

## Women's Major Group contribution for the Seventh Session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (OWG7) *Sustainable Consumption and Production, including Chemicals and Waste*

### **Sustainable Development Requires Effective Policies and Incentives to Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production and Address the Environmental Impacts of Chemicals and Waste. Analysis & key recommendations by the Women's Major Group<sup>1</sup>**

As noted by the TST Issues Brief, and The Future We Want, addressing current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production is imperative for the achievement of sustainable development as well as reversal of climate change. This implies that sustainable consumption and production should be recognized as an overarching objective of, and essential requirement for, the proposed post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Sustainable development goals in areas like energy and food and the use of natural resources such as forests, fisheries and biodiversity make little sense if they don't address the need to fundamentally change consumption and production patterns in these areas.

We caution against developing another set of reductive goals, targets and indicators that ignore the transformational changes required to address the failure of the current development model rooted in unsustainable production and consumption patterns exacerbating gender, race and class inequities. Twenty years after the Earth Summit in Rio, there has been far too little progress on achieving sustainable consumption and production, and equitable inter-state and intra-state resource distribution.

On a planet with a limited carrying capacity, sustainable consumption and production is a pre-condition for justice and equity, including gender justice and equity. Women are the majority of the world's monetary poor people, and thus they are a key victim of the current inequitable distribution of the Earth's resources and carrying capacity. The TST Issues Brief provides a proper overview of the environmental impacts and social and economic consequences of unsustainable consumption and production and the poor management of chemicals and waste, which is closely related to unsustainable consumption and production.

Further, the Brief also points out that achieving SCP requires "*major changes to production systems, employment patterns and technologies in every country, as well as accompanying behavioural changes influencing consumption*" and that these changes are mandated by international human rights standards. Further, the Brief also recognizes that inclusive and evidence based governance, based on broad and equal participation, non-discrimination and accountability, is key to achieving SCP patterns – clearly this requires equal participation of women as well.

However, in light of the fact that SCP are a pre-condition for sustainable development, the responsibility of governments goes far beyond providing "enabling conditions" as the TST Brief suggests. We support the main elements for the way forward proposed, but it should be clearly recognized that governments

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<sup>1</sup> This briefing paper was elaborated by members of the Women's Major Group on Sustainable Development, <http://www.womenrio20.org/>. It is based on a more comprehensive report with recommendations for the post-2015 agenda by WMG members: [http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/Womens\\_priorities\\_SDG.pdf](http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/Womens_priorities_SDG.pdf). For more information, please contact Simone Lovera: [simone.lovera@globalforestcoalition.org](mailto:simone.lovera@globalforestcoalition.org)

have a primary responsibility to put in place the policy measures and incentive systems, including legally binding policy measures like bans and prohibitions, to ensure sustainable consumption and production. Furthermore, when adopting the life cycle approach, it is important to emphasize the design-for-sustainability idea at the upstream level. Information of hazardous substances used in the production or manufacturing process and in the products need to be made available for consumers and the public in general. International agreements like the 10 Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption Production Patterns (10YFP), the Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biodiversity, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, the synergies among the three conventions in the chemicals and waste cluster (the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention) and the new Minamata Convention on mercury, which was adopted in October 2013, have provided important milestones, but they have obviously failed to trigger the necessary change.

### **Management and Reduction of Chemicals and Waste**

Currently, between 70,000 and 100,000 chemicals are already on the market with an estimated of 1,500 new ones being marketed each year. Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and potential EDCs are mostly man-made, found in various materials such as pesticides, metals, additives or contaminants in food, and personal care products. EDCs imposed irreversible health effects and risks to human especially women and babies. Recent studies highlight how global warming may affect the movement and level of chemicals such as organochlorine pesticides in the environment. The studies also show how a changing climate might weaken the ability of animals and human to tolerate those harmful chemicals. Most developing countries lack a political will to prioritize and mainstream sound management of chemicals into their development agenda.

The planet, and its inhabitants, cannot afford to wait for the effect of public-private partnerships, voluntary standards and certification schemes and other corporate-driven voluntary approaches that have obviously had far too limited impacts in the past twenty years. Moreover, many of these schemes ignore the quantity-related aspects of unsustainable production and consumption of natural resources like forests and fisheries where the sustainability of production is directly related to the quantity of production. Commercial certification schemes and other corporate initiatives are per definition incapable of addressing such quantity-related aspects as they require unlimited economic growth to remain profitable for the business stakeholders involved.

