

The Centrality of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for Sustainable Development

Contribution to the Outcome Document

UN Women

01 November 2011

CONTENTS

- UN Women's Expectations for the outcome of Rio+20 Conference
- Key Messages
- UN CEB's Common Statement on the Outcome of UNCSD
- Full text of UN Women's submission

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE OUTCOME OF RIO+20 CONFERENCE

“Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.” Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration encapsulates UN Women’s advocacy on the criticality of reaffirming and strengthening the interlinkages between gender equality, the empowerment of women, and sustainable development in the outcome of Rio+20 Conference. Indeed, sustainable development cannot be achieved if fifty-percent of the world’s population is excluded. Inclusion has to drive sustainable development.

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21, recalling the international community’s endorsement for the full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities, and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women’s emphasis on “women's participation in national and international ecosystem management and control of environment degradation” recognized that “effective implementation of these programmes will depend on the active involvement of women in economic and political decision-making and will be critical to the successful implementation of Agenda 21.”

The international norms established by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was also referred to in Chapter 24 of Agenda 21, and the Beijing Platform for Action should be the take-off point for updating the gender equality and women’s empowerment dimensions of sustainable development discussions at Rio+20 and serve as a basis for strengthening Chapter 24 of Agenda 21. CEDAW underscores that the “full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields” and makes reference to ensuring women’s access to land and other resources, education and safe and equal employment.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995 and which has been revalidated three times, the last one was in 2010, reaffirmed Agenda 21’s recognition of the essential role women play in advancing sustainable development objectives. Of particular relevance are the strategic objectives outlined in section K of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women and the Environment: (1) involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; (2) integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and (3) strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.¹ Indeed, the first strategic objective on Women and the Environment echoes the areas requiring urgent action that were outlined in Chapter 24 of Agenda 21, which include “the need for countries to take urgent measures to avert the ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation in developing countries that generally affects the lives of women and children in rural areas suffering drought, desertification and deforestation, armed hostilities, natural disasters, toxic waste and the aftermath of the use of unsuitable agro-chemical products. In order to reach

¹ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. (1995). Chapter IV, Section K. See attached annex.

these goals, women should be fully involved in decision-making and in the implementation of sustainable development activities”.²

Despite these strong normative bases and efforts on the ground to ensure their operationalization, the potential of women to engage in sustainable development issues as participants, agents and beneficiaries of change has not been fully realized. This means disregarding the intrinsic roles and contribution of half of the world’s population to the ecological sustainability of the planet. Women have vital roles in ensuring rational and sustainable exploitation of resources, regulating and managing population growth and dynamics as well as productivity patterns and contributing to the enhancement of human well-being.

Global challenges such as increasing disparities and inequalities, persistent gender inequality, social inequity, a growing deterioration of the environment, and recurrent economic, financial, energy and food crises continue to pose additional burden to women and the further realization of their agency and contribution to sustainable development.

The Rio+20 Conference should assess the progress in the implementation of international conventions and plans of action on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of sustainable development and highlight lessons learnt, gaps, challenges and good practices. It should also call for the effective implementation of previously adopted action plans including those contained in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 and Section K of the Beijing Platform for Action and endeavor to propose measures and actions for governments and other key stakeholders in mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women into sustainable development at all levels – national, regional, global, and in various processes.

The acknowledgement of the inextricable linkage between the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and sustainable development, is the indispensable value-added of the Rio+20 Conference. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are integral to the achievement of all three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Women’s role, agency, participation and leadership in advancing and promoting sustained economic growth, social justice and welfare and ecological sustainability help ensure the holistic integration of gender perspectives into sustainable development. The international community must highlight and prioritize these interdependencies and the win-win relationship between gender equality and women’s empowerment and sustainable development outcomes.

In addition to gender equality and women’s empowerment, equally important and pressing priority issues that warrant particular attention in the context of sustainable development at Rio+20 include: energy, water, oceans, green jobs, sustainable cities/rapid urbanization, sustainable agriculture and food security, regeneration of natural resources, disaster risk reduction, and investing in health, education and youth. Defining key action points in these priority areas must be done with a “gender lens” and must consciously integrate gender considerations.

² Agenda 21. (1992). Chapter 24, paragraphs 6 and 7.

The Conference presents an historic opportunity for all stakeholders to reaffirm, renew and strengthen political commitment to the goal of sustainable development and to foster strategic partnerships on gender-focused and gender-responsive sustainable development processes, institutional frameworks, financing mechanisms, and a governance structure that promotes the voice, participation and greater role of women in decision-making at all levels.

Rio + 20 should recognize the continued importance and role of women's national machineries and women' non-governmental organizations. It is worth recalling that among the major contributions of the 1992 Summit and a milestone for gender and policy-making was the creation of the Women's Major Group among nine major groups³.

As women and girls are critically impacted by desertification, climate change and loss of biodiversity, their role as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries of policies, strategies and measures for prevention, mitigation and adaptation and the promotion of sustainable development in these areas is equally central. It is important that the Rio+20 Conference must reiterate and reaffirm the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the implementation of the Rio Conventions – The United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

³ Business and Industry; Children and Youth; Farmers; Indigenous peoples; Local authority; NGOs; Scientific and technological community; Women; and Workers and Trade Unions.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Social, economic and environmental issues are intertwined and form part of a greater whole called sustainable development. Gender equality and women's empowerment are critical to the achievement of these three pillars of sustainable development

Gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to the achievement of the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Women, which comprise half of the world's population, play a vital role in sustainable consumption and production as well as in safeguarding the natural environment, traditional knowledge and in allocating adequate and sustainable resources within the household and community. Gender equality also enhances the achievement of social justice and welfare. When women are afforded equal access to resources and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, they become drivers and beneficiaries of economic growth and poverty reduction. With these roles in each pillar, women make its contribution to sustainable development.

These three pillars interact to affect the quality and the access of women and men to resources, finance, technology, basic services and employment. Thus, the approach toward sustainable development should be holistic, comprehensive and inclusive with the overall strategic goal of enhancing human well-being.

