

WOMEN MAJOR GROUP STATEMENT

4TH MAY 2009

Women Major Group appreciates the numerous statements by governments during the CSD process confirming their commitment to consider and act upon these issues.

Women are too often still treated as a target group rather than considered as strategic actors who are able to make their own informed choices. Globally and in Africa, women must be encouraged to work with governments, ^{and} to shift from managing poverty to alleviating poverty. Agricultural policies must be geared towards income generating activities, which will eventually lead to job creation and empowerment in increased food production. When women are positioned equitably in society, there will be direct improvements in the health and development to be enjoyed by all. Our focus is:

- 1) Gender mainstreaming and transformation of policies, institutions and programs is required to develop the conditions under which women farmers can be put in the forefront and centre of the reorientation structures and processes at all levels, recognising their roles as primary food producers and environmental managers.
- 2) Education in rural areas, especially for girls, is essential for positive change. Vocational training for women is a prerequisite to enhance their economic and livelihood opportunities, and should be based on the train-the-trainer principle and incorporate local knowledge systems. Women must learn to carry out minor maintenance of agro-processing equipment, conduct PH and soil fertility testing, understand post harvest technological practices and have knowledge of basic bookkeeping.

- ECA region recommendation for technical training for women & girls (Economic Commission Africa) must be encouraged and facilitated*
- 3) Secure access to natural resources, especially land and water, are severely lacking for women and the ability to inherit and own land must be guaranteed to women, as already incorporated in CEDAW.

We hope the explicit ~~statement~~ recommendation of e.g. EU and ECA will lead to action and implementation of new land and water policies.

4) With biofuel production a primary concern in today's development agenda, the role of women as food producers and their potential to enhance their livelihoods must be considered in tandem during the planning stages of any bioenergy and biofuel production.

5) Incentives should be given to small-scale women farmers to enhance their transition to more ecologically sustainable practices. Access to credit with appropriate repayment plans, technology and markets are vital. Rural infrastructure must be improved and storage facilities made available.

6) Africa must use innovation to develop rural women user-friendly technologies both to reduce women's workload and to increase productivity.