



Declaration of the Inaugural Global South Women's Forum on Sustainable Development

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

03.10.2016

Co-convenor: IWRAP-Asia Pacific



Sustainable Development with Equality, Dignity and Justice for All

Realizing women's human rights and gender equality for present and future generations

1. Preamble

We, the women from the Global South who participated in the inaugural Global South Women's Forum on Sustainable Development in Phnom Penh, Cambodia between 27 September 2016 to 3 October 2016¹, reaffirm our commitment to women's human rights in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

We see this commitment as essential in the context of a neoliberal, neocolonial and patriarchal model of development that only serves to deplete our planet and violate our human rights. We are deeply concerned that despite the goals espoused by the sustainable development declaration, there has been little to no state accountability in terms of gender equality and women's human rights. This is also in light of existing binding international commitments, as well as national constitutional protections and guarantees.

We remain concerned that structures (such as neoliberalism, neocolonialism, patriarchy and androcentrism) only create inequality and social, cultural, political, economic and environmental crisis for all. For this reason, we call for a paradigm shift. We believe that sustainable development for both people and the planet can only occur through universal human rights and universal peace. The sustainable development agenda will only eradicate poverty and inequality if it addresses the root causes, which includes the unequal distribution of wealth and resources.

In this context, women and girls in the Global South face multiple challenges. The continuing prevalence of discrimination against women and girls is highlighted by the:

- Lack of women's access to economic resources
- Forced migration of women for low skilled employment
- Unregulated growth-led economic development and expansion of the private sector negatively affecting women and girls, in particular small landholders and rural women
- Lack of meaningful democratic and political participation of women
- Stereotypes of family responsibilities, including unpaid domestic and care work
- Reluctance to recognize sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Reluctance to recognize the intersectional forms of discrimination women face
- Early and forced marriages, pregnancies and other harmful practices
- Institutional weaknesses of gender machineries at the national level
- Lack of funding for women's human rights
- Denial of women human rights due to extremism, including religious extremism
- Unending conflict and the continuing epidemic of violence against women

¹ 38 participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Honduras, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste and Turkey attended the Forum in Cambodia. 21 people from the Burundi, DR Congo, India, Iraq, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Turkey and Yemen also submitted a written statement to the Forum and over 1300 people participated via live streaming.

The Forum was co-convened by International Women's Rights Action Watch – Asia Pacific

2. Challenges

The neocolonial, neoliberal and androcentric nature of the globalized world has only exacerbated the violations of women's human rights and the destruction of our shared planet. Conflict, multiple crises and complex disasters are all consequences of the current global political and economic model. Women and girls in the Global South unfairly bear the burden of these consequences for everyone.

To this end, we reaffirm our deep concern of the challenges that Global South women and girls face and call for a coherent and consistent commitment from both the Global South and the Global North to go beyond the potential rhetoric of the SDGs and truly create sustainable development for all.

The challenges Global South women and girls face include:

- **Foreign direct investment, trade agreements, fiscal policies and tax justice**

Whilst systemic economic issues (including illicit flows) continues to undermine development in the Global South, governments also continue to promote foreign direct investment. In this respect, governments in the Global South refrain from regulating the private sector from exploitation and discrimination against people and the planet. In addition, Global North governments are not enforcing their extra territorial obligations and are not holding the private sector accountable to human rights violations and environmental destruction. The high cost borne by corporate violations against people and the planet is ultimately paid by everyone, but Global South women and girls in particular. Furthermore, harsh and opaque free trade agreements (such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER+) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)) only serve to create greater barriers to achieving equality, women's human rights and sustainable development. States must ensure a rights-based approach to trade agreements, including asymmetrical agreements such as the PACER+, RCEP and the TPPA, which must not supersede national constitutions and legislation and must not allow infringement by corporate actors on human rights or on national policy space. Unfortunately, the ambitious sustainable development agenda is not enough when there is a lack of progressive fiscal policies and frameworks, a lack of global tax justice and limited regulation of corporate investments. These current realities are not conducive to achieving sustainable development and gender equality and therefore, must be urgently addressed.

- **Crisis in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)**

The current ODA system is in crisis. On the one hand, the Global North is not fulfilling their commitment to guarantee an on-going flow of ODA to the Global South. But on the other hand, ODA does maintain a neocolonial dynamic that needs to be addressed by a global tax body in order to regulate tax evasion. We, the women of the Global South, recognize the dangers of allowing the private sector to fill the development finance gap given their continual human rights abuse and unabated environmental destruction. In this respect, Public Private Partnerships for sustainable development must be regulated and private sector partners must be scrutinized and held accountable to the United Nations Guiding Principles and international human rights norms and standards if we are to achieve sustainable development and gender equality for all.

- **Shrinking Democratic Space, Lack of Political Participation & Women's Leadership**

The vital voices of women and girls in the Global South, who enrich all our lives with their diversity, have been silenced under discriminatory and sometimes archaic laws, policies and practices, denying them their human right to meaningful participation in democratic and political spaces, and access to decision-making and leadership positions in the public and private sectors. Women's human rights and gender equality are still not prioritized by governments. The "first steps" made by governments in relation to Agenda 2030 indicate a continuing lack of will to ensure gender equality in a coherent and consistent manner in all three dimensions of sustainable development.