To reach this goal, we must collectively enhance equity, revitalize the global economy and protect the ecosystems so that all people – women and men – can live in dignity and equitably share one planet, ensuring its viability for future generations.

2. Women are and can be powerful agents and participants in advancing the three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – when their rights are realized and respected

While progress on gender equality has been made in some areas, the potential of women to engage in the sustainable development project as participants, agents and beneficiaries has not been fully realised. Yet women's historical and ever more increasing role as consumers, producers, caretakers, educators, farmers, and leaders in science, business and politics are crucial to promoting and achieving a convergence of the three pillars of sustainable development.

To invest in women is to invest in sustainable development. Women can be among the greatest contributors to promoting, sharing and practicing sustainable development methods and practices if they are allocated equal access to resources and opportunities they need to realize their agency for sustainable development.

Governments should accelerate implementation of commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in the areas critical for sustainable development such as: participation in decision-making, access and entitlement to natural resources, inheritance and land rights, right to education, reproductive health and rights, access to credit, access to equal employment opportunities and equal remuneration in the informal and formal sectors with adequate economic and social services, including social protection, and freedom from sexual gender-based

violence. In addition to instituting gender-responsive and gender-sensitive enabling policy frameworks and investments in infrastructure support both hard and soft, special measures may need to be put in place such as incentive schemes, quota allocations, and targeted social support, especially to ensure that women have access to resources, finance, technology and decision-making.

3. Women's participation, agency and leadership must power the transition to and sustain the growth of a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as well as bring tangible benefits to them

Gender equality and the empowerment of women must be centrally incorporated into any national, regional and global strategies for moving towards a green economy.

A green economy, understood either as a goal or a structural adjustment process to greener industrialization, agriculture, services sector and scientific and technological development, should not increase inequality and should not lead to further marginalization of women. The transition toward a green economy must put gender equality and women's empowerment at its core – with women as key contributors, shapers and beneficiaries of sustainable production and consumption patterns. In order for the move to a green economy to be socially fair and to promote equity and inclusiveness, a “just transition” strategy should be implemented.

Likewise, green jobs, green technology and green finance must have strong focus on the economic empowerment of women and contribute to enhancing food, energy and job security, as well as in achieving the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Productive employment and decent work should be accessible particularly for those most in need, including youth, women, the working poor, and those working in the informal economy or in precarious jobs.

Development of and access to green technologies should aim to close gender equality gaps, engage women ‘end-users’ as stakeholders in the design process, and ensure equal opportunity for women scientists, innovators and decision-makers in their design and operations. Concomitantly, there is a need to ensure that public policies promote gender-sensitive social protection for women, particularly those working in the informal sector, in the transition toward a green economy.

4. Sustainable Development goals must include gender equality and the empowerment of women as a goal in its own right. All other SDGs must likewise incorporate gender perspectives and considerations

Should Member States choose to adopt specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Rio+20 Conference, UN Women proposes the inclusion of gender equality and empowerment of women as a critical Sustainable Development Goal in its own right, as well as the integration of gender perspectives into all underlying principles, targets and indicators of all other SDGs as well.

The universal recognition that MDG 3 is essential to the achievement of other MDGs is a strong reaffirmation of the continued importance and relevance of gender equality and the empowerment of women as a development goal. As a way of ensuring that MDG 3 is taken forward for its cross-cutting significance and as critical to the realization of the three pillars of sustainable

development, gender equality and women empowerment merit being among the sustainable development goals.

Any SDG should likewise address the issues of finance, technology and other enabling modalities and tools for its implementation. Commitment and support at all levels and by multiple stakeholders are required for it to be truly effective and useful.

5. Any institutional framework on sustainable development must fully recognize and integrate a gender perspective in its over-all mandate of promoting sustainable development

An effective institutional framework must contribute to ensuring and strengthening the coherence of international environmental governance as well as its inter-linkages with international economic and social governance institutions and mechanisms. It is essential to promote coordination, coherence and integration within and among institutions and processes to implement commitments and the outcome of Rio + 20 and other relevant normative frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action and Chapter 24 of Agenda 21. Consideration could be given to establishing closer linkages between the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and that of any new framework on sustainable development that may emerge from Rio + 20.

Overcoming fragmentation within the current international environmental governance structure and system would better ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women are addressed in a coherent and integrated manner – across the entire spectrum of multilateral environment agreements, conventions, and governance mechanisms, including financing and technology-related mechanism.

In keeping with advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, any institutional framework, mechanisms and tools for implementation including financing, capacity- building, technology transfer and development, should ensure women's equal participation and representation in governance and decision making and gender-responsive planning and allocation of resources in all cases at all levels.

6. Women's agency and participation must be taken into account and fully utilized in the implementation of sustainable development objectives

Any implementation framework must deliver on international commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment especially with regard to their equal participation and voice at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making and in formal governance institutions, in particular those relating to natural resources and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation. It is crucial to particularly draw upon indigenous women's knowledge and experience in this regard.

Special temporary measures are required and should be targeted toward women's equal participation in decision-making, increased access to information and education, finance, environmental rights, and the integration of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of resource management mechanisms, production techniques, and infrastructure development.

Efforts are also required to develop and disseminate women-friendly technologies, freeing up women's time, reduce their domestic burden, and enable women and men to combine their jobs with childcare.

Similarly, greater and more dedicated investments (including provision of adequate financing, technology, and knowledge for sustainability) in programmes and projects with gender equality and women empowerment components and/or targeting women as direct beneficiaries must be supported and encouraged. Gender considerations must be taken into account in all stages of sustainable development finance. Gender-responsive budgeting tools are useful in this regard.

7. In measuring progress and results of the international community to advance sustainable development, appropriate gender-sensitive indicators must be adopted to ensure comprehensiveness and capture accurate results

Human well-being is not well-captured in the current dominant models used to gauge development, such as the GDP. There is need to redefine the concept and tools by which 'success in the 21st Century' is gauged by the international community, individual governments, and private sector.

Gender equality and women's empowerment—critical to economic and sustainable development in particular—need to be squarely reflected in any new measurement system. This will require redefining key concepts such as poverty, capital and wealth more broadly and in a multi-dimensional way to include relevant measures and indicators that reflect gender equality and the empowerment of women.

