in the financing text, however, it is imperative that the intergovernmental process include gender expertise, so that the report includes a gender perspective both in its assessment of financing needs, as well as in the proposed sustainable development financing strategy.

### **Right to Food**

Another important result of Rio+20 is the recognition of the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. The Rio+20 outcome also reaffirmed commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and the right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. There was a lack of recognition of the right to environment or the right to healthy environment.

## **Beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

Moreover, at Rio Member States recognized the need to go beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of progress and to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard the UN Statistical Commission, was requested to launch a programme of work in this area building on existing initiatives and in cooperation with UN and other relevant organizations.

## **10 year Framework of Voluntary Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns<sup>2</sup>**

Furthermore, Member States adopted a 10 year framework of voluntary programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns. The General Assembly at the 67<sup>th</sup> session will designate a Member State body to take any necessary steps to fully operationalize the framework. The framework includes a vision of promoting gender equality and active participation of women. The flexible, initial, and non-exhaustive list of possible areas of programmes, based on the experience gained through the Marrakech Process, including those areas identified in the regional sustainable consumption and production round tables, strategies and action plans includes: (a) Consumer information; (b) Sustainable lifestyles and education; (c) sustainable public procurement; (d) sustainable buildings and construction; (e) Sustainable tourism, especially ecotourism. IAW and women's major group have an opportunity to ensure that the 10 year framework programmes reflect the important role of women in sustainable consumption. Studies conducted by the OECD find that gender has a huge influence on sustainable consumption, partly due to the differing consumption patterns of men and women. Women are more likely to be sustainable consumers, e.g., they tend to buy eco-labelled or organic food. Women pay closer attention in their purchases to ethical issues such as child labour and fair trade. Women are primary decision-makers in household consumption and if provided with information and incentives, can be instrumental in sustainable consumption. Women have a tremendous consumer spending power: globally, women will control \$15 trillion in spending by the year 2014. And by 2028, women will be responsible for about two-thirds of consumer spending worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

## **Green Economy**

At Rio+20, Member States considered green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the implementation tools available for achieving sustainable development, that could provide options for policymaking, but should not be a rigid set of rules. The Rio+20 green economy text, includes references to women, with a view of enhancing their welfare, improving the livelihoods and empowering the poor and vulnerable groups, and mobilizing the full potential and ensuring the equal contribution of both women and men. The green economy policy implementation envisioned in Rio, includes endeavors to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, particularly for women, youth, and the poor. The Rio+20 outcome on green economy has been heavily criticized by the women's major group, and especially the women from the South, because it fails to ensure the free, prior and informed consent for communities being impacted by the green economy investments, and is not firmly planted in a legally binding implementation of the precautionary principle, and has no safeguards. Furthermore, the outcome on green economy does not acknowledge women as rights holders. Women, local communities and indigenous people fear losing access and control over natural resources, water, and land, as a result of investments and privatization of those resources.

## **Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

At Rio+20, Member States agreed on the importance of gender equality, women's empowerment, and the effective participation of women for effective action on all aspects of sustainable development; emphasizing

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<sup>2</sup> 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, as contained in document A/CONF.216/5: [https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216-5\\_english.pdf](https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216-5_english.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Silverstein and Kate Sayre. (2009). "Women Want More: How to Capture Your Share of the World's Largest, Fastest-Growing Market." New York: HarperCollins, updated 2011, Boston Consulting Group survey data.



commitments to women's equal rights, access and opportunities for full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development, the economy, society, and political decision making. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is recognized as one of the thematic areas and a cross-sectoral issue with a dedicated section of the text and gender language and focus on women is included throughout the Rio +20 outcome document with a total of 84 references, including 26 references to gender and 58 references to women. The Rio+20 outcome includes gender equality in its vision, as well as specific references to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the renewing political commitment section; and additional text on acceleration of implementation of commitments in CEDAW, Agenda 21, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Millennium Declaration.

