

# Grassroots fight for right and survival in nuclear contaminated areas

## Milya Kabirova

Ajgul, Russia

I would like to greet all the members of the International Conference of Women of Europe for Sustainable Development and thank the organizers for the opportunity to take part in this forum.

My name is Milya Kabirova and I come from Russia, from the city of Chelyabinsk, in the Southern Ural. During the world war the Soviet government transplanted most of the armament industry which had been based in cities on the western side of the Urals to the Eastern side of the Urals where it would be safe against the enemy. It was also therefore that Russia's "nuclear" regions concentrated behind the Ural mountains. The nuclear industry is located near Chelyabinsk, in Sverdlovsk, in Tomsk, in the Novosibirsk region and in the Krasnoyarsk area. The regional governments of these regions have always been and continue to be pro-nuclear. The population of these regions suffer from 50 years of contamination with radionuclides, and continue to be exposed to a huge health risk.

### Severe nuclear contamination

In 1949 the nuclear armament plant "Mayak" started operating in the province of Chelyabinsk. The Mayak complex dumped its liquid radioactive waste from the beginning of its operations in 1949 until 1956 in the Techa-Iset-Tobol river system. During the period 1948-1952 the discharge of radioactive waste into the river Techa totalled three million curies. The radioactive contamination of Mayak has already reached the Arctic Ocean via the rivers Techa, Iset, Tobol, Irtysh and Ob. The contamination of these rivers exposed 124,000 people

living on the riverbanks to severe levels of radiation. The majority of the people living in the villages along these river banks belonged to the ethnic minorities of Tartars and Bashkirs. In 1952, 67% of the population of the village of 'Metlino' were diagnosed with leukemia. Several villages alongside the river were evacuated, while the inhabitants of certain others remained.

*67% of the population of the village of 'Metlino' were diagnosed with leukemia*

Those residents who were evacuated had received effective radiation doses in the range of 0.35 Sv to 17 Sievert. Of the remaining people in the area, it was the 4,000 residents of the village of Muslyumovo who received the highest doses, averaging 2.8 Sv. Until 1992 inhabitants of this region were not informed about the radioactive contamination which they had been exposed to over many years. The population has been subject to compulsory testing of blood and bone marrow since 1950, but the results were kept secret until 1992. They were not aware about the serious health risks associated with radiation. The authorities explained the high mortality as due to 'low standard of living'. When finally made public, the blood analyses indicates highly increased levels of various radiation-inducible diseases and ailments. As if the dumping of radioactive waste was not enough, the population was further exposed because of several terrible accidents which happened in Mayak. These accidents have always been kept secret. In September 1957 a liquid radioactive waste storage tank exploded following a failure in the cooling system. An area of 23,000 square kilometers (almost half the size of the Netherlands) was contaminated and 270 thousand people were exposed to radioactivity. 10,700 people who lived in areas where the soil was considered too highly contami-

nated, were silently evacuated. The evacuated population could not bring any of their belongings. Their houses, livestock and clothes were burned, and after

*The population has been subject to compulsory testing of blood and bone marrow since 1950, but the results were kept secret until 1992.*

a 'desinfecting' shower, they were sent away to the surrounding cities in

clothes provided by the government. They were asked not to talk about what had happened. This nuclear contaminated area of 23,000 square kilometres is known as the Eastern Ural's Radioactive Trace (EURT). In the long hot summer of 1967 another major accident occurred when the lake Karachay dried up. This lake had been used as a dump-site for radioactive waste from Mayak and when it fell dry the nuclear contaminated sediments were blown over an area of 2,200 square kilometres, again exposing many people to radioactivity.

#### **The village "Muslumovo" on the radioactive river Techa**

Muslyumovo is a village of 4000 inhabitants on the banks of the contaminated river Techa. The area of Muslyumovo is severely contaminated by the nuclear accidents and daily operation of the Mayak nuclear plant. Though the health situation in Muslyumovo is critical because of the pollution, the villagers have never been evacuated. Mayak needed the Muslyumovo railway station. In 1998, more than 40 years after the first nuclear accident, the villagers of Muslyumovo had a brief moment of victory after a broad public campaign, when the oblast (provincial) authorities decided that Muslyumovo should be resettled. Local NGOs and activists, including myself and my husband, had been fighting for this for over 7 years. However, the authorities never said when and where Muslyumovo would be resettled. Due to economic problems so far little has happened. Villages that have been evacuated after the accidents have been resettled in temporary homes,

*An area of 23,000 sq. kilometers was evacuated and remains closed*

made out of asbestos board, that should last for a maximum of ten years. This was

30 to 40 years ago. These temporary homes are still being used today. Until 1992 the villagers were never informed about the dangers of the radioactive contamination of the river. The high level of birth defects

among newborns and the high mortality among the adults was attributed by the local health authorities to a "low standard of living". When a first foreign team of scientists, of the German nuclear research institute in Munich, visited the village the mid-90', they found that the local population had accumulated such levels of radioactivity over the last 30-40 years which would have been lethal had they been received in one dose. The scientists also found contamination in the food of the villagers, including fish from the Techa river with levels of more than 7000 bequerel per kilo.