8. All stakeholders have a role in ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are integrated into the sustainable development agenda and implementation frameworks

Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring that these inter-linkages are mainstreamed in policies and programmes as well as in institutional structures and processes. Enabling laws, policies and frameworks, including the social, environmental and economic infrastructures must be gender-responsive and gender-sensitive. Adopting gender-responsive planning and budgeting better ensures targeted programming and monitoring for gender-based results. Special measures need to be put in place to ensure that women have access to resources, finance, technology and decision-making.

Within governments, national gender machineries should institutionalize active linkages with line ministries, in particular those related to carrying out the three pillars of sustainable development and involved in shaping policy and taking strategic decisions on sustainable development.

At the regional and global level, Governments acting through intergovernmental bodies, can facilitate national actions by providing an overall normative framework and modalities for multilateral cooperation which takes gender considerations into account in advancing sustainable development objectives addressing all three pillars.

The Bretton Woods Institutions, regional banks and other donors providing finances including ODAs must be further encouraged to adopt a gender-responsive aid policy and make gender responsiveness/gender component a key indicator of aid effectiveness. It is worth noting that the World Bank Board has set the requirement of 60 percent of IDA loans having to be 'gender informed'. UN Women's collaboration with the Bank at the country level especially during the dialogue process with the government is expected to help them achieve this commitment.

The private sector can have a powerful contribution in promoting gender responsive and environmentally-, economically- and socially-sustainable business practices and investments by way of their corporate social responsibility, of which, the integration of "corporate gender responsibility" is key to the process. Through the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) – a joint initiative of the UN Women and the UN Global Compact to integrate a gender perspective into corporate social responsibility– businesses can advance gender equality in lock-step with sustainable economic growth. The government, in cooperation with the private sector, should pay particular attention and provide the needed support – by way of enabling policies and programmes, infrastructures and special measures, to women entrepreneurs, in particular rural women and ensure that they are linked to the supply chain and markets.

To promote women's agency and their rights, women's movement and their advocacy at the global and the regional level must be encouraged and supported. Their role, contribution and participation in international fora, including in governance bodies and negotiating fora must be ensured. Similarly, women's community-based and grass-roots initiatives should be supported by enhancing their access to economic, financial and environmental resources (for example, land and credit), and ensuring their voice and participation in decision-making at all levels and various processes.

The UN system needs to highlight and prioritize the interdependence between gender equality and women's empowerment and successful sustainable development policies and outcomes.

UN Women's Role and Contribution

The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, in July 2010 reflects the imperative of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in all aspects of life. With a rights-based approach and a development approach as its foundation, the establishment of UN Women provides opportunities for greater attention to be brought to the linkages between gender equality and the promotion of sustainable development.

UN Women, in carrying out its mandate, is guided by six goals, the first five focusing on five priority areas as follows: (a) to increase women's leadership and participation in all areas that affect their lives; (b) to increase women's access to economic empowerment and opportunities, especially for those who are most excluded; (c) to prevent violence against women and girls and expand access to survivor services; (d) to increase women's leadership in peace and security and humanitarian response; (e) to strengthen the responsiveness of plans and budgets to gender

equality at all levels. The sixth goal involves support for a comprehensive set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment that is dynamic, responds to new and emerging issues, challenges and opportunities and provides a firm basis for action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality and holds the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

UN Women's normative support role at the global, regional and national levels , its programmes on the ground, its advocacy, strategic partnerships and civil society fostering, its role as a knowledge hub, and its instrumentality in UN system coordination and accountability, among others, make the Entity well-positioned in advancing the integration of gender equality and empowerment of women in the sustainable development vision and goals adopted at the Rio+ 20 Conference as well as in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in all areas of its work.

UN Women is in the process of establishing strong regional presence in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These regional hubs will be expected to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in line with regional priorities on all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic as well as environmental, and within the context of the UN Women's thematic priority areas.



29 October 2011

**Common statement by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)
on the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**

1. We, members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board, recognize the historic opportunity provided by **the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to reset the world on a sustainable development path.**
2. We affirm that sustainable development is a top priority for our organizations, and reaffirm the continuing validity of the principles in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and of Agenda 21, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. We recommit to a renewed system-wide effort, in partnership with the full range of governmental, civil society and private sector stakeholders, to support the realization of these principles.
3. Despite substantial improvement in many key areas of development and environment, the world has not made the progress towards sustainable development aspired to in the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and in subsequent related world conferences.
4. Over the past twenty years, the world has witnessed strong economic growth and significant progress toward attaining a number of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is of grave concern, however, that these positive trends have been accompanied by increasing disparities and inequalities, persistent gender inequality, social inequity, a growing deterioration of the environment, and recurrent economic, financial, energy and food crises.
5. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (or Rio+20), renewed commitment and urgent action are therefore needed to lay a firm foundation for a longer-term process of redressing imbalances, agreeing on priorities, and reforming institutional arrangements at all levels, to bring about coherence and the integration of policies across the economic, environmental and social pillars, with human beings and their wellbeing at the centre. The Conference must also address the means of implementing outcomes, through the provision of resources, including for technological transformation and capacity building.
6. Charting the way forward to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development must start with the recognition that the world has changed in fundamental ways. Climate change is significantly altering the physical and human geography of the planet. There are major differences in population growth, age, sex structures, spatial distribution and patterns of movement; resource

consumption has increased, and production patterns are more unsustainable. But there has also been wide-ranging technological progress, from renewable energy and energy efficiency, to innovative measures for adapting to climate change impacts, and new and efficient means for social networking, dialogue and participatory engagement, providing opportunities that were not available twenty years ago.