In the thematic section on gender equality, Member States agree to support prioritizing measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres, including the removal of barriers to their full and equal participation in decision-making and management at all levels, emphasizing the impact of setting specific targets and implementing temporary measures, as appropriate, for substantially increasing the number of women in leadership positions, with the aim of achieving gender parity.

Furthermore, Member States commit to creating an enabling environment improving the situation of women and girls, and resolve to unlock the potential of women as drivers of sustainable development, including through the repeal of discriminatory laws and the removal of formal barriers, ensuring equal access to justice and legal support, the reform of institutions to ensure competence and capacity for gender mainstreaming and the development and adoption of innovative and special approaches to address informal, harmful practices that act as barriers to gender equality.

Member States commit to actively promote the collection, analysis and use of gender sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data to deliver the promise of sustainable development for all.

Member States resolve to undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology. Previous versions of the negotiations text included provisions on equal rights for women to inherit and own property and land, with strong support from Iceland, Norway, and Mexico, and opposition from G77, this language was not included in the Rio+20 outcome.

### **Lack of Reproductive Rights**

Member States commit to promoting the equal access of women and girls to education, basic services, economic opportunities and health-care services, including addressing women's sexual and reproductive health, and ensuring universal access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable modern methods of family planning. Gender equality is included in the health and population thematic area, with references to human rights, universal access to reproductive health, and implementation of Beijing and International Conference on Population and Development, maternal mortality, and improving the health of women, also in terms of access to information and provision of health services. Recognition of reproductive rights of women and addressing the sexual and reproductive needs of women was included in the previous versions of the negotiations text and supported by United States, Norway, Finland, and other governments, however, the Holy See and G77 were opposed. For the first time in 1994 the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo acknowledged that women's human rights include reproductive rights. In Beijing the following year, the Fourth World Conference on Women reasserted this right. Rio+20 outcome did not recognize women's reproductive rights.

## Gender Equality Reflected in Thematic Areas

Gender equality is a cross cutting issue and focus on women was recognized in 11 out of 26 thematic areas, including in **poverty eradication**.

In the **food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture** thematic area, women are recognized as critical agents for enhancing agricultural and rural development and food security and nutrition. Provisions on promoting the participation of women in national strategies in community, domestic, regional and international markets, and enhancing access of women agricultural producers to credit and other financial services, markets, secure land tenure, health care, social services, education, training, knowledge and appropriate and affordable technologies including for efficient irrigation, reuse of treated wastewater and water harvesting and storage, are also included.

In the **water and sanitation** thematic area, the access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation is recognized as necessary for poverty eradication and empowerment of women.

Gender equality is recognized in the **energy** thematic area and a reference to sex-disaggregated data is included in the **sustainable cities and human settlements**.

In the **promotion of full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection** thematic area, considerations on women, include in access to employment and income opportunities, safe and decent working conditions, access to acquire job skills, education, and worker's protection, and providing **social protection floors** for all citizens. **Informal unpaid work**, performed mostly by women, was recognized as contributing substantially to human well-being and sustainable development. However, there is a lack of recognition of unfair and unequal burden that women carry and that it prevents them from pursuing productive opportunities.

The **oceans and seas** thematic area specifies women fish workers' access to fisheries and fish markets. The **disaster risk reduction** thematic area recognizes the need to integrate a gender perspective into the design and implementation of all phases of disaster risk management.

The **education** thematic area, includes full access to quality education at all levels as essential condition for inter alia, gender equality and the empowerment of women, and for the full participation of both women and men.

Gender or women references are **lacking from the thematic areas on climate change, forests, biodiversity, desertification, land degradation and drought, mountains, chemicals and waste, mining, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable tourism, and sustainable transport**. Unfortunately many of the references to gender or women in those thematic areas were present in previous versions and have been removed from the final version of the negotiating text. This is a step back because women have an important role and are agents of change for sustainable development in those areas.

