

## **WOMEN'S MESSAGES**

### **Biodiversity**

Women's knowledge, including traditional knowledge, on biodiversity conservation, should be protected, documented and retained in the hands of the rightful custodians. Such knowledge should be respected and therefore not be exploited and patented by multinational corporations. The right to livelihoods, particularly for indigenous communities, are intertwined with ecosystems. As such indigenous rights to customary land, their resources and IP knowledge needs to be recognised and guaranteed by national and international regulations.

### **Green economy**

We call on UNEP and its partners in the process of developing Green Economy strategies and guidelines to ensure that the principles and criteria which will be developed will consider the protection of women's rights including the right to safe and decent jobs, avoidance of all forms of discrimination and equal opportunities in benefiting from the Green Economy.

### **Chemicals**

Women and children are especially vulnerable to risks associated with harmful chemicals due to their different biological make-up. In many cases, women are employed for dangerous jobs such as pesticide sprayers and many chemicals which they are exposed to are persistent, bio-accumulative, carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic and are endocrine disruptors. As women are the first environment for their child, toxic contaminants will be passed to their children during pregnancy and lactation. Women's right to a healthy living and working environment must be ensured.

Women should be given non-chemical alternatives in their work and daily lives. Non-chemical pest and disease management exists, however, too little is known or are made known, and therefore should receive more research funding and outcomes made available to farmers.

Governments should inform all users of pesticides of the health risks, in particular risks to women. Existing legislation on pesticide and biocides needs to be strengthened, to reflect the long term damage to human health – specifically women's reproductive health - and the environment, ultimately, leading to a substitution of all hazardous chemicals. Governments should adhere to the FAO code of conduct on the distribution and use of chemicals.

We call on governments to provide financial and institutional support so that the Bamako Convention on the ban on the import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, can become operational.

### **Chemical convention synergies**

The women major group is very concerned that an issue of such great importance to the health of the environment and future generations, as well as that of safe chemical management, is not receiving heightened political attention it deserves from governments, as illustrated a.o. by the lack of funding of the 3 chemical Conventions. We support in principle the synergy process of the 3 conventions, but are concerned that there is a possibility of a downward harmonization in

terms of practices. In addition, we are concerned that civil society, as an important stakeholder, is not directly involved in the consultation and review process.

We therefore call on governments to:

- provide additional funding for the chemical conventions
- strengthen the conventions through stronger compliance and voting mechanisms
- work on the life-cycle concept of chemical management
- include civil society in all stages of the review process
- promote non-chemical substitution

We ask the secretariats of the 3 Conventions to assure that in the planned, common, clearance house, the specific health effects on women workers and the community will be considered.

We call on the chemical and agricultural industries, as they are at the root of much of the economic costs caused by chemical pollution:-

- to agree on a global fund for chemical and waste clean up measures, under the umbrella of the UN system, and
- to proactively seek cradle to cradle life-cycle approaches in chemical management and product design.