#### **Chernobyl started the Ural ecological movement**

We don't know how long the secret of the radiation accidents at the nuclear facility "Mayak" would have been kept had the Chernobyl tragedy not happened. The Chernobyl tragedy awoke the public opinion in Chelyabinsk. Chernobyl stands at the cradle of the Ural's ecological movement.

*The power plant needed the railway station, so the village was never evacuated*

My own work is inspired by that of my mother. My mother, Sarvar Shagiakhmetova, was born and raised in the village of Muslyumovo. In 1995 she was the first person to start a lawsuit in order to get recognition of her and our family's diseases linked to radiation and to get compensation from the Mayak nuclear plant. Her husband, my father, had already died in 1962 of leukemia. In the course of the lawsuit two of my brothers also died. The authorities finally analysed the blood of myself and my 4 other brothers and sisters and we were diagnosed with chronic radiation disease. The lawsuit that could have created a precedent for other cases was stopped when my mother died in October 1998.

I have been working now for many years with other environmental organisations in the Chelyabinsk region, among other the Movement for Nuclear Safety. In 1999 I founded the NGO Aigul, which means "Moon Flower" in Tartar. It is a beautiful name for a sad flower which grows not under the sunshine but in the white stillness of the moon, resembling the nuclear winter. Aigul unites women who suffer from chronic radiation disease or who have children suffering from radiation exposure. Our main objectives are to protect civil rights

of people who have been exposed to radiation and their descendants, to promote an ecological way of

*Every fourth child has chromosome mutations; our children are mutants*

thinking, to promote the principles of humanism, to eliminate nuclear arms production and usage and to promote public participation in shaping state policy and laws.

In 1992 together with scientists of the Vavilov Institute for General Genetics in Moscow we conducted genetic research of the blood of children who are descendants of the irradiated population around Mayak. The results were astonishing. It showed that every fourth child has chromosome mutations. Our children are mutants! Even from children born as late as 1997 we found radiation markers in their blood. The radiation is effecting the 4th generation. Worse, the research shows that the level of genetic damage is higher among the children than among their parents.

This research also showed how the radiation has caused chronic pathologies among both adults and children. We have an increase of radiation disease, statistically significant high rates of cancer, as well as high rates of sterility and inborn deformities. As my husband said in an interview with Australian television, **“The atomic bomb which was built in Mayak hasn’t as yet killed a single enemy, but it has caused half of the population of my village to die from radiation-related diseases.”**

The population of our region is suffering terribly from the mistakes of “nuclear” officials. But maybe they were

*The level of genetic damage is higher among the children than among their parents*

not mistakes. Maybe those who made the decisions to produce nuclear weapons took it for granted that they were putting the lives of the thousands of people around Mayak in lethal danger.

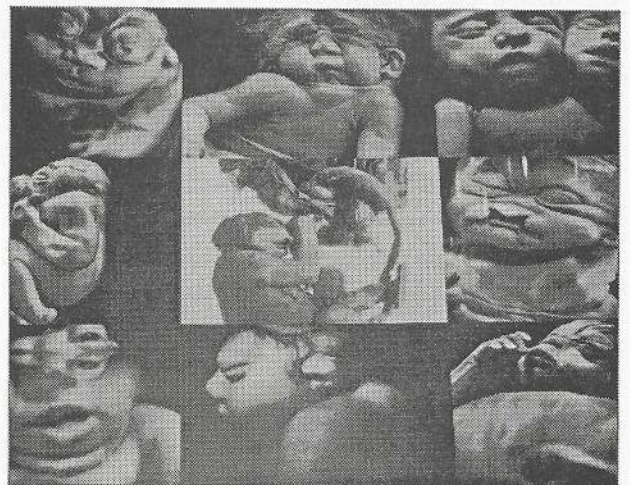
The Government of Russia has recently agreed to import foreign nuclear spent fuel to the territory of Russia to store and reprocess, against the sum of 20 billion USD. A large share of this plutonium waste will come to Mayak. So Moscow will get 20 million dollars to send foreign plutonium to our region. We don’t believe much of that money will be used for good

investments in our region. The Ministry of Atomic Energy is trying to ‘sell’ this decision to the public by creating a myth about high technologies. The NGOs of my region are against this commercial venture. Now that we are finally starting to understand the tragic results of the previous activities of the Minatom facilities, we do not want to increase the risk for the population even more.

Through the activities of Ajgul and other NGOs we try to protect our right to a healthy environment. We use different methods for this, we have meetings with local officials, we work with the State Duma deputies, we organise signature campaigns against foreign nuclear spent fuel import, and we hold protest actions together with other NGOs such as Greenpeace Russia.