Structural adjustment policies and bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations have forced developing countries to open up their domestic markets as well as to focus of producing food and other products for export rather than for domestic consumption. Cheap imports from the North have depressed prices in the South reducing the earnings of many local producers. These policies have prioritized the allocation of land and resources to export-oriented production, hence decreasing land and resources availability for small producers like small farmers and pastoralists and weakening food security.

### **Sustainable food and energy production and consumption and reducing food and water waste**

Food, water and energy sovereignty takes a rights based approach, encompassing the right of self-determination, and the right to food and decent work. It drives an anti-colonialist agenda in food, water and energy production and consumption, upholding the right of small producers to have access and control over their productive resources including land, forests, water sources, wind, the sun and seeds. It emphatically acknowledges the central role of women as producers across various sectors.

The current shift towards a 'Green Economy', which promotes an economy based on bio-products (bioeconomy), comes with a call for market-based mechanisms, that is, the financialization of the Earth's natural processes, re-branded as 'ecosystem services'. Such markets in environmental services encourage land and water grabs to detriment of women and other economically and politically marginalized groups like Indigenous Peoples and small farmers. 'Green economy' approaches maintain unsustainable consumption and production patterns and 'business as usual' in a new cloth, increasing environmental pressure as more and more biomass is required. These approaches are socially and environmentally blind to the needs of women and rural peoples worldwide and the distributional transformation that SCP requires. Meanwhile, 40% of the world population, i.e. about 3 billion people, rely on traditional biomass to cook and heat their homes. The majority of these un- and under served are rural poor, mainly women who make up 70% of world's poor. Overreliance on biomass resources is unsustainable, leads to depletion of resources and has negative consequences on women's and children health.

Sustainable production and consumption is not a myth, people have already cultivated and protected lands over millennia. Returning to locally-based economies that reduce resource consumption throughout the whole chain with the vision to ensure the future generation's existence can bring possibilities for reducing the world's hunger and meeting the so-'longed for' Millennium Development Goals.

Sustainable consumption and production must be recognized as an overarching framework for the post-2015 development agenda. This requires effective policies and incentive schemes, including legally binding policy measures, to ensure SCP as part of a broader agenda of deep structural and transformational changes. This should be firmly rooted in human rights obligations and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Social and ecological justice, including gender justice, must be at the heart of sustainable development. Northern countries, and countries with large wealthy elites, should take the lead in ensuring effective public governance of natural resources and changing unsustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles.

## **Recommendations**

- Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) policies, and policies related to chemicals and waste must consider the differentiated impacts on women worldwide and throughout each step of policy development. The recommendations below should be read in the light of these differentiated impacts on women.
- Ensure a macroeconomic environment that preserves national policy space for governments to fulfill their human rights obligations and effectively advance SCP, including by increasing their tax base through progressive tributary policies and putting in place trade restrictive measures when necessary.
- Regulate commodity markets, limit fluctuations in food prices, ban speculation on food, close tax havens and implement a global financial transaction tax.
- Ban the use of unsustainable, radioactive and harmful chemical substances, untested and obsolete technologies in manufactures, unconventional and risky energy production and waste management.
- Support mainstream and better implementation of sound management of chemicals at the national level with inter-linkages between processes, stakeholders and value chains, a life-cycle approach and broad stakeholders engagement.
- Eliminate financial support to and impose economic sanctions on ecologically or socially harmful economic activities such as industrial fisheries, unsustainable agriculture, large-scale industrial bioenergy and extractive industries, and impose moratoria in areas of mining, nuclear energy, chemicals and large-scale monocultures that lead to irreversible biodiversity loss,
- Redirect support to alternative sustainable energy technologies, agroecological practices and local sustainable value chains that can safely meet energy, water and food needs while generating employment and supporting local communities. This includes redirecting fossil fuel subsidies to support small renewable energy enterprises that promote cooking and lighting technologies. Large energy infrastructure financing and investments must focus on energy needs of poor households in developing countries. This would increase access to energy for the 3 billion that are currently underserved, majority of which are women, while at the same time reducing unsustainable consumption of fuelwood.
- Secure food, water and energy sovereignty based on the recognition of women, including small holder farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk, as key economic actors whose right to use and own land and sustainable energy sources and access rivers, lakes and seas should be protected against land and resource grabbing through legally binding safeguards.
- Solicit women's knowledge in the development of policies and programs that reduce fuelwood consumption and target women in particular to promote energy efficiency at the urban household level. Financial support to provide clean and efficient energy to women's food production and food processing street food enterprises would help reducing the burden on women for gathering fuelwood.