## Means of Implementation

In the Rio+20 outcome on means of implementation on finance, women are included in the text on fostering the private sector contribution to sustainable development, on facilitating entrepreneurship and innovation, including among women, the poor and the vulnerable. Empowering women is included in the context of improving income growth and distribution. Furthermore, in means of implementation on technology and capacity building, both women and men are recognized as contributors and beneficiaries, and participation and representation of men and women scientists and researchers is encouraged.

## Voluntary Registry of Commitments

Rio+20 established a voluntary registry of commitments, open throughout 2012 to all stakeholders and their networks to implement concrete policies, plans, programmes, projects, and actions to promote sustainable development and poverty eradication. The online registry is open to the public and transparent. To date, the

Rio+20 Secretariat, together with the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, has received over 700 Rio+20 voluntary commitments, made by all stakeholders, including governments, UN, private sector, and civil society, together collectively mobilizing more than \$500 billion in actions towards sustainable development. Gender equality is one of the areas for commitments; so far there are only 4 commitments on gender equality submitted by UN Women. Among these commitments is empowering 5,000 women entrepreneurs in green economy businesses in Africa. In support of actions on the ground, UNV's Volunteer Action Counts efforts captured more than 64 million actions by individuals. There is a potential for more women and gender specific commitments to be undertaken and submitted. The commitments are the next stage of journey for sustainable development.

### **Global Participation in Rio+20 via Social Media**

Rio+20 featured an unprecedented participation of people around the world through social media platforms and the internet, which represents a global movement for change. Millions of people from around the world joined the online conversation to share their vision for the future and demand action. The top thirty recommendations were chosen from parallel processes that included the online dialogues top ten picks from a million votes worldwide, the top ten picks from 111 panelists during the panel dialogues in Rio, and the top ten picks from the audience of over 1,300 people, who attended each dialogue panel. All thirty recommendations reflecting diverse sectors of civil society were presented to Heads of State at the start of Rio+20. One of the top topic of recommendations presented to the Heads of State for all three populations, online audience, audience in the dialogues and panelists was: Sustainable development as an answer to the economic and financial crises, which included a recommendation to promote a tax reform that encourages environmental protection and benefits the poor from the online audience, creating a tax on international financial transactions with a view to contributing to a Green Fund in charge of promoting decent jobs and clean technologies from the audience, and adopt the SDGs by panelists including on areas of water, health and sanitation, energy, food, urban infrastructure and industry. Other ambitious recommendations on different topics included: calculate environmental damages into the Gross National Product (GNP) and complement it with measures on social development, take concrete steps to end fossil fuel subsidies, launch a global agreement to save high seas marine biodiversity, and develop a global network of international marine protected areas.

### **Rio+20 People's Summit**

The Rio+20 People's Summit for Social and Environmental Justice brought together social and mass movements, indigenous communities, trade unions, environmentalist organizations, and women's networks, among other groups, who agreed on a final Declaration on topics such as rights for social and environmental justice, defense of common goods and against commoditization, food sovereignty, energy and extractive industries, and employment.

### **Women's March**

Moreover, the Rio+20 conference featured high level events and calls for action on women in sustainable development. On Monday June 18, thousands of women took to the streets in Rio de Janeiro and marched together calling for justice, equality and change.

### **UN Women "The Future Women Want"<sup>4</sup>**

"The Future Women Want," UN Women Rio+20 report and call to action, details recommendations centered around harnessing the transformative power of women in sustainable development and women's agency and leadership for an integrated people-centered development approach. The report details priorities of safe water and sanitation, food security and sustainable agriculture, energy access, efficiency and sustainability, sustainable cities, decent work and green economy, health, and education, in terms of their importance to sustainable development, women's contributions, women's challenges, and provides the gender-sensitive way forward for each of the priorities. The report also provides examples of innovative and successful strategies and programmes that champion gender-responsive development.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women "The Future Women Want:" <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/The-Future-Women-Want.pdf>