*Moscow gets 20 million dollars to send foreign plutonium to our region*

The reaction of authorities to such actions are not always predictable. But we are ready to conduct a constructive dialogue to solve our problems. Thus, beginning with 1999, for three years, the “Movement for Nuclear Safety” has been organizing and conducting negotiations “Society – Government: Dialogues on Nuclear Policy”. The aim of these negotiations is to develop mechanisms of involving the public in



*These foetuses with malformations caused by exposure to radioactivity are kept on formaldehyde in the archives of the institute for radiology which has been following the medical situation of the population in the region for 50 years. All data were kept locked up, not even the people who had given blood were informed about their results.*

decisions on nuclear policy. We are trying to have NGOs take part in negotiations with the officials and to monitor decision-making and implementation.

From the experience of the negotiations we can say that there are three levels of interaction: discussion, dialogue, and cooperation. In the first year we merely had 'discussions' with the officials. There were many emotions as each side tried to express their dissatisfaction without listening to the other side.

The second year things got better and we had a more constructive dialogue. We prepared a number of documents and concrete proposals that were listened to with great attention. Last year the negotiations were held in the Ministry of Atomic Energy, the Office of the General Prosecutor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health. We submitted Memorandums on the moratorium on the federal laws, permitting foreign nuclear spent fuel import to Russia. With the Ministry of Health we outlined a number of joint activities.

*Finally we had our first victory, the supreme court decided that the radioactive waste was to be send back to Hungary*

And finally we had our first victory. The Chelyabinsk public organizations "Pravosoznanie" and

"Movement for Nuclear Safety" went to the court with the claim that the import of spent fuel as ordered by the Russian federal government was in violation with the Russian federal constitution. We argued that therefore "Mayak" should send the radioactive waste from the nuclear power station "PAKS" back to Hungary. The supreme court made a positive decision!

The society-government dialogue has become a necessity in order to protect Russian population interests and to strengthen public control in the spheres of nuclear safety and public health. The joint discussion of different aspects of nuclear policy at such a level can become a step towards the dialogue between the federal government officials – who live far away in the capital – and the population of the regions who suffer the impact of their decisions.



**Milya Kabirova**  
Ajgul, Russia  
techa@chel.surnet.ru

# War and subsequent Poverty and its effects on Women and Children in Tajikistan

**Muborak Sharipova**

Open Asia, Tajikistan

## **Tajikistan, a brief introduction**

Tajikistan is one of the Newly Independent States. We have a republican form of government. Tajikistan became independent in 1991 and a new Constitution was approved by a nation-wide referendum in November 1994. Tajikistan is located in the South-East of Central Asia, bordering on Uzbekistan and Kirgizistan (in the West and the North) and with China and Afghanistan (in the East and the South). The territory of Tajikistan is 143,100 square km of which 93% are mountains, the highest being the Pamir mountains in the East of the country. Tajikistan has a population of 6 million (1998) of which 52% are women. More than half the population of Tajikistan are youth and children under the age of 18. Tajikistan has a high and growing birthrate. Average life expectancy is 63,3 years. 72% of the population live in the country-side. Until 1991, Tajikistan was one of the Soviet Republics which meant that - despite a lack of many consumer goods - the country did have a low death-rate, good education and medical services accessible by all. Tajik women had an important place in the social, economical and cultural life. The literacy rate among women was 98%. Women were represented in all government structures.

## **Tajikistan's civil war's long term damage**

Tajikistan suffered from a civil war just after independence, on and off from 1992 till 1997. One side of the population was for a change of regime towards democracy, the other not. It is estimated that about 60.000 people were killed, 1% of the population. 55 000 children became orphans. 25.000 women became wid-

ows. One out of every sixth person became a refugee. 200 000 people fled to other NIS countries and another 60 000 spent 5 years as refugees in Afghanistan! These figures say little about the terrible personal stories. In an interview given to the BBC in the first year of war one, the opposition leader acknowledged having raped large number of women, and that the same had been done by his opponents. Great effort from the side of the UN, Tajik leaders and others helped that the war did not spread further and last longer. I believe that if we all make such efforts, if we join forces to stop further militarization, we can have peace in all the world.

Even though the war stopped, we still suffer from post-war traumas and war-aftermath diseases. We have a strong increase in diseases like cancer. My organisation helps women and children who suffer from the after-effects of the war. We have done many interviews to try and document and understand the situation. Most of the women and children we interviewed, lost one or several relatives during the war – a father, a mother, a husband, a brother, a sister, an uncle, a grandfather, or grandmother. Zamir, a 12 years old girl, told how she fled to Afghanistan with her family. **“The Afghans pushed my father into the river. My brother became angry and insulted them. They took us away. We saw many dead bodies in the yard. They ordered us to pick them up and to bury them. When we buried them in the earth on an earlier-made grave seemed to move. We opened the grave and found my uncle’s friend, he was hardly alive. We took him to the home.”** In the interviews we asked the women and children what they were afraid of. They fear the violence which takes part in their direct surrounding. Many children have witnessed shootings

and cruelty in the streets and in their families.

