

Women and Biodiversity

Statement from representatives of the Women's Caucus during the COP 9

Bonn May 2008

We are women scientists, activists, mothers, peasants, producers, consumers, teachers... from different countries all over the world. We speak on our own behalf and also on behalf of the voiceless women of the world. Worldwide anti-democratic structures and development models have often no respect for us women, our decision-making needs, our power and our creativity.

Biodiversity is being threatened, as are women's dignity and lives, indigenous cultures, local communities and humanity in general. The work and caretaking done by women has been rendered invisible. The patriarchal vision is based on contempt and lack of appreciation of the role of women in enhancement and production of biodiversity.

This dominating model forgets that besides giving birth to men and women that inhabit this planet, we also preserve food sovereignty, food security, work for peace, secure our seeds, maintain our traditions, memories and visions.

Due to our wisdom and that of our mothers and grandmothers, we must resist the imposition of models that affect us negatively through privatization and monopolisation and are only oriented to the accumulation of money. We must turn our eyes to the local cultures and the special work and needs of women. It is thanks to them, that what is still left has been preserved.

Therefore we say:

- No to the reduction of life-forms to chemicals or natural and financial resources, as seen in the development of nanotechnology or synthetic biology
- No to patents of life, biopiracy or cultural piracy
- NO to GMO's, and for actual reasons especially NO to GMO Trees.
- No to industrial agro-fuels and nuclear energy as so called solutions to climate change.

We demand for all women the right to maintain and share their own seeds and to have free access to seeds from other sources. Women need their own forms of full participation and benefit sharing within all levels of biodiversity policies and control within ecologically sound livelihoods. Land rights should be given especially to women in rural areas and property rights to all women to overcome the poverty and hunger amongst women and girls.

With our demands we refer to our achievements within the UN System, such as Agenda 21, Chapter 24 and 28, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), The Beijing Platform of Action 1995, especially chapter K on Women and Environment and the Millennium Development Goal No. 3.

Therefore we support that there **is** a Gender Action Plan under CBD and extra budgetary resources for it. We hope that the Gender Mainstreaming and Capacity Building related to the Gender Action Plan will include enough independent expertise on biodiversity. We are deeply concerned that within the CBD process in general, independent experts, not paid by powerful stakeholders, are almost ignored.

Finally our priority must be a sustainable economy, based on values, respect, diversity, dignity, cultural identity, and above all, life.

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