

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Opening remarks by Mary Robinson

I am delighted to be here in Dhaka for CBA7 and to have the opportunity to meet so many practitioners on community-based adaptation from all over the world. I would like to thank you for attending this session today on “human rights, equity and the legal aspects of community-based adaptation”. I am looking forward to hearing from you, the experts, during the dialogue component of this session as I am convinced that the equity and human rights aspects of adaptation need to be given more attention. I would like to take this opportunity to thank CDKN, the World Resources Institute, the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security and of course IIED who helped to make this session a reality.

In the opening session on Monday, Saleem Huq spoke about the Climate Justice Dialogue and I would now like to take the opportunity to tell you more about this. The Climate Justice Dialogue is a joint initiative of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice and the World Resources Institute that aims to mobilise political will and creative thinking to shape an equitable and ambitious international climate agreement in 2015. Central to this is the need to mobilise constituencies around the globe to demand greater urgency and ambition from political leaders.

A climate justice narrative that amplifies the voices of the most vulnerable can help to change the conversation on climate change and create this demand. By focusing on issues of fairness and justice this narrative can

serve as a pressure point on the road to an international climate agreement in 2015 as well as the post-2015 development agenda.

Adaptation policy makers and practitioners are an important constituency that can be influential in informing and mobilising demand for climate action. You work with the unequal impacts of climate change on a daily basis and you see first-hand how climate change is undermining human rights. An equitable international climate change agreement will need to give equal emphasis to adaptation and mitigation - however the focus of discussions on equity and justice in the negotiations is predominantly on mitigation. We need to ensure that the new agreement recognises action by countries on adaptation as well as mitigation in addition to providing the support needed to protect vulnerable communities and build adaptive capacity.

The Climate Justice Dialogue features a series of convenings or conversations taking place across the globe over the next 3 years with a view to creating a narrative, collecting ideas and building momentum for a new agreement in 2015.

This session is one of those conversations, coming in the same month as a workshop in Chile and a conference in Dublin.

In Chile two weeks ago, negotiators from several Latin American countries joined civil society and academia from Chile to explore what climate justice and equity means to them. Key outcomes of the discussions were that;

- 1. Climate justice is not about refraining from climate action because others are dragging their heels. This risks leaving the world with unmanageable and costly climate impacts. Leading on the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society makes sense for many middle income countries.**
- 2. Equity is not only about sharing effort or burden: it is also about opportunity and the transition to a better future. Action by all—both developed and developing nations—is required, as is a shared legal framework that holds countries accountable to each other.**
- 3. A new narrative on climate justice is needed to win hearts and minds and build the political will for action on climate change.**

Last week in Dublin, my Foundation co-hosted a conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Climate Justice with the Irish Government. This was an exciting conference, as more than 100 of the 300 people attending were grassroots participants from regions including Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Arctic. Their participation in the event injected energy, enthusiasm and realism into the discussions and gave validity to the proceedings. As one of the participants, Mitchell Lay from Antigua said, ‘No-one can represent you like you can represent yourself’. Some of the key messages from the event were that

- local knowledge has to be the foundation on which research and solutions are built;**
- platforms need to be established for real dialogue between all stakeholders to enable local priorities and solutions to be communicated and scaled up;**
- laws, policies and international frameworks aren’t enough – they need to be translated into action, through resources and awareness raising;**

- **don't keep half the population outside the door – women have an important role to play but care must be taken to ensure that interventions don't just add to women's workload;**
- **difficult issues need to be addressed –including land ownership, power struggles, inequalities, the rule of law and the need to uphold human rights.**
- **the private sector must be engaged more proactively**
- **resources are needed to deliver change at the local level – there was recognition of the need to deliver on commitments to provide financing for adaptation and make it flow to the local level. It is simply too hard to get at the money that is there – and not enough money in the pot.**
- **Finally, there was a recognition that poor people have to adapt to climate change because they have no other option. The urgency felt locally needs to be felt internationally and trigger action. This is what the Climate Justice Dialogue aims to do.**

The adaptation community has an important role to play in being vocal on the impacts climate change is having on human rights and equity. We want to listen to you so that your experiences shape a narrative on adaptation that we can bring to the international stage. Equity and justice are central to understanding and framing the risks posed by climate change on vulnerable communities and many adaptation practitioners are adopting rights based approaches in their work.

We also need to get the message out to the adaptation community that we need an international climate change agreement because there is a certain point beyond which people will not be able to adapt. There is a tipping point and we must work together to ensure we don't pass that threshold.

Today, we have time to start a dialogue. But it is just the start. I hope that you will continue to work with us in 2013 and 2014, to help us mobilise the adaptation community around issues of equity and justice. Please speak with my colleague Mary Faherty later today or tomorrow if you have additional ideas you would like to share with us so that we can keep developing the dialogue going beyond what we discuss today.

I look forward to listening to the perspective of community based adaptation practitioners. I am here to listen. We need you as a constituency of demand, a constituency that demands fairness and justice. I am looking forward to an engaging and energetic dialogue this afternoon.