7. Against these changing parameters, Rio+20 must acknowledge that economic, social and environmental objectives are not independent variables, but are mutually supportive, with progress in each area facilitating advancement in the others. Our objectives should be to enhance equity, revitalize the global economy, and protect the planet and its ecosystems that support us so that all people, women, men and children, can live in dignity.
8. The sustainability of future growth and development will rely critically on innovation, improved economic, energy and natural resource efficiency, an open and supportive multilateral trading system, better fiscal policies providing incentives for sustainability, comprehensive wealth accounting and valuation of ecosystem services, equitable access and inclusive political processes and the capacity to create sufficient decent work. Growth must lead to strengthened resilience – of households, ecosystems, and economies, and improved water, food and nutrition security.
9. Economic growth must be of high quality and inclusive. It should occur hand in hand with relevant efforts to accelerate progress in global health, gender equality and women's empowerment, the realization of human rights, greater equity, improved access to and quality of social protection and the rule of law, and the fair distribution of the benefits of development. Policies must avoid trade protectionism and negative impacts especially on the poor and vulnerable groups such as refugees and internally displaced persons. These objectives are all key elements of the green economy approach, and we pledge the support of our organizations to Member States as they engage in this critical and transformational transition.
10. The shift to sustainable development presents challenges, but also offers opportunity for substantial investments, both public and private, in productive infrastructure, technological transformation, science, education and human capital development. The UN system stands ready to assist Member States as they formulate and implement the enabling policy and regulatory frameworks that are essential for such investment to take place, and to continue to strengthen its work at the country level.
11. In the current fragmented system, institutional reform is unquestionably needed at national, regional and international levels, to integrate the dimensions of sustainable development, improve effectiveness in implementation, urgently scale-up activities, and bring about further coordination and coherence of policy.
12. The UN system is determined to do its part on institutional reform, by improving system-wide coordination mechanisms, and by reviewing and improving policies and programmes, including through joint programming. But this may not be sufficient, and Rio+20 should consider continued efforts on broader reforms within the UN system, for example, the strengthening of institutions, mandates and regulatory frameworks, or making structural changes.

13. At a more specific level, from a range of priority issues, a number have emerged that warrant particular attention in the context of sustainable development at Rio+20. Among these are: energy, water, oceans, green jobs, sustainable cities, sustainable agriculture and food security, disaster risk reduction, and investing in health, education, youth, gender equality and women's empowerment.
14. These issues require a coordinated approach by the UN system, stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector, to find joint innovative and lasting solutions. The organizations of the UN system have been intensifying efforts and cooperation to address the challenges of the water, energy and global food security crises. Rio+20 will provide an appropriate platform to support selected initiatives, such as the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which illustrate a collective renewed commitment to sustainable development.
15. At Rio+20, we must build upon and scale up the achievements, best practices and lessons of the MDGs, and lay strong foundations for the post-2015 development agenda. We must chart a course for measurable progress towards sustainable development goals, using milestones that integrate the economic, environmental and social dimensions and a new generation of metrics to measure our achievements. The UN system stands ready to support the world's nations and peoples to make sustainable development a reality.

I. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21: Twenty Years On

People—women and men—are at the centre of sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Sustainable development is about meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations. Achieving it requires an integrated approach to the management of relationships between population, resources, and environment in order to maximise their contribution to economic and social development. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to the achievement of sustainable development because women, in all of their roles – as agricultural, industrial and service sector workers, domestic workers, decision-makers and caretakers of the family, bearers of traditional knowledge and practices, to name but a few – are engines for powering and contributing to critical changes that are needed to ensure truly sustainable development.

Normative basis

The recognition that gender equality and the empowerment of women are critical to the achievement of sustainable development was very much integrated into the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21. The outcomes of the 1992 Conference on Sustainable Development sent a critical message to the international community with Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration recognizing that “Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development”⁴. Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 – Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development⁵ reinforced the need for the full, equal and beneficial integration of women in all development activities, in particular through their increased participation in decision-making at all levels. In particular, it urged “countries to take urgent measures to avert the ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation that generally affects the lives of women and children in rural areas....”⁶ To realize this, “women should be fully involved in decision-making and the implementation of sustainable development activities.”⁷

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995, reaffirmed Agenda 21’s recognition of the essential role women play in advancing sustainable development objectives. Of particular relevance are the strategic objectives outlined in the section K of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women and the Environment: (1) involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; (2) integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and (3) strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental

⁴ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. (1992). Available at <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=78&articleid=1163>.

⁵ Agenda 21. (1992). Chapter 24. Available at http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/res_agenda21_24.shtml.

⁶ Ibid., Chapter 24.6

⁷ Ibid, Chapter 24.7

policies on women.⁸ Indeed, the first strategic objective on Women and the Environment echoes the areas requiring urgent action that were outlined in Chapter 24 of Agenda 21, which include “the need for countries to take urgent measures to avert the ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation in developing countries that generally affects the lives of women and children in rural areas suffering drought, desertification and deforestation, armed hostilities, natural disasters, toxic waste and the aftermath of the use of unsuitable agro-chemical products. In order to reach these goals, women should be fully involved in decision-making and in the implementation of sustainable development activities”.⁹

Despite a strong normative basis and efforts on the ground to ensure their operationalization, the potential of women to engage in sustainable development issues as participants, agents and beneficiaries of change has not been fully realised. In most countries, efforts toward the achievement of sustainable development do not adequately take into account gender equality concerns and differentiated needs. As a result, the full impact of women’s potential to contribute significantly to and benefit from these efforts remains unfelt.

The Rio+20 Conference can and must provide a greatly needed opportunity to reaffirm, renew, strengthen and implement commitments with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women. While affirming the Rio Principles, the Conference should bring renewed attention to gender equality as an imperative for sustainable development.

II. Advancing sustainable development by promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

Sustainable Development and its three pillars

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are integral to the achievement of the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Women play a vital role in influencing sustainable consumption and production as well as in safeguarding the natural environment, traditional knowledge and in allocating adequate and sustainable resources within the household and community. Gender equality also enhances the achievement of social justice and welfare. When women are afforded equal access to resources and opportunities and participate in decision making processes, they become drivers and beneficiaries of economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Social Development Pillar and Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental to social justice. Social norms, gender stereotypes, unequal and limited access to resources, health and education services, and other unrealized rights can limit women’s ability to participate as full and equal participants in all aspects of life.¹⁰ Ensuring women’s full and equal access to social protection services, universal basic services, employment and remuneration, and education and vocation

⁸ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. (1995). Chapter IV, Section K. See attached annex.