### **Poverty as a result of the war effects women and children most**

The war destroyed our countries infrastructure, farms and factories which has lead to an economic downfall. According to the World Bank, 90% of the population live in poverty. Less then 3% of the population have access to clean drinking water. About 20 000 special-ists left the country, either during the war, or because of the economic crisis after the war. We now have a great shortage of teachers and doctors. As many men died or became refugees during the war, the full burden of surviving in a devastated country lays on the women's shoulders.

### **Women's burdens: domestic violence on the rise, forced marriages**

Until recently the theme of domestic violence was taboo. Interference in a other family's problems, even if connected with extreme violence, is not acceptable. With our organisation we try to address this issue and provide help for beaten women. After the war the old traditions have been coming back increasingly. Many widows were denied the right to inherit the property of their dead husbands. When they were lucky they had sons who were legal heirs. Also children who lost their fathers suffer from this situation. We see that poverty in the families which we surveyed was a main reason behind an increasing young age of marriage. We now have more and more 14 – 16 year old girls being forced to marry out of economic need. One out of 10 of the parents we interviewed said they had forced their daughters - and sometimes their sons - into marriage. One consequence is that we also see an increase in another old tradition, 'self-burning' of young women. They try to commit suicide.

### **Child labor and school drop-outs**

One out of 3 parents surveyed acknowledge that they cannot send all their children to school. Mostly the girls will stay at home. It can be simple things, like the lack of warm shoes or clothes in winter, which make that children sometimes do not even attend primary school. But mostly it is that the children are sent out to work to supplement the income of the family. Taruk. 11 years old. "I lived in my aunt's house. She did

not let me go to school. She said, - go and get money and bring back bread. If you can't find bread you do not go to school".

### **Positive developments by NGOs**

On the other hand, all these negative developments have also lead to the creation of a number of active NGOs who try to improve peoples lives, particularly of women and children. My organisation is one of them. We were created in 1997 with the aim to improve the position of women and children in post-war Tadjik-istan. We have help-centers for women. We are in the process of setting up a Women's Bank to provide small credits to women entrepreneurs. We have also done constant lobbying work which have lead to a decree by the President to increase the role of women in society. And two government programs were started in which we had a hand; on fighting domestic violence and female poverty.

To conclude. Peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development. I would like to support the proposal by Katerina Stojkovska to write a peace petition from all the participants of this conference and to give it to the leaders at the WSSD.



**Muborak Sharipova**

muborakopenasia@hotmail.com

# Cotton: Sustainable Production in Agriculture

The Example of Sustainable Cotton Production, Processing and Consumption

## Alexandra Baier

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

### Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

PAN was founded in 1982 in Malaysia. Pan is now a network of over 600 participating non-governmental organizations, institutions and individuals in over 60 countries. PAN works to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound alternatives. PAN's projects and campaigns are coordinated by five autonomous Regional Centers, such as PAN-Europe.

Why should we do something to reduce pesticides? On Average, every minute one person is intoxicated by pesticides! Chemical/Synthetic pesticides endanger human health and the environment, especially in developing countries. We are for a life without dangers from pesticides,

Pan Germany was founded in 1984. There are 19 environmental, development and consumer organisations who are members of PAN Germany.

PAN Germany's work focuses on critical monitoring of pesticide related legislation in Germany, Europe and on an international level as well as on different projects for awareness raising and development of sustainable alternatives to pesticide use. Why did we create a PAN in Germany? Most of you will know the chemical company Bayer. Bayer and other German (now internationally acting) companies export dangerous pesticides to developing countries. PAN raises public awareness on the issue, puts pressure on politics and industry and supports sustainable alternatives for the control of pests both in agriculture and indoor.



### Cotton Connection

In 1992 PAN Germany started the campaign "Cotton Connection". We started Cotton Connection because cotton is one of the most chemical-intensively cultivated crops, with great dangers to humans and the environment. The Cotton Connection aims to inform the public about social, economic and environmental effects and to demonstrate possible alternatives for cultivation, processing and consumption of cotton.

Cotton grows best in warm and dry regions of tropical and subtropical climates. Cotton often needs irrigation of up to 30m<sup>3</sup>/ 1 kg raw fibre. The world annual harvest of cotton is ca. 20 million tons. The biggest cotton producers are China, USA, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkey. Cotton is grown in total in about 70 countries, including many African and Asian countries like India, Uganda and Senegal.

About 10% of all the pesticides used in the world are used on cotton. 25% of the world's insecticide-use is for cotton. The use of pesticides and insecticides in cotton can lead to acute (deadly) poisonings and chronic diseases for the cotton workers. Cotton growing also causes environmental damage, i.e. contamination of water. The cost of these pesticides and insecticides are high, so that many small

cotton farmers have been pulled into a debt spiral.