- **Land Grabs**

National and multinational corporations, governments and private individuals are buying and leasing large tracts of land in the Global South for the purpose of industrial food and biofuel production, amongst other things. Land on which women depend for life and livelihood is highly susceptible to "land grabs". Many systems of land tenure continue to be subject to traditional, cultural and patriarchal practices that discriminate against women by limiting or denying their right to land, to access, ownership, inheritance, transfer, and property sharing in marriage and divorce. Furthermore, women rarely hold positions in traditional or formal institutions that make decisions regarding land and violent backlashes (including murders of women human rights defenders and environmental defenders) has become an emerging reality for some Global South women.

- **Conflict**

Protracted armed and unarmed conflict continue to prevail in all regions of the world. Many are unresolved conflicts, while others are new struggles underpinned by scarce resources amid the virulent spread of neoliberalism and neocolonialism. Many of these conflicts take place in marginalized communities and all have gendered causes and consequences, both during and after conflict. Women's responses to, and experiences of, conflict are both multidimensional and diverse. In addition to CEDAW General Recommendation 30 and Security Council Resolutions, including SCR 1325, it is critical that Agenda 2030 (including SDG 16) is more cognizant of the causes of conflict and the role women play as human rights defenders, as members of resistance movements, as combatants, as active agents in formal and informal peacebuilding and perhaps most of all, as agents of change.

- **Disaster and Climate Change**

Over the past two decades, disasters such as cyclones, floods, storms, heatwaves, droughts and tsunamis have increased in frequency and intensity with devastating effect on Global South women and girls. The lack of appropriate and effective environmental management by states and the private sector has only increased everyone's vulnerability to disaster. Global South women and girls are the most vulnerable to these disasters, but they are simultaneously the most capable of effectively implementing appropriate disaster reduction strategies. Global South women recognize that the current growth-led model of development directly contributes to climate change, but also the associated violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Climate justice for all includes placing gender justice at the heart of climate agreements. Solutions to climate disruption must be based on gender responsive policies, including processes to adequately address the development and human rights impacts of climate change. We reaffirm

that the global average temperature increase must be limited to below 1.5 degrees Celsius to limit catastrophic and disproportionate impact on the Global South, especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

- **Violence Against Women & Girls**

It is a blight on humanity that violence against women and girls in all its forms still exists unabated. The political, economic, social and cultural acceptance of gender-based violence is at the heart of inequality and discrimination against all women and girls. Violence against women continues in both public and private spheres; not only in the home, but in the workplace, in schools, on public transport, in public streets, in hospitals, police stations, detention centers, in media, social media, music, film, fashion and sport to name but a few. Women and girls live with a reality that accepts the perpetration of physical and psychological violence and abuse. We must change this unquestioning acceptance to conscious condemnation.

3. The Need for a Global South Women Solidarity Network

In response to these challenges, the Global South Women's network seeks to:

- Share knowledge, skill and experience in order to enhance activism for gender equality in the SDGs
- Work towards fulfilling women's human rights and achieving gender equality by addressing the need for a sustainable development process that considers the priorities of present and future generations of Global South women and girls, including indigenous women, migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, internally displaced, stateless and nomadic women, rural women, older women, women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities and LBTQI people
- Develop modalities and strategies to incorporate women's human rights guaranteed by CEDAW and other global and regional human rights treaties within the sustainable development agenda
- Address the shrinking democratic and political space, especially for feminist and women's organizations to make their voices heard and promote women's leadership
- Prioritize data as a key element of obligations under international human rights commitments, including gendered macroeconomic planning
- Advocate for comprehensive Means of Implementation for the SDGs and to hold governments accountable to existing commitments in the UDHR, CEDAW, UPR, CRPD, CPD and CSW
- Build the capacity of women's human rights defenders, activists and advocates by creating linkages across thematic areas
- Strengthen the knowledge, skill and experience of feminist and women's rights organizations on gender budgeting and taxation and to put these tools at the core of the advocacy strategies of national and local governments

4. Statement of Solidarity with Cambodian Human Rights Defenders

We, the women present at the Global South Women's Forum on Sustainable Development call for justice for five Cambodian human rights defenders who have been working to promote human rights in Cambodia. This includes four senior staff at the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC): Ny Sokha, Nay Vanda, Yi Soksan and Lim Mony, who were charged with bribery of a witness under Criminal Code Article 548 and sent to CC1 and CC2 prisons in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In addition, former ADHOC staff member Ny Chakrya (who was recently appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the National Election Committee) has been charged as an accomplice to bribery under Criminal Code Article 29 & 548. Ny Chakrya was sent to Police Judiciary (PJ) prison. If convicted, all five could be sentenced to five to ten years' imprisonment.

This act of alleged bribery amounts to 204 USD provided to Sreymom (who is also accused of having an affair with the Deputy Chair of the opposition party, Mr. Kim Sokha) to cover transportation and food costs.

We call upon the Cambodian Government to ensure justice and due process for the five human rights defenders working to promote human rights in Cambodia who have been imprisoned. The payment is said be a standard and legal form of payment, commonly used to provide per diems. There are concerns that the criminal justice system and State law enforcement institutions are being used to criminalize and punish human rights defenders. We call upon the government to see that investigations and prosecutions are conducted fairly and with assurances of due process.