⁹ Agenda 21. (1992). Chapter 24, paragraphs 6 and 7.

¹⁰ World Bank. *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*.

training opportunities, as well as ending violence against women are all vital in ensuring equitable economic growth, environmental sustainability and poverty eradication. Social policies need to encompass the principles of inclusiveness, equity and environmental sustainability, and should be aligned and complement the two other pillars of sustainable development.

Economic Development Pillar and Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

When women are afforded equal access to resources and opportunities and participate fully in economic life -- as workers, managers, entrepreneurs, marketing agents or as consumers, they become drivers and beneficiaries of economic growth and sustainability. Yet, the feminization of poverty, women's unpaid work, their concentration in informal and vulnerable employment and their limited access to productive resources and capital, and the lack or absence of women representatives and voice in key decision-making bodies restrain the unleashing of women's potential contribution to productivity and efficiency, and sustainable development.

Environmental Protection Pillar and Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Women play a vital role in influencing sustainable consumption and production as well as in safeguarding the natural environment, traditional knowledge and in allocating adequate and sustainable resources within the household and community. Women and children have also proven to be among the most vulnerable, however, to the negative impacts of climate change and man-made degradation and disaster. Providing women with opportunities and resources and engaging them in decision-making processes regarding the environment could improve peoples' everyday life and benefit entire communities in areas that advance sustainability.

Global Challenges

Contribution to advancing the discourse and action on sustainable development is particularly critical with respect to alleviating the consequences of economic, food and fuel crises, climate change and demographic changes. These crises, aside from posing threats to the achievement of sustainable development, equally pose additional burden and danger to women.

The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are increasing. Migration is likely to increase as food and water become scarce as a result of the continued impact of climate change induced desertification, flooding and drought as well as man-made degradation and destruction of forests, grasslands, coastal areas and other ecosystems. World population is expected to expand from the current 7 billion to 9 billion by 2050^[2]. With 80 percent of the LDC population living on less than 2 dollars per day^[3] and the global number of chronically hungry people already at 925 million in 2010^[4]—60 percent of whom are women^[5]—this situation is causing major challenges for today's societies. Undernourished people are concentrated in developing countries. The

^[2] UNFPA, 4 August 2011: Inter-Agency Consultation on Population and Sustainable Development, p.2.

^[3] UNCTAD. 2010. The Least Developed Countries Report 2010: *Towards a New International Development Architecture for LDCs*. URL: http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2010_en.pdf (accessed 18 October 2011).

^[4] Estimate of FAO in 2010: URL: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/45210/icode/> (accessed: 17 October 2011).

^[5] ECOSOC, 1 June 2007: Strengthening efforts to eradicate hunger. URL: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp224568.pdf> (accessed: 17 October 2011).

current famine in Somalia, with more than half of its population in crisis, shows just how urgently the issues of food security in the realm of sustainable development need to be addressed.

A gender-responsive approach to sustainable development is required to address some of those global crises. Women can be the greatest contributors to promoting, sharing and applying sustainable development methods and practices if they are allocated the resources and opportunities they need, including participation in decision-making, to realize their agency for sustainable development.

Making the case for women's agency and participation in promoting sustainable development

Women's empowerment is crucial to accelerating the achievement of the both gender equality and sustainable development:

- Women's empowerment can put a stop to fast-paced population growth on their free will.

"Better access to health care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and education beyond the primary level, ... contribute to the empowerment of women and falling fertility levels."¹¹ Simply meeting women's demand for contraception, enabling them to make choices about spacing and timing of children would lower global fertility rates significantly and address many pressures on societies from rapid population growth.

- Women's empowerment can contribute to heightened food security and reduce the number of hungry and undernourished people.

Giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people.¹²

- Women's empowerment can lead to sustainable consumption if women are enabled to participate in decision-making and take on leadership and management roles.

Surveys in developed countries have found that women, owing to lifestyle and consumption patterns, seem to be more concerned about the environment and have a greater sense of responsibility towards achieving sustainable development."¹³

¹¹ UNFPA: Inter-Agency Consultation on Population and Sustainable Development, 4 August 2011, p.7.

¹² FAO, 7 March 2011: Closing the gender gap in agriculture. URL: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/52011/icode/> (accessed: 17 October 2011).

¹³ Commission on the Status of Women, Moderator's Summary on Gender equality and sustainable development, Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, 55th session in March 2011. E/CN.6/2011.CRP.7.

- Women's empowerment can lead to the use of local and indigenous knowledge to advance environmental sustainability.

Women who depend on ecosystems—such as forests and the wood, medicinal plants, wild fruits, and other food and energy sources—provide valuable knowledge and skills critical for protecting, sustaining and managing the environment and its resources. However, they must be empowered to engage in decision-making processes as well as have equal opportunity to access and manage natural resources.

Gender equality and women's empowerment strengthen the convergence and the integration of the three pillars. Advancement in gender equality and women's empowerment in one particular pillar often propels progress in the remaining two pillars. For instance, addressing environmental issues such as land degradation could help to enhance and preserve the economic livelihoods of rural women, in turn positively affecting school attendance and enrolment rates due to improved economic and environmental conditions at the household level.

The integration of a gender perspective in development strategies and resource allocation is recognized as a necessary strategy in reaching the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Gender equality and women's empowerment are indispensable for more inclusive and equitable development and growth, which is prerequisite for sustainable development. Women and men at the local level are already actively engaging in the promotion of sustainable solutions to address environmental problems. The following concrete local-level examples make the case for supporting women's initiatives and provide compelling reasons for the centrality of gender equality and women empowerment in advancing sustainable development:

- *Initiatives to strengthen local production, using women's traditional knowledge about biodiversity can significantly reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities.* Women in Kenya and Zimbabwe are enhancing biodiversity (e.g. by protecting and planting indigenous and medicinal trees, as well as establishing bee populations in arid areas), while promoting economic and social development (e.g. through enterprise development, and training of women and girls on the sustainable use, harvesting, and processing of trees and honey). UN-Women is working alongside indigenous women's groups in Ecuador to ensure their involvement in the sustainable conservation and management of the natural and cultural heritage of the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve.
- *The use of renewable energy, such as solar power, can contribute to addressing women's multiple challenges (e.g., poverty, limited access to productive assets, threats to their health).* In Nicaragua and Uganda, women-lead initiatives use solar power to transform women's and children's everyday lives. Minimum solar electrification at home allows for 3-4 hours of light per night, thereby facilitating women's engagement in business activities and access to information and communication technologies, and providing extra time for boys and girls to study. In Nicaragua, women have opened a restaurant serving 'solar food' prepared with the use of solar energy. UN-Women, in collaboration with the Barefoot College of India, is empowering rural and illiterate grandmothers through the provision of hands-on training, and necessary

equipment and technical support—making them effective and technically and financially self-sufficient solar engineers.