In the cotton industry we have a strong international division of labour. About 100 million farmers and processors work in the cotton plantations and industries, mostly at very low wages. In addition comes sea-



*Photo: courtesy of Sarojeni Rengam, PAN-Asia/Pacific. Malaysian farm workers mixing pesticides with their bare hands.*

sonal labour by children in many countries (such as Uzbekistan). Most of these cotton workers have no social protection, are exposed to great health hazards but have (almost) no protective equipment nor medical insurance. In Africa, women make up 30% of farmers, this is also true for cotton farming. Nevertheless, women are very underrepresented in the boards of village producer group for cotton. Organic cotton pilot projects are targeted specifically at women farmers, and therefore provide an interesting alternative. The majority of the workers in the cotton processing industry – the garment and textile industry – are women. There is a lack of social accountability. Most women work on short-term contracts with no social security and for meager salaries.

#### **Genetically Engineered Cotton is NOT a solution!**

In 1996 the first genetically engineered cotton has been commercially planted. By the year 2000/2001 genetically engineered cotton was grown on 5 million hectares. There are three types of GE cotton, the best known being the herbicide tolerant cotton (BXN, Roundup Ready). Research has shown that there are absolutely no advantages of this GE cotton. On the

contrary, there are big dangers for farmers and environment.

#### **The only way forward is Organic Cotton Production**

Organic cotton has many advantages. Organic cotton growing reduces nutrient loss of the soil – which is one of the main problems in conventional cotton growing – it allows the cultivation of locally appropriate varieties which are better suited for the local climate and pests. Organic cotton growing uses natural fertiliser, crop rotation and intercropping to reach good yields. Organic cotton has many advantages for the farmer:

- improved income through premium prices,
- improved food security through crop rotation and intercropping,
- improved farmer's knowledge and skills,
- benefits to health and welfare, especially of women and children.

Also in the cotton processing industry socially and environmentally friendly alternatives exist, as is being promoted by the Clean Clothes Campaign and fair trade organisations.

The PAN Germany campaign has been raising awareness with consumers and large textile importers and distributors. We have focused on large-scale consumers with multiplier effects. For example large hotels and sports clubs who purchase sheets and towels in large quantities. We are promoting transparency along organic cotton textile chains, so that consumers can take informed purchase decisions. We have created a special education-set with information for pupils and teachers. Together with a center for further-education we have organised a "Cotton City Rally" for school classes in Hamburg. The rally was a way to show the difference between organic and non organic cotton – the pesticide intoxication and exploitative wages vs. the social and environmental sustainability of organic cotton. We also organised a special teachers training seminar.

We have started with a pilot project with a large conference center called "Haus am Schüberg" located near Hamburg. This conference center is run by the Lutheran church. The conference center regularly needs to buy



new sheets and linen for its 100 beds. We have helped them find good organic cotton alternatives. Both the guests and the staff are very satisfied with the new organic sheets.

### **International Organic Cotton Directory (IOCD)**

Together with PAN UK and PAN North America, we have created an international catalogue of suppliers, manufacturers and traders of organic cotton. In this way we create transparency in the organic cotton market. The companies first have to fill out a questionnaire with which we check all the criteria for organic cotton growing and processing. The entry in the directory is free of charge. The entire directory is on our website:

**[www.organiccottondirectory.net](http://www.organiccottondirectory.net)**

The directory is one way of promoting organic cotton production and sales. But more is needed. We need support from policy makers and textile companies. We need to create more demand for organic cotton products in major markets by improving the information to consumers. Also, we need to better inform farmers about the opportunities of organic cotton farming. We therefore want to set mandatory minimum standards for production and processing at an international level. We need to **combine** standards of **social** accountability, **organic** farming and **fair trade** giving consumers simple guidelines for sustainable textile consumption. Policy makers should support an **image campaign** for sustainable textiles.



**Alexandra Baier**

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)  
[www.organiccottondirectory.net](http://www.organiccottondirectory.net)  
[alexandra.baier@pan-germany.org](mailto:alexandra.baier@pan-germany.org)

# Women, poverty and globalization in the NIS

106

**Yelena Panina**

EcoPravo (Eco-Law), Kiev

Poverty in the Newly Independent States as one of the most critical social challenges is extremely difficult to tackle in the current period of transition when the old political and economic structure has been dismantled, and the new foundation is still not laid.

After demolition of the Soviet Union many post-Soviet republics were determined to pursue democratic development, neglecting the innumerable obstacles of the transition period. Democracy building in these countries is hindered by growing poverty, inequality and social injustice.

According to some assessments 1,6 billion people in the world have the income level which is classified by the World Bank (the WB) as "absolute poverty", moreover the number of "absolutely poor" is increasing. The NIS countries "contributed adequately" to this later process. By very rough calculation the number of the poor (below poverty line) in the NIS is 156, 689.000 people, which constitutes around 10% of the world poor.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads as follows, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". So, we have all the more reason to insist that poverty is the prevailing breach of human rights all over the world.

**Poverty** is now widely viewed as encompassing both income and non-income dimensions of deprivation – including lack of income and other material means; lack of access to basic social services such as education, health and safe water; lack of personal security; and lack of empowerment to participate in the political process and in decisions that influence one's life.

Globalization has aggravated the poverty situation. The so-called poor countries, "being pressed" into the WTO by the powerful economies, are not handled like equal partners but providers of cheap sources of natural resources and labour to the benefit of the TNCs. In this way the financial institutions are co-responsible for violation of human rights and intensification of poverty.