The “The Future Women Want” call to action was launched during the Women Leaders High Level Summit, on June 21 2012, which gathered Heads of State and Governments, who pledged their support and urged governments, civil society and the private sector to prioritize gender equality and women’s empowerment in the sustainable development agenda and accelerate actions for its implementation. It calls to: (A). Enable women to contribute to and benefit from sustainable development; (B). Leverage women’s agency and leadership for sustainable development; (C). Create an enabling environment for gender equality in sustainable development; and (D). Establish a gender-responsive development framework. The call to action was signed by female leaders including the Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, Costa Rica's President Laura Chinchilla Miranda, the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the Prime Minister

of Denmark, and the head of UN Women Michelle Bachelet. The former Norway Prime Minister and Chairwomen of the Brundtland Commission, Gro Haroem Brundtland, criticized absence of reproductive rights reference in the UN Women call to action, which represents a step backwards.

### **Global Framework of Action for Rio+20 and Beyond**

The High Level Ministerial event on June 20 launched the Global Framework of Action for Rio+20 and beyond (GFA), an joint initiative by implementing partners: Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment (NWMLE); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Women in Europe for a Common Future /Women International for a Common Future (WECF)/WICF); Global Water Partnership (GWP); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO); Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) and Gender and Water Alliance (GWA). The GFA is a mechanism that will enable the implementing partners and other stakeholder to forge ahead the integration of gender perspectives into the Rio+20 processes and outcomes. By doing so, the GFA will address a key concern of Rio+ 20 being that of “Gaps in implementation” and in particular, the relevant areas pertaining to women’s empowerment. Further, the implementing partners will explore opportunities to achieve a transformation towards gender responsive sustainable economic growth. The objective of Global Framework of Action is “To strategically address and ensure that in post Rio+20 outcomes, gender perspectives are fully integrated and ensuing commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment are matched with clear-cut implementation processes”. A comprehensive framework will be completed by October 30, 2012 and thereafter disseminated widely.

### **Women’s Rio+20 Good Practice Awards**

Sixteen grassroots women from around the world were honored by “Women’s Rio+20 Good Practice Awards” for local projects in food sovereignty, climate adaptation, decent jobs and health, water and sanitation, and sustainable energy. Awards were presented by eight Women Ministers from Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Nigeria, Denmark, Iceland, and Switzerland during an award ceremony organized by the Women’s Major Group, NWMLE, UNEP, and WECF on June 21, 2012.

### **Environmental Degradation**

At the basis of Rio+20 was a deep concern with the pressing sustainable development challenges such as worldwide decline of the majority of nearly two thirds of the services provided by nature to humankind and climate change that poses unprecedented threats to humanity. The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO 5)<sup>5</sup>, released at the launch of Rio, details that out of 90 most important environmental goals and objectives, significant progress has been made only in 4 eliminating the production and use of substances that deplete the ozone layer, removal of lead from fuel, increasing access to improved water supplies and boosting research to reduce pollution of the marine environment. Some progress was shown in 40 goals, including the

5 GEO 5: [http://www.unep.org/geo/pdfs/geo5/GEO5\\_report\\_full\\_en.pdf](http://www.unep.org/geo/pdfs/geo5/GEO5_report_full_en.pdf)

expansion of protected areas such as National Parks and efforts to reduce deforestation. Little or no progress was detected for 24 – including climate change, fish stocks, and desertification and drought. Further deterioration was posted for eight goals including the state of the world’s coral reefs while no assessment was made of 14 other goals due to a lack of data. The GPO, produced by UNEP every three years in a process that involves more than six hundred experts worldwide, is the most authoritative assessment of the state, trends, and outlook of the global environment. The GPO 5 recommends that urgent scaling up of successful policies is needed to meet the ambitious set of sustainability targets, as well as much needed change to current patterns of unsustainable consumption and production. After Rio, much will depend now on the future processes under the General Assembly on financing, SDGs, and high level political forum, including their modalities, how are women and gender included, and the results of work of those processes in the coming years. Our work is not over.