



Forward Looking Strategies – Women and Climate Change: Durban and beyond

COP 17/CMP 7 Co-Hosted High Level Meeting

On 7 December 2011, a high level event entitled “Women and Climate Change: beyond Durban” was held in Durban, co-hosted by the Hon. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) South Africa and President of COP 17/CMP 7 and the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRFCJ).

The objectives of the meeting were to bring together a significant number of Ministers and women leaders committed to highlighting the gender dimensions of climate change; to invite new members to join the [Troika+](#); to provide an opportunity for Troika+ members to share their experiences and knowledge and to encourage women leaders to advocate for stronger gender outcomes in the texts under negotiation at COP 17.

Documents shared by MRFCJ during the meeting

MRFCJ presented a number of documents to the participants at the event:

- MRFCJ briefing document on the Troika+ of Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change
- List of Troika+ members (as of September 2011)
- MRFCJ briefing note outlining women’s representation on bodies established by the UNFCCC (including a proposal to revise Decision 36/CP.7)
- MRFCJ tracking table on Gender in COP 17 draft decision texts
- WEDO document outlining Gender in priority areas of draft decision texts

Statements by the Panel

The panel for the high level event consisted of Minister Maite Nkoana Mashabane (Minister of DIRCO South Africa and President of COP17/CMP7), Ms. Christiana Figueres (Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC) and Mary Robinson (President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice).

Mary Robinson, President, MRFCJ

Mary Robinson introduced the concept of the Troika+ as an innovative form of leadership that serves as an organic, flexible platform that highlights the gender dimensions of climate change. The genesis of the Troika+ at COP 16 in Cancun was explained as well as the [first meeting of the Troika+](#) in New York in September 2011.

Mary Robinson noted that the next main event for the Troika+ will be the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in early 2012. Michelle Bachelet of UN Women, who is also a member of the Troika+, will lead the CSW which will focus on rural women. While the composition of the Troika+ will vary from CSW to Rio+20 and on to COP 18, the core focus of the Troika+ will remain the same. The documents provided by MRFCJ (listed above) were introduced and briefly explained.

Ms. Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

Ms. Christiana Figueres thanked Mary Robinson for continuing to push on the issue of gender in the context of climate change negotiations. She said that while some of the gender text is tenuous, women should not be judged by the numerical value of their representation but by their quality. She gave the example of one of the female representatives on the Technology Executive Committee (TEC), who said her primary agenda as a member of the TEC was to ensure gender was addressed in the text. Christiana stated that twenty years ago there was not a single mention of gender in the COP texts. Much progress has been made. She thanked Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane for doing a good job of simultaneously guiding and pushing delegates.

Minister Maite Nkoana Mashabane, President, COP 17

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that we cannot solve the problems of climate change without empowered women. She said that women are natural custodians of their homes, their communities and their lands. Women instinctively understand the issues around climate change since they are the ones who tend the land, walk long distances to collect water and worry about access to land. Women are on the frontline picking up the pieces – having to labour harder for longer and walk further to collect water.

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane noted the strength, resilience and resourcefulness that women have. She drew attention to a well-known South African saying – “you strike a woman, you strike a rock and you shall be crushed”. She highlighted the practical solutions that women offer while safeguarding the lives of many. She drew attention to the many meetings that have taken place – encouraged by Mary Robinson - to address and highlight the gender dimensions of climate change. These meetings have taken place at a national and continental level and have involved more than twenty five countries coming together. Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that as a result of these high level discussions, it is now known what needs to be done. Minister Nkoana-Mashabane called for the involvement of women in all levels of decision making. She said it is time for women to take the process forward.

Participants

More than seventy people attended the meeting. The meeting convened women Ministers, deputy Ministers, negotiators, key civil society figures and senior women leaders to discuss a human-centred approach to climate change that incorporates gender and sustainable development.

A number of senior women leaders signed up to becoming new members of the Troika+. A full list of Troika+ members is included as an Appendix to this report.

Priorities for gender and climate change discussions beyond Durban

Statements were made by speakers from Africa, Europe and America. There was a cross-pollination of opinions and ideas from the ministerial, ambassadorial, international organisation and non-governmental organisation levels. Based on the statements made, key priority areas emerged.

The main priorities identified for gender and climate change discussions beyond Durban are summarized below.

Agriculture and Food Security:

Agriculture and food security was a very strong theme throughout the meeting and was a key issue mentioned by a number of speakers. Ms. Bineta Diop summarised the view of many when she said that grassroots women farmers are waiting for the outcome of Durban, saying “if we fail, we fail the women of the world, not just Africa”. Ambassador Verveer drew attention to the fact that the majority of small holder farmers around the world are women. She said recent studies by the FAO highlight how vital women are to agriculture but also how women’s resources when compared to men’s resources are inequitable. Women are less productive than they can be because they don’t have access to the tools that they need or access to extension programmes or access to credit. Dame Nicola Brewer said that COP 17 should address climate-smart agriculture.

Finance:

Finance emerged as another strong theme during the meeting. Ms. Winnie Byanyima from UNDP said that we should not leave Durban without an agreement on the Green Climate Fund. Ruth Kagia, South Africa Country Director of the World Bank said she hoped the Green Climate Fund would be more gender specific. Dame Nicola Brewer also highlighted finance as a key point, specifically the need for a mechanism that ensures that money gets to women. Ingrid Skjolaas from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway drew attention to gender budgeting as a useful practical tool for addressing gender equality and she spoke about the work done in Norway on mainstreaming gender into budgets.

Access to Energy:

Access to energy was highlighted by EU Commissioner Connie Hedegaard as a key issue with a gender dimension. With 2012 designated by the UN Secretary General as the year of Sustainable Energy for All, the gender dimension of energy access will be an important focus in the year ahead and at Rio +20. Ingrid Skjolaas from Norway also highlighted energy access as an important issue to be addressed. Ambassador Verveer said the issue of access to clean energy in the form of fuel efficient cookstoves is a critical issue for women around the world.

Linking to CSW, Rio+ 20 and COP 18:

The need to link CSW in Feb/March 2012, Rio+20 and COP 18 was highlighted several times during the meeting. Ambassador Williams said she was pleased to see the link being formed with Rio+20 and on to COP 18.

Closing comments

In her closing comments, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane said that there was a need to continue defending the position of women. She said it was important to address food security, energy security and access to water as well as considering mechanisms for women to be climate-smart. In closing the meeting, Mary Robinson thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. She confirmed her intention that the Troika+ would meet again at CSW and at Rio+20 in 2012.