As has been the case for a number of years, there is an outflow of capital from the poorest to the richest countries. In spite of all promises, the world banking system did little to solve the problem. Though propositions to cancel debts of poor countries being put forward the implementation is delayed, to say nothing of the proportion suggested to be annulled against total debt amount.

*Poverty encompasses both income and non-income dimensions of deprivation such as lack to education, health and safe water*

The major damage of external debt is economic depression in the debtor countries, i.e. poor countries. In case these countries want to have their debts restructured or raise a loan, they are forced to open their markets to let in the flow of cheap goods, especially food products, from the highly industrialized countries, thus undermining national producers which

results in a deepening poverty of the nation.

However, low income is not a single index of destitution. Material poverty is accompanied by political and civil inactivity, social apathy, and acceptance of subordinate roles in society due to really low capacity. This

*The burden of poverty falls mainly on women and via them on children*

painful situation greatly hampers the progress of civil society building, particularly in

the NIS countries. Poverty elimination in the NIS countries urgently demands active public involvement and public participation in making decisions.

In all countries in transition the burden of the situation falls mainly on women, and via them – on children. Women are personally liable for children and the whole family, that's why they suffer many times more than men would from low wages, unemployment and lack of social security. Middle-of-the-road reforms in the social sphere, especially public health service and education, where women traditionally made up the predominant labour force, has brought a loss of earnings. Kindergartens, nurseries and schools have been closed and, hospitals scaled down. This not only reduces the chance to get a new job, but also prevents to actively participate in social and political life.

Now women in transition countries have to face a lot of challenges; unemployment, low wages, narrow choice of professional jobs, poor health, reduction on benefits, overwork, domestic assault, sexual harassment and restricted access to policy making.

I will try to analyse the status of women and provide constructive recommendations. I have grouped the NIS countries into three regions:

- Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjhikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan);
- Transcaucasian region (Azerbaydzhane, Armenia, Georgia);
- Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine).

I have use the data of the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The three essential indica-

tors are if people lead a long and healthy life, acquire knowledge and have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible. At the same time there are additional choices, highly valued by many people, which range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities of creative and productive activity, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights. The Human Development Index is the average of the life expectancy index, index of education and adjusted real GDP per capita (PPP\$) index. The HDI is an aggregate figure which defines the poverty rating of the country.

According to the WB research, the highest HDI among the NIS countries is reported for Belarus (57th position in the world), and the lowest – for Tadjhikistan (110th) (Appendix, Table 1). Below are some comments on the tabular results with an allowance for regional peculiarities.

#### **Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjhikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).**

In this region the highest HDI is in Kazakhstan (73rd), then follows Kyrgyzstan (98th), Turkmenistan (100th), Uzbekistan (106th) and Tadjhikistan (110th). On the whole the region is the poorest in the NIS area. The GDP per capita index for Kazakhstan is much higher though, and is level with the EECs, which in general look more successful. Still the increased GDP per capita index is not the only prerequisite for the high level of human development. The real progress here could be achieved only if economic potential of the country is utilized for people's benefit.

The majority of the population in this region lives below official low income level. The UNDP data show, that more than 60% of people in the Central Asia region (CAR) live on less than 4 USD per day, which is below poverty line (Annex, Table 1). In Kyrgyzstan 88% of the population live below the poverty level. The wages of teachers and medical doctors in Kyrgyzstan are lower the minimum living wage, about 550 soms, which is almost nine times less than the wage of a bank clerk. Poverty is most severe among the rural population. It looks as if the situation in Tadjhikistan is the same or even worse, but there unfortunately is no data available.

Particularly women suffer from poverty. Traditionally women in the region did not participate actively in public life, however, in the Soviet Union they gained the easier access to political and social life and even dominated against men in some spheres such as medical care and education. The recession and hardships of the transition period brought a drop in public funding of education and medical sphere, thus increasing the risk factor for women. The analysis made by the WHO experts shows, that the maternal mortality in the CAR is one of the highest in the European Region. According to data of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, it amounts to 60 per 100 000 live births in Tadjikistan (1996), the highest in NIS. However, according to estimates based on clinical data, the actual figures were more than twice as high. The resources available to the health sector are insufficient to support the existing infrastructure and to meet the traditionally high level of demand for medical services. This has been apparent in shortages of drugs and equipment, and deterioration of medical care quality. All this, when accompanied by outdated and ineffective treatment methods, has resulted in the increase of breast cancer and cervix mortality.

It is to be highlighted that an unsafe environment produces an adverse impact on people's health. It is revealed through critical shortage of water, above all drinking water, high level of soil pollution by pesticides, herbicides, industrial and farm waste. The most vulnerable are the poor, as they can't afford to move to environmentally clean areas, as well as buying clean food products and portable water.

