

CSD-14

STATEMENT FROM NORWAY

1. MAY 2006

Gender and Energy

As pointed out by the panelists, access to energy services and technologies are not gender neutral. The lack of modern fuels and electricity is therefore both a gender issue and a poverty issue.

Most of the poorest households are headed by women. Women and girls are disproportionately burdened by lack of access to modern fuels and electricity since they are responsible for fuel gathering, cooking and food preparation. Many girls are withdrawn from school to attend to such domestic chores with lifelong harm to their literacy and economic opportunities. They also suffer considerable damage to their health, especially respiratory diseases from indoor air pollution, by having to cook indoors on poorly vented stoves. Energy services such as heat for cooking and power for food processing are therefore particularly important for women and girls.

We firmly agree with the Secretary General that improving access to modern energy services can make an important contribution to the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women. We also agree on the importance of a more thorough understanding of men's and women's needs for and potential uses of energy in order to ensure that the goals of energy-related projects are realized equitably for women and men.

The Norwegian Delegation will like to underline that there is a need to enhance research and data gathering on women's energy use and needs when developing energy policies and projects. Capacity-building and technical training for women should also be emphasized as a strategy for enabling women's access to decision-making processes.

Mr. Chairman, everyone has the right to a reasonable standard of living, including food, clothing, housing, medical treatment and essential social services. Supporting equal rights for women and men are a basic principle in the Norwegian society. It is also fundamental to our understanding of many of the linkages in the development debate that the fulfilment of women's rights is a prerequisite for many of our development efforts.

Norwegian development cooperation support countries in their efforts to meet their political and legal commitments with respect to gender equality. This will also facilitate the effort to mobilize the considerable resources women represent in work to promote development and provide a stronger platform for women's role as agents of change for development. Gender and energy are priority areas for Norwegian development cooperation and we are in the process of preparing an action plan on how gender can be more effectively integrated into our development cooperation.

The focus of traditional energy and environment programming has been on technology and science. Integrating gender and rights issues into energy projects shifts this focus as project beneficiaries are placed at the centre of the programming process. This leads to a more flexible approach, with projects responding to the particular needs of women and other disadvantaged groups, local priorities and contexts. We need to ensure that our approach is based on the principle of "working with women not for women".

Thank you.