



## GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS : ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY IN PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND STATES

Pacific women possess complex and layered knowledge and skills that are fundamental to social, economic and ecological sustainability.

They also face unfair and unequal burdens in sustaining societal wellbeing and economies, intensified in these times of social, economic and ecological crises faced by Pacific and other SIDS, LDC, LLDC and economic south countries, and globally. Further, unfair global, regional and national monetary, financial and trade rules; unsustainable production and consumption patterns; and persistent systems of patriarchal decision-making and resource distribution worsen persistent inequalities, especially impacting on poor Pacific women in remote, rural and urban areas.

**Accordingly, Pacific women advocates from Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands participating in this important 2013 Pacific SIDS Preparatory Meeting in Nadi, Fiji from 10-12 June 2013 as part of the Women's Major Group of over 430 organisations, social networks and indigenous women's groups from all global regions** working for gender equality, social justice and human rights, strongly call for the Meeting Outcome statement to reflect that Pacific women already play critical roles in all areas of sustainable development; and are at the centre of work to address climate change adaptation and mitigation. There is also a need to recognise that care and social reproduction is primarily carried out by Pacific women, intrinsically linked with the productive economy, and must therefore be fully reflected in both microeconomic and macroeconomic policy.

**Therefore urgently calling** for Pacific SIDS Constitutions, legislation, policies and programmes to recognise and (re)distribute to women equitable share of decision making and access to food, water, land, agriculture, fisheries, livelihoods, crafts, indigenous and other natural medicines, symbolic and other including monetary wealth, and also including recognition of diverse social relationships including women's informal networks of support;

**On economic policies impacting on SIDS,** calling for urgent re-framing of development policies toward food and water sovereignty and security, sustainable production and consumption systems, and also affirmation of individual and collective rights of indigenous and other urban poor, rural and remote communities to determine their own development priorities. Women, children and young people too often bear the brunt of the effects of old-style development where people are framed as workers and consumers, and not as full rights holders. Central to this Pacific SIDS agenda is focus on the kind of growth, trade and development that contributes to wellbeing and sustainability for all. Sustainable

development policies must be reoriented to identify specific sources of economic growth, evaluating them carefully for their re-distributional effects, and ensuring respect for human rights and ecological limits. Such policies build on existing Pacific cosmovisions and worldviews incorporating reciprocity, community care and wellbeing, thus building resilience in times of crisis and change.

**Also strongly reiterating that culture is always fluid, socially negotiated and continually transforming according to current societal needs.** Urgent advancement of gender equality and the end to other persistent social inequalities is therefore one of the most important human rights, sustainable development and social justice responsibilities of Pacific SIDS states. Women must never be instrumentalised in development. It is therefore vital now to include as highest sustainable development priority, the urgent end to all forms of sexual and gender based violence; and full recognition and implementation of human rights of Pacific women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**We therefore call for the inclusion of gender equality and women's rights as one of the explicit goals of the Outcome statement here at the 2013 SIDS Preparatory meeting.** We call for political, financial and technical strengthening of national and regional women's machineries; and consistent global, regional and national gender equality human rights based policies toward gender equality;

**Additionally, calling for strongest protection and defence of key principles and commitments achieved at the UN Conference on Environment and Development 20 years ago, in Agenda 21, and reaffirmed and supplemented in followup conferences including in BPoA and MSI, *inter alia* and overall reaffirmed in Rio+20 Outcome document, 'The Future We Want'.** These include sustainable development principles of critical importance to SIDs, LDCs and LLDCs such as the precautionary principle; common but differentiated responsibilities and historical responsibility; transfer of proven and appropriate technology; and free, prior and informed consent, of particular concern to indigenous communities; but also to women, young people, children, people with diverse and non-heteronormative sexuality and gender identity, people with disabilities, and many others. Also the polluter pays principle; access to information, participation and justice; the on global commons.

**Particular focus is required on the principle of intergenerational justice,** as further articulated in the statement at the 2013 Pacific SIDS preparatory meeting, 'Youth as Partners in Sustainable Development', and including the cruel legacy to future generations of contamination from nuclear, mining and other toxics. Young women's development leadership is further described in the statement on 'Gender, Economic and Ecological Justice' by young women advocates from the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

**The Women's Major Group close our statement by reaffirming Pacific SIDs responsibility and political influence in the global development agenda toward sustainable development within ecological boundaries, that must not be violated if we are to avoid danger zones with large-scale and critical biosphere thresholds or 'tipping points':**

The Pacific SIDS statement must promote development alternatives in the scale and form that addresses our current ecological crisis through a biosphere approach informed by recognition of, and investment in diverse local, indigenous, feminist and other systems of knowledge; and building on evidence-based approaches of the IPCC and other scientific bodies;

As such, environmental degradation can no longer be dismissed as an externality in

economic, social development and human rights. The costs of remediation should be borne by those who cause the problems, including the private sector.

This cannot be merely about climate-change related targets to hold the increase in global average temperature below '2 degrees C above pre-industrial levels'. Rather, we need mechanisms and processes to connect, measure and address ecological loss and damage, community sustainability and economic viability.

Some of these are now being advanced by various south states including on sustainable development indicators wider than GDP; focus on 'Loss and damage' mechanisms to take forward concrete implementation of CBDR; Policy attention to land use change, freshwater use, aerosol loading, pollution by persistent toxic substances, and poor waste management practices. These include methylmercury in fish stocks; biodiversity loss and species extinction; ocean acidification; global sea level rise; deforestation; drought; desertification; flooding; extreme climate events, and more;

The Pacific can also play leadership roles to ensure a stronger and accountable UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS);

Also insisting on global and national binding rules and safeguards, including by applying the Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as central to the protection of bio-cultural users of land and natural resources from negative impacts of extractive industries, and large-scale monocultures;

In order to further safeguard Pacific communities specific measures are needed including in state and regional policies, SDGs and Post 2015 Development Agenda, including monitoring conditions wherever there is large-scale land, water and ocean appropriation by private interests; Full and robust state regulation of gas and oil and any other such public-private partnerships that involve transnational and multinational corporations, other states, donors, IFIs and other development partners; Also balancing subsistence and local oriented agricultural production vis a vis export-oriented agriculture; and shifting from export of raw materials such as minerals, fossil fuels and agricultural commodities to productive capacities in value-added products, etc.

Sustainable development targets must also explicitly measure the extent to which economic policies are damaging to local communities including migrants, fisher, forest and indigenous peoples, and many other marginalized communities, where women are at the forefront of both production and 'care' work. This requires data collection and analysis to provide quantitative and qualitative sex disaggregated information for evidence based policies.

**In closing, Pacific women call for transformative sustainable development paradigms and policies that respect and support all Pacific people. As part of that recognition, ensuring that universal human rights and gender equality is at the centre of all sustainable development agendas.**

**We thank you for the opportunity to provide our substantive comment into this important 2013 Pacific Small Island Developing States preparatory meeting toward the Third International Conference on sustainable Development in Samoa, in September 2014.**

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