- *Women's active participation in decision-making processes at all levels can lessen the harmful effects of climate change, water shortage, air pollution and disease.* In Nepal, the Women's Environment Preservation Committee is managing around 963 tons of waste per year, supporting the construction of 40 waste fed biogas plants. The Global Women's Water Initiative in East and West Africa provides training for grassroots women to implement water related-strategies to strengthen their communities' resilience to climate change.

A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

A green economy could be defined as an economy that results in improved human well-being and reduced inequalities, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It seeks to bring long-term societal benefits to short-term activities aimed at mitigating environmental risks.

Green economy, understood either as a goal or a structural adjustment process to greener industrialization, agriculture, services sector and scientific and technological development, must be seen not as an end in itself, but as a pathway toward achieving the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Currently at least 80 percent of global green jobs are expected to be in the secondary sectors, such as construction, manufacturing and energy production, industries where women are currently under-represented. With increasing demand for professionals trained in green sectors and sustainable business practices, women therefore provide an untapped resource for green growth. Therefore, targeted public support can ensure that girls and women have equal opportunities in education and training, leading to a stronger role in research and development on environmentally sound technologies.

Development of and access to green technologies should aim to close gender equality gaps, engage women 'end-users' as stakeholders in the design process, and ensure equal opportunity for women scientists, innovators and decision-makers in their design and operations. Concomitantly, there is a need to ensure that public policies promote gender-sensitive social protection for women, particularly those working in the informal sector, in the transition toward a green economy.

The 'greening' of economies may also require the introduction of policy frameworks that promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production, public finance, and capacity development of local communities. Green policy instruments for moving along a sustainable growth path may require setting-up of specific incentive measures for both producers and consumers. This may involve subsidizing sustainable methods of production and taxing harmful practices, and require ecological tax reforms that promote a shift of the tax base away from 'good factors' of production (e.g. labour) to 'bad factors' (e.g. pollution), therewith boosting employment for both women and men while correcting environmental externalities.

Public-led investments in infrastructure including public transportation, water and sanitation and renewable energy and locally developed or adapted environmentally sound technologies must respond to the specific needs of women, including rural women. Social investment policies, including in the health and education sectors, would also require changes to ensure that they are implemented in an environmentally enhancing manner and are responsive to the needs of women and girls

These frameworks need to be supported by long-term financial commitments. Gender-responsive budgeting is a tool that can help ensure more equitable and effective resource allocations and foster distributional outcomes.

III. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Should Member States choose to adopt specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Rio+20 Conference, UN Women would like to advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical sustainable development goal on its own right, as well as the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into the underlying principles, targets and indicators of all other SDGs as well.

It is worth recalling that there was a universal recognition that the realization of MDG 3 is critical in the achievement of all MDGs. As gender equality and women empowerment are critical aspects in the realization of the three pillars of sustainability and taking forward the MDGs, gender equality and women empowerment merit being among the sustainable development goals.

Moreover, any SDG should likewise address the issues of finance, technology and other enabling modalities and tools for its implementation. Commitment and support at all levels and by multiple stakeholders are required for it to be truly effective and useful.

UN Women commits to collaborate and contribute to the further development of gender-focused and gender-responsive goals, underlying principles, targets and indicators and measurements. It is likewise committed to strengthening national capacities to generate and utilize appropriate and locally-relevant data and indicators and provide support in the conceptualization and operationalization of a monitoring and evaluation framework that is fully representative and responsive to the needs of women.

IV. Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

An effective institutional framework must contribute to ensuring and strengthening the coherence of international environmental governance as well as its inter-linkages with international economic and social governance institutions and mechanisms. It is essential to promote coordination, coherence and integration within and among institutions and processes to implement commitments and the outcome of Rio + 20 and other relevant normative frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action and Chapter 24 of Agenda 21. Any such governance structure must be accountable to both women and men and fully recognize and integrate the gender perspectives in its over-all mandate of promoting sustainable development.

Overcoming fragmentation within the current international environmental governance structure and system would better ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women are addressed in a coherent and integrated manner – across the entire spectrum of multilateral environment agreements, conventions, and governance mechanisms, including financing and technology-related mechanism.

It would also be beneficial to find ways of strengthening institutional frameworks for governance across the three pillars of sustainable development. These are likewise important at the national and regional levels.

In keeping with advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, any institutional framework, mechanisms and tools for implementation including financing, capacity-building, technology transfer and development, should ensure women's equal participation and representation in governance and decision making and gender-responsive planning and allocation of resources in all cases at all levels. Women's equal access to financing and technology would enable them to meaningfully contribute to implementing sustainable development practices and obligations.

V. Utilizing women's agency in the implementation of sustainable development objectives and follow-up

For women to become active agents of change and catalysts for sustainable development, their economic, social and political rights need to be strengthened to ensure their ability to own land, control rights to natural resources, obtain necessary education and training, access information, raise financing and acquire relevant technology. Efforts are also required to develop and disseminate women-friendly technologies, freeing up women's time, reduce their drudgery, and enable both women and men to combine their jobs with child and elder care responsibilities.

The integration of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of resource management mechanisms, production techniques, and infrastructure at all levels must be ensured. Similarly, greater and more dedicated investments (including provision of adequate financing and transfer of technology and knowledge) in programmes and projects with gender equality and women empowerment components and/or targeting women as direct beneficiaries must be supported and encouraged. Gender considerations must be taken into account in all stages of sustainable development finance, including within the governance bodies of finance mechanisms; establishment of funding criteria; during planning and implementation; and in monitoring and evaluation to ensure equitable access and benefits to finance and the services it provides.