#### **Transcaucasian region**

Economic degradation, devaluation of savings and incomes of the population, social security system destruction, considerable decrease in HDI, along with political, national, traditional and other factors, generated poverty in this region. The problem of poverty in Azerbaydzhan, Armenia and Georgia is also aggravated by national conflicts between countries (Azerbaydzhan and Armenia) and domestic conflicts (Georgia). For instance, official persons in Azerbaydzhan are inclined to pin poverty issues in the country on the war and the notorious transition period after-effects. It is worth highlighting that Azerbaydzhan has recently improved

the degree of human development, and raised from the 110th position in the world up to the 90th, and according to the latest data, shifted to the 79th position in the world in 2001. According to the rate of HDI, Georgia is in the 70th position and Armenia is 93rd. In the last year signs of economic recovery emerged there, however slight they might be. Thus, since 1994 the GDP per capita growth rate constituted 5,4%, and the GDP per capita index reached 504 USD in 2000. In spite of some positive changes in economy, the poverty level did not change in these countries. The research undertaken with the support of UNDP in this region revealed 55% of the population living in poverty, while more than 20% - are destitute. The general level of health care declined greatly compared to the Soviet period. Thus, Armenia holds the third position among NIS regarding maternal mortality per 100 000 births, Azerbaydzhan - the 11th, Georgia - the 12th; and by breast cancer mortality: Armenia - the 5th, Georgia - the 7th and Azerbaydzhan - the 12th position.

The Poverty issue is nowadays aggravated by polluted environment in the region. The immediate victims of environmental degradation are vulnerable groups. There are numerous cases of deforestation aimed at cleaning the land for pasture. As a result, intensive degradation of natural resources and environment on the whole. So, woodless areas influence the flora and fauna regime negatively, contribute to water deficit.

The governments of Transcaucasian countries, as well as those of Central Asia countries in co-operation with international organizations, are drafting National Programs on poverty elimination. Governmental and non-governmental organizations will jointly participate in their implementation. In this respect it is very interesting to note the experience of Georgia, which is negotiating the writing-off of debts with the western creditors on a "debt - in exchange for environment" basis. It implies the partial allocation of the debt to environment protection measures.

#### **Eastern European region (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine)**

Speaking about poverty in NIS in general, and in the eastern-european parts, in particular, one should keep in mind the previous historic period. One can't deny

that totalitarianism coupled with planned economy and social policy brought certain equality for the prevailing part of the population as to financial security and guaranteed social protectability (the right to free health care, free education, pensions, housing, gender

*The Soviet Union did not have an official term for the poor, they are referred to as "insufficiently provided for"*

& nation equality). It's quite another matter, that the common level of such equality was rather low against well-developed

countries. But subjective estimation of one's well-being and social status by an individual was positive and met his/her requirements. In other words, the majority of people didn't consider themselves poor or aggrieved. Having gained independence, these countries inevitably "fell out" of the system of intra-Union co-operation and labour division. To build a new all-sufficient (economically, politically, socially) state system in each of NIS, it is necessary to overpass a transition period, the main hardship of which is poverty. The flows of refugees, forced migrants, the brain drain, and illegal migration have become major challenges for NIS halfway into reforms. The chaos of transition has made itself felt in the lives of ordinary people who, just a dozen years ago, felt complete – if limited – material security from cradle to grave.

The Soviet Union did not have an official term for the poor. Even in Ukraine today, such people are officially referred to as "insufficiently provided for". Ukraine is getting poorer. UNDP reports that since 1994, Ukraine's HDI rating has deteriorated significantly from 45th spot to 95th, right after Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Paraguay. The dramatic drop was due in part to a sharp fall in life expectancy and living standards, according to representatives of National Academy of Science, who said, "Ukraine has no methods for defining poverty. Officially, the term 'poverty' is not even used – as if the problem doesn't exist". Yet, the Ukrainian researchers estimate the level of poverty as 33% of Ukraine's population, meaning they have incomes below the official low income level. If typical Western indicators were used, however, 85-90% of the population could be declared poor, according to NAS Economy Institute Chair: "In Ukraine, 61% of personal income is spent on food, compared to 16-18% in the US." According to the data provided by the WB, the number of

people living below poverty level constitutes 63%.

At present (data of 2001) Ukraine is in the least favourable position among FSU countries, because of the biggest setback in production of GDP per capita – three times less against the level of 1990. Unprecedented setback in production output and decrease in wages caused a catastrophic jump of poverty in Ukraine. The recent economic recovery in Russia has not led to a significant decrease in the scale of poverty. The wages of employees of industrial enterprises and business offices quite often are not different from wages in developing countries. Low-paid, low-income jobs are the root causes of poverty in Russia, and getting a job increasingly ceases to be a security against poverty. Families with children are the worst off.

