

**Women's Major Group (WMG)**

**WMG Statement**

**Informal interactive hearings with representatives of Non-governmental  
Organizations, Civil Society, Major Groups and the Private Sector on the Post-2015  
Development**

**26 May 2015**

**Round Table 1: Theme: Declaration**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates and participants

My name is Mrinalini Rai, an indigenous woman from South Asia.

On April 25, the first earthquake hit Nepal with a devastating magnitude of 7.4, killing thousands of people affecting millions, and in its wake leaving a stream of devastation that has shaken the country at its core from the Capital to the laps of the Himalayas. Even now the ground under my family, friends, colleagues and people of Nepal is restless and shakes. And just when we were picking up the pieces, the second earthquake hit on May 10. My 10 year old twin nieces tell me , *“my legs feels like jelly”*, when I talk to them over the phone I laugh with them for a moment , before I realize the fragile and unpredictable situation they are in and I feel helpless. And my mother is currently homeless and taking shelter in a tent in a school ground because the apartment she lived is now certified unsafe.

Today I take this space to bring to your doorstep this piece of reality from outside of these UN premises. This is just one small narrative, there are numerous others that I cannot do justice to in this short time. Where would I start? the personal experiences of 10 years olds camping out in tents? the young mothers and the new generation born in open fields? the hundreds of migrant workers overseas<sup>1</sup> in grim conditions who are unable to make it home to attend the last rituals of the families they have lost? These are small but essential pieces that must inform the new model of development we all seek. And within these narratives, the most affected are often girls and women of all ages. Women are not inherently vulnerable but legal and cultural realities often mean they are marginalized in practice, and therefore part of vulnerable groups. In Nepal, UNFPA<sup>2</sup> now estimates some 2 million women and girls of reproductive age are among those affected by the earthquake– including some 126,000 pregnant women.

Over the past months of post-2015 negotiations, I have heard much about addressing poverty and leaving no one behind. The Declaration holds the key to setting the stage and the principles needed for the realization of the Post2015 development agenda which should

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/24/qatar-denies-nepalese-world-cup-workers-leave-after-earthquakes>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unfpa.org/news/new-estimates-show-126000-pregnant-women-affected-nepal-quake>

be built on a universal, holistic, just, transformative approach to sustainable development - to shift the existing development paradigm through lasting, structural reform.

The Women's Major Group has some proposals, which I share with you here, responding to the 3 guiding questions:

**First, to frame a visionary and ambitious sustainable development agenda**, with its interlinked social, economic and environmental dimensions, so it can be understood and embraced by all people – the Declaration must speak to a shared vision, shared needs, shared concerns and shared urgency.

I highlight 6 points. It should

1. Clearly **prioritize protection of, respect for and fulfillment of universal human rights, fundamental freedoms**, the rule of law and good governance and the implementation of human-rights based approaches to development.
2. Ensure equality and nondiscrimination, with reducing inequalities as an overarching objective for all goals and targets.
3. include a *specific paragraph in the Declaration that focuses on the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment* with explicit reference to the **'human rights of women and girls'** given that sustainable development cannot be achieved without it
4. Ensure **ecological justice to protect biodiversity**, address the multi-dimensional crisis of climate change, and promote living within planetary boundaries.
5. Ensure intergenerational justice to safeguard the well being of future generations and of our planet.
6. Affirm all Rio Principles set out in 1992 including the principles of people-centered development and **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)**.

**Second, inspiring all governments and all stakeholders** to take action towards implementing the fundamental transformations envisioned in the agenda should be the easy part! if based around the shared vision for a future free of poverty, hunger and inequality.

- The declaration should paint a picture of a world with **access to justice for all, sustained peace, equality, the autonomy of peoples**, and not just the preservation of but the **flourishing** of the planet – and identify the pathways to get there: through economic models and development approaches that are firmly rooted in principles of human rights and environmental sustainability, that address inequalities between people and states, and that rebalance power relations – including through inclusive and equitable trade regimes
- Clearly recognize the contribution and inherent **value of traditional and indigenous knowledge, innovation and practices**, as well as those of women, migrants and others whose voices are often muted
- Reiterate a commitment to the global partnership and full range of means of implementation, including allocation of **adequate international and domestic resources**

- And it must Recognize the gains that have been made as a result of global cooperation and focused efforts at national level, including those by civil society and organized constituencies.
- **A strong review, follow-up and accountability mechanisms is necessary with HR Framework** to make everyone involved accountable (including private sector accountability, including for transnational corporations, international financial mechanisms and multilateral banks.)

**Third** How can the **Sustainable Development Goals and targets be featured in the Declaration** to maximize ownership and communication?

In people's every day lives they do not live in silos of agriculture, gender, infrastructure, education – but they are all related – so we need to understand that people's reality already sets them up to understand the complexity of the SDGs, they feel effects them in all multi-layers, like the recent earthquake disaster in Nepal.

- Therefore **SDGs must be referenced as the full package of 17 Goals and 169 targets**
  - Simplifying the SDGs into groups of goals for communication purposes could obscure the overall picture and inhibit true ownership
- **Address the multiple dimensions of poverty and discrimination.** Disaggregated data must be collected and analyzed for all goals and targets, at a minimum based on gender, age, income level and geographic location.
- Identify the **transparent, inclusive and participatory processes**, in which SDGs were developed, and reaffirm the continued need for involvement of civil society organizations and all major groups, in decision-making, indicator setting, review and monitoring processes..

Human rights and gender equality have to be at the core of the Political Declaration, the Secretary General stated *“This is the century of women: we will not realize our full potential if half of humanity continues to be held back”*. We call on all governments of the world to set an example of leadership for what I'm sure you all agree is the important – and unprecedented – business at hand. But as work together to set the post-2015 agenda in motion, we must all work to ensure it is *not business AS usual, but instead “Business UNusual”*.