Gender-responsive budgeting when applied to relevant sectors and gender-responsive green stimulus packages could ensure more effective and equitable resource allocations, benefits and service delivery in the areas at core of sustainable development at all levels of governance.

VI. Measuring Progress and Results

It is imperative that a gender-sensitive sustainable development framework adopt appropriate indicators to ensure comprehensiveness and capture accurate results. With respect to

data, this includes collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and redefining key concepts such as poverty and capital/wealth/GDP more broadly and in a multi-dimensional way to reflect the gender equality and women's empowerment components.

As a member of the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, UN Women contributed to the development of a minimum set of gender indicators as mandated by the UN Statistical Commission. A preliminary list of indicators will be presented at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan (29 November – 1 December 2011). The preliminary list proposes indicators in the following domains: (i) economic structures and access to resources; (ii) education; (iii) health and related services; (iv) public life and decision-making; and (v) human rights of women and girl children. Some indicators such as women's access to credit, land and agricultural inputs, would require developing new methodologies and/or mechanisms for collecting missing data.

UN Women is committed to supporting this process including strengthening national capacities to generate and utilize appropriate and locally-relevant data and indicators. This includes support to a monitoring and evaluation framework that is fully representative and responsive to the needs of women.

Likewise, UN Women supports a proposal to be presented at this Forum to create a global fund to assist countries in developing capacity to produce gender statistics. The purpose of this fund would be to provide advisory services, technical assistance and training to statistical offices.

VII. Role of stakeholders in ensuring the implementation of Rio and Rio+20 commitments

Governments have the primary responsibility for creating conditions for sustainable development and take the lead in adopting and implementing policies, strategies and programmes in support of a green economy, with civil society, in particular grassroots women's organizations, and the private sector as important partners. These frameworks need to be supported by long-term financial provisions, including through official development assistance (ODA).

Governments must commit to a common understanding of the importance and indispensability of women's participation in a green economy and acknowledge their role in pushing forward the government's sustainable development agenda, in general. Within governments, national gender machineries should institutionalize active linkages with line ministries, in particular those related to carrying out the three pillars of sustainable development and be involved in shaping policy and taking strategic decisions on sustainable development.

The UN system needs to highlight and prioritize the interdependence between women's empowerment and successful sustainable development policies and outcomes, as well as the achievement of social justice and welfare. When women have equal access to resources and opportunities and participate in decision-making processes, utilize their potential and skills, they become greater agents, drivers and beneficiaries of economic growth and have a multiplier effect on sustainable development.

At the regional and global level, Governments acting through intergovernmental bodies, can facilitate national actions by providing an overall normative framework and modalities for multilateral cooperation which takes gender considerations into account in advancing sustainable development objectives in social development, economic development and environmental protection. The UN system, which serves these intergovernmental bodies, has the responsibility to provide politically sound, evidence-based advice on what can be done and how, and to help implement decisions made at all levels.

Civil society, academia and research institutions and think tanks also play important roles in making a case for a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approach to promoting sustainable development practices through providing data, information, research, lessons learned and good practices.

The Bretton Woods Institutions, regional banks and other donors providing finances including ODAs must be further encouraged to adopt a gender-responsive aid policy and make gender responsiveness/gender component a key indicator of aid effectiveness. Financing of sustainable development initiatives or projects and programmes promoting gender equality and women empowerment or those that involve enhancing women's contribution to the economy and the society as a whole while protecting the environment must be given special consideration or priority.

The private sector can have a powering contribution in promoting gender-responsive sustainable business practices and investments. In this regard, UN Women encourages governments to promote the adoption and adherence by their business communities of the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPS) – a joint initiative of the UN Women and the UN Global Compact. The WEPS offer practical guidance to business and the private sector on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Among others, these principles promote the implementation of gender-sensitive workplace policies that enable women equal opportunity to advance in, encourage businesses to promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy, and encourage the measuring and public reporting of progress to achieve gender equality.

In addition to adopting the WEPS, there must be a strong call for businesses to afford women position and participation in key posts, including in managerial positions, as well as in decision-making boards.

Financial institutions also have a role. Building on the success of microfinance in empowering poor women, they should explore how they can increase women's access to a range of financial services, including savings instruments, remittance transfer services, credit and insurance. This is particularly important for women-owned small- and medium-size enterprises, as they transition from microfinance to mainstream commercial banks.

To promote women's agency, women's community-based and grass-roots initiatives should be supported by enhancing their access to economic, financial and environmental resources (for example, land and credit), and a broadening of the impact of those initiatives. Women's community initiatives should be linked to and supported by holistic, multisectoral and

participatory national planning, policy and budget frameworks. Regional and multilateral funding mechanisms should also be encouraged to support and prioritize initiatives by these women organizations.

VIII. UN Women's Role, Contributions and Initiatives

The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, in July 2010 reflects the imperative of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in all aspects of life. With a rights-based approach and a development approach as its foundation, the establishment of UN Women provides opportunities for greater attention to be brought to the linkages between gender equality and the promotion of sustainable development.

UN Women, in carrying out its mandate, is guided by six goals, the first five focusing on five priority areas as follows: (a) to increase women's leadership and participation in all areas that affect their lives; (b) to increase women's access to economic empowerment and opportunities, especially for those who are most excluded; (c) to prevent violence against women and girls and expand access to survivor services; (d) to increase women's leadership in peace and security and humanitarian response; (e) to strengthen the responsiveness of plans and budgets to gender equality at all levels. The sixth goal involves support for a comprehensive set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment that is dynamic, responds to new and emerging issues, challenges and opportunities and provides a firm basis for action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the United Nations system's work in advancing gender equality and holds the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

UN Women's normative support role at the global, regional and national levels , its programmes on the ground, its advocacy, strategic partnerships and civil society fostering, its role as a knowledge hub, and its instrumentality in UN system coordination and accountability, among others, make the Entity well-positioned in advancing the integration of gender equality and empowerment of women in the sustainable development vision and goals adopted at the Rio+ 20 Conference as well as in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in all areas of its work.

