

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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GIMAC speaking notes for Mary Robinson

President, Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRF CJ)

I am delighted to be here today to address the 19th Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit. It is great to speak to an audience of Grassroots Networks who represent the women who are coping with the issues facing Africa on a daily basis. I am particularly pleased that this Summit, whose theme is “Boosting Intra-African Trade” is considering some of the broader issues affecting Africa and African women, in particular the issue of climate change and how this affects food security and access to energy.

Climate change is a complex, multifaceted problem and it hits the poorest countries and people hardest. I know that this is not news to this audience, as it is African communities in particular who are at the forefront of the challenges that climate change is exacerbating. The work of my Foundation, the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRF CJ), views climate change as a human rights issue. Our work is centred on a Climate Justice approach, which links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable, to share the benefits and burdens of climate change equitably and fairly.

This was why I attended the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa last November and December. The 17th Conference of Parties, or COP 17 as it is better known, took place over two weeks in Durban and I would firstly like to congratulate the Hon. Minister Maite Nkoana Mashabane, President of COP 17 who is also here at GIMAC, for her excellent work in presiding over COP 17.

I would like to take this opportunity to explore what the outcomes from COP 17 mean in the context of climate justice. MRFCJ had three priorities going into COP 17:

- 1. Women's leadership and the gender dimensions of climate change**
- 2. Food security and agriculture**
- 3. The legal form of a future climate change agreement**

Starting with the issue of women's leadership: if we are to find effective solutions to climate change, then we have to include all of those who can make a difference. Ignoring or undervaluing the contribution of women restricts the potential for innovation and our capacity to act.

During COP 17 I worked with an inspiring set of women leaders to highlight these issues, including my friends Maite Nkoana Mashabane and Bineta Diop of FAS. Maite co-hosted an event with MRFCJ on the 7th December to look at how the gender dimensions of climate change were being addressed. This event succeeded in bringing together a large number of high-profile women leaders from several continents. It was a dynamic event and an exciting opportunity to influence women leaders to be strong advocates for gender in the climate change negotiations. Overall, the references to gender in the COP 17 decision texts can be viewed as a positive outcome. The decision text on the Green Climate Fund has strong references to gender. This is an important outcome from Durban, given the crucial role that finance plays in helping developing countries address climate change. The Green Climate Fund – report of the Transitional Committee contains five references to gender:

- Objectives and principles: states that the Fund take a “gender sensitive approach” (Annex I paragraph 3).**

- **Selection of board members will give “due consideration” to gender balance (Annex II paragraph 11).**
- **Establishment of the Secretariat will take into account gender balance (Annex II paragraph 21).**
- **Operational modalities will address gender aspects (Annex III paragraph 31).**
- **Stakeholder input and participation: “The Board will develop mechanisms to promote the input and participation of stakeholders, including women” (Annex XIII).**

The text relating to the role and functions of the Board of the Green Climate Fund includes a requirement to “develop environmental and social safeguards” that are internationally accepted. There is also the inclusion of a paragraph that states that the fund will provide resources for activities including the strengthening of capacities at a country level for social safeguards. This is very important since social safeguards provide an opportunity to ensure gender equality is addressed in the operation of the fund.

The second theme that guided MRFCJ’s work at Durban was that of food security and agriculture.

We know that up to 75% of people living in developing countries rely on agriculture for their livelihoods and that over 90% of Africa’s agricultural production comes from small-scale production. Many of these farmers are women, who play a critical role in food and nutrition security and are responsible for growing, buying, selling and cooking the food. Between 60 and 80% of the food produced in most developing countries is produced by women and in sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is between 80 and 90 per cent. Yet less than 2% of land in sub-Saharan Africa is owned by women.

Across Africa, farmers are experiencing unpredictable growing seasons, making the age-old art and science of farming a guessing game. It is estimated that by 2050, up to 25% of world food production could be lost as a result of climate change, water scarcity and land degradation. This, combined with an expected population of 9 billion in 2050, paints a frightening picture of what may lie ahead for the next generation.

The challenge in Durban was to reflect the importance of food security and agriculture in the work of the Convention. While the decision at COP 17 falls short of establishing a work programme to explore the issue of food security and agriculture, it has opened the door to this possibility. This year, Parties will consider how best to support a process that addresses the impacts of climate change on food security, the role of agriculture in finding ways to grow food under changing climatic conditions, while at the same time safeguarding the environment and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The final theme MRFCJ worked on is that of the legal form of a future climate agreement. Durban delivered a commitment to develop “*a new protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force*” by 2015, which would come into force by 2020. This means that we now have all the countries of the world committed to working together as part of a multilateral process to develop a new legal agreement. Lots of work needs to be done on the technical, legal and diplomatic fronts to achieve the 2015 deadline. Core climate justice issues have to be discussed and agreed including issues of equity, the right to development, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. However, let us take a moment to realise the significance that, for the first time, the whole world has agreed that something must be done to address climate change.

Women instinctively understand the issues around climate change because they think inter-generationally. They think of their children and their grandchildren. What is clear is that we must act so as not to leave the next generation with a problem from which there is no way back.

I invite you to join us in the sessions on climate change that take place later today and tomorrow, when we hope to explore further how climate change is affecting the lives of women in Africa, in particular on issues of food security and agriculture, and access to clean energy.

At the end of February/early March in New York, a number of us will meet again in New York in the context of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), with its priority theme of the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. On 5th March, MRFCJ is co-hosting an event with Michelle Bachelet of UN Women. This will provide a further opportunity to hear concerns and ideas on how to improve women's access to food security and to affordable renewable energy.

In June, we will focus our minds once again on sustainable development, when Rio+20 takes place in Brazil, 20 years after the last Rio Earth Summit in 1992. We have certainly made some significant gains since then but we have also experienced first-hand the impacts of unsustainable development and how challenges such as climate change are undermining the advances made. One of the main themes for Rio+20 is the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. We should bear this in mind during our discussions over the next few days. Now is the time to imagine the future we want for the women of Africa so that we have a new vision for the future, with the imagination and creativity to achieve it.