UN Women is in the process of establishing strong regional presence in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These regional hubs will be expected to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in line with regional priorities on all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic as well as environmental, and within the context of the UN Women's thematic priority areas.

UN Women implements its various mandates through the following:

Programme and Technical Assistance—within countries that request its assistance, UN Women works with government and non-governmental partners to help them put in place the policies, laws, services and resources that women require to move towards equality. UN Some examples of

women's programmes that aim to advance the complementary objectives of gender equality and women's empowerment, and sustainable development include:

Grant-making Funds—UN Women provides grants to fuel innovative, high-impact programmes by government agencies and civil society groups through two funds—the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. A multi-donor initiative, the Fund for Gender Equality is dedicated to programmes that increase women's economic opportunities and/or political participation at local and national levels.

Intergovernmental Processes—UN Women offers regular information on women's rights issues to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women. UN Women maintains the UN Secretary-General's database on violence against women, which tracks measures to end violence taken by UN Member States and UN organizations. UN Women also backs efforts to advance international commitments to gender equality at intergovernmental negotiations around specific development issues such as climate change and sustainable development.

Capacity Development and Training—UN Women shares its in-house expertise through a series of training programmes for national governments, often held in conjunction with other UN organizations. These strengthen national skills and capacities, including of women's machineries, to uphold women's human rights, end violence against women, and integrate gender across national policies, programmes and budgets.

Expert Group Meetings—Expert group meetings help UN Women provide valuable inputs to the Commission on the Status of Women's annual priority theme for discussions, and to flagship reports. Each group convenes leading experts to explore state-of-the-art research and analysis, identify good practices in achieving gender equality and develop independent policy recommendations. Experts are sourced from academia, government, civil society, and UN or other regional and international bodies.

UN System Coordination—UN Women leads and coordinates the overall efforts of the UN system to support the full realization of women's rights and opportunities. UN Women provides expertise in assisting other UN organizations to gender mainstream their programmes, and monitor UN system's internal commitments to women. As the chair of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, UN Women helps orchestrate the efforts of 25 UN organizations to promote gender equality across the UN system.

Example of concrete UN Women projects that promote gender equality and women's empowerment and sustainable development are the following:

- *Women Light up the World*

UN-Women is collaborating with the Barefoot College of India to promote, scale up and ensure sustainability of community managed, controlled and owned solar lightening. As a first step of the initiative, 24 women from Liberia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda travelled to India during fall 2011 for a 6-months grass root hands-on training. Upon their return, each woman barefoot solar

engineer will be responsible for setting up solar panels for 60 households as well as training other women. They will be provided the necessary equipment, materials and technical support to enable them to fabricate, install and maintain the solar lightening systems in their villages and make them technically and financially self-sufficient. The solar electrification of each village home allows for 3-4 hours of light per night (for a small house) and enough to charge a cell phone daily. In the context of this initiative, UN Women will track concrete changes in women's economic empowerment and citizens' wellbeing in participating villages as well as in the lives of the barefoot solar engineers (the grandmothers). The results of the findings will help UN Women in making a case for greater investments in renewable energy and for scaling up and replicating similar initiative in other villages and countries.

- *Global Rural Women Programme*

UN-Women with FAO, IFAD and WFP are developing a results-oriented collaborative programme to promote the economic empowerment of rural women. Focusing on a limited number of field sites, this coalition is expected to generate synergies—capitalizing on each agency's comparative advantage—for more lasting and wider scale improvements in the livelihoods of rural women. The joint programme will economically empower rural women through differing combinations of investment, policy, programme and safety net interventions; and reduce the disparity in access between women and men to productive resources critical to food security as a basis for sustained improvements in gender equality.

- *UN Women and Coca-Cola's 5 BY 20 initiative*

In line with the UN Women Strategic Plan, The Coca-Cola Company and UN Women have established a partnership to promote women's economic empowerment by addressing specific barriers women entrepreneurs commonly face in the economy (e.g. business skills training, access to financial services, and support networks of peers and mentors). The Partnership will also work to strengthen the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment – for example, through policy, advocacy, and positive consumer-facing messaging – which will benefit all women.

- *Gender-Responsive Budgeting*

In supporting gender-responsive budgeting in over 40 countries, UN Women seeks to engage with the formulation, execution and review processes of national and sectoral development plans, public finance management systems and aid policies to improve their responsiveness to gender equality concerns. Gender-responsive budgeting has also proven effective in promoting inclusive and participatory planning, execution and monitoring of local budgets, and thus fostering more accurate assessments and response to women's needs in local communities. Through its Gender Equitable Local Development (GELD) Programme, UN Women, in collaboration with UNCDF, is building capacity of local governments to undertake gender-sensitive planning, budgeting and performance monitoring. The programme has resulted in significant improvement of women's access to resources and public services, such as clean water in Tanzania, and solar energy in Mozambique.

Other concrete assistance and support include:

- Contributing to the development of a minimum set of gender indicators to complement existing measurement tools and indicators with respect to capital, wealth or GDP;
- Provide support to strengthening national capacities to generate and utilize appropriate and locally-relevant data and indicator;
- Capacity-building to address the pressing needs of rural women in LDCs and address the challenges of food security and climate change;
- Building assets opportunities and expanding women's options in the agricultural sector;
- Investing in women's entrepreneurship and capacity to harness and disseminate renewable energy;
- Undertaking programmes to strengthen governance and specifically aimed at increasing women's participation in leadership and decision making in environmental bodies at all levels;
- Building capacities to integrate gender equality priorities and targets in national development plans and budgets;
- Developing tools and mechanisms that effectively measure the resources allocated to gender equality – to be used by both multi-lateral development agencies and national governments;
- Promoting rural women's access to universal basic services, such as access to clean water and access to clean and renewable energy;
- Promoting women's economic empowerment and reduce the feminization of poverty, which is critical to achievement of economic sustainability;
- Ensuring women have access to equal and fair representation and access to the legal justice system; and
- Promoting the use of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) at all levels of government, including applying GRB to Overseas Development Aid (ODA).