The mortality level has been rising steadily in Russia in the past third of the century with a brief interruption in the period of the anti-alcohol campaign. This situation is especially gloomy for Russian males. The gap that opened between life expectancy for men and women in Russia in the late 1990s is the widest among the world's countries. The HDI in the Eastern European region is the highest for Belarus (57th position in the world), then comes Russia (62nd), Ukraine (78) and Moldova (102). Thus, Moldova, together with the poorest countries of Central Asian region, is located in the second hundred of countries according to HDI rating. At the same time it should be taken into consideration that poverty for a nation implies not only the great number of the poor, but the small number of the rich, as well. This phenomenon is demonstrated by polarization of incomes indicator (Annex, Tables 1; 3). So, rather high level of polarization (correlation between total income of 20% of the richest and 20% of the poorest) is in Russia – 12,2, which proves the significant degree of society stratification. The same indicator for Ukraine is rather marginal – 4,8, which is the evidence of the nations poorness (considering a very low level of national product output) and incapability to overcome the economic crisis without assistance.

The process of polarization in all FSU countries was provoked by inflation, raged in the early 90s, which swallowed up practically all people's savings. The sluggish pseudo-reforms carried out in these countries don't produce a desired effect.

From the socio-psychological perspective people are getting to comprehend their own status and estimate it as destitute. The most vulnerable groups are suffering most of all. The state of health of the nation is undermined. Women and children are the first victims. The analysis shows that though budgetary health care provisions in the region exceed the general level of the NIS countries, and in Moldova it amounts to 6,8% (the leader in the region and NIS), the quality and procurement of medical service don't meet the up-to-date standards. As a result, the level of maternal mortality is very high: Russia occupies the first position here (43,5 per 100 000 live births), Moldova is the second (39), Belarus and Ukraine retain the similar level (30 and 29, correspondingly).

The indices of breast cancer mortality are rather high: Ukraine – 19 deaths per 100 000 women (the leader in the region and the second after Armenia in the NIS), Russia – 18,5, Belarus – 16, Moldova – 15. The worst

*Breastcancer deaths in Ukraine are high: 19 deaths per 100.00 women*

levels are found in the eastern-european region of the former Soviet Union that was exposed to the impact of the Chernobyl disaster and is still suffering from its after-effects. Besides, the region is known as extensively industrialized, with out-of-date polluting technology.

### Conclusions

All the FSU countries, which joined the NIS, possess a series of common features determinative for overcoming poverty. Sustainable development will enable them to put an end to poverty. The principle factors generating poverty are, low productivity, because of outdated industrial infrastructure and an inadequate educational system, that stimulates a brain drain, but does not facilitate the breakthrough of economy. Here, also, should be mentioned an extremely imperfect system of taxation. Another obstacle is the mentality of most of our political elite, cultivated in the Soviet and corrupted in the post-Soviet period, which do not understand the notion of sustainable development.

On top of everything are well-known wars and local conflicts, such as the second Chechen war in Russia, the long-term conflict between Azerbaydzhan and Armenia, the Georgian – Abkhaz conflict and border line conflicts in Central Asian countries. None of them are

ended for good. These conflicts contribute greatly to deterioration of the situation. An interesting conclusion we made while estimating such indicators as living minimum, minimum wage, and average earnings: in all the NIS countries the indices of minimum income and minimum living wage are fixed at the level lower than official low income level accepted by the UN, i.e. 4 USD per day. Even the average earnings are lower. Hence, the paradox is – in the NIS even people engaged in budget spheres: education, medicine, some branches of agriculture, are poor. Moreover, the proportion of women working in these spheres is up to 75-85%, which raise the issue of poverty feminization and the problem of poor working women. Living in unsafe and polluted environments, people are forced to spend their slender means on medical treatment to overcome the adverse impact of environmental pollution, whereas they could have allocated their money to improve the quality of nourishment, housing, living conditions, education or cultural life. A cause-effect relation exists: environmental degradation inevitably leads to a decline in living standards and increase of poverty.

### Propositions regarding NGOs' participation in the process of poverty elimination in the NIS countries.

Poverty elimination needs economic development. But at the same time the mere rise of GDP per capita won't improve the situation. Transparency of governments' decisions and budgets, monitoring of the social programs implementation by public organizations make democracy one of the major tools in poverty elimination.

Authoritarian ruling in all NIS countries and the lack of public control over the authorities has lead to terrible corruption. Corruption is one of the major obstacles on the way to poverty elimination. Funds allocated for poverty elimination often don't even reach the destination. We suggest that the international institutions, while implementing poverty programs, should actively involve non-governmental organizations, which can inform the wide public on the process and provide monitoring of their implementation.

It is worth noting, that at the national level NGOs are enabled to implement the policy of poverty elimination with the help of the Aarhus Convention. Almost all NIS

countries signed and ratified the Convention. Guided by the provisions of the Convention NGOs must actively participate in budgeting at local, regional and national levels. We also advise the NIS governments to follow the Georgian way and negotiate with international creditors the possibility of writing off bad debts on the basis of “debt – in exchange for environment” principle.

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**Yelena Panina**

EcoPravo (Eco-Law), Kiev  
 ecolaw@ecop.relc.com

# Sustainable Development and Women's Empowerment in the Agricultural Region of Rioja, Spain

112

## Isabel Ripa

Futura - Mujeres para un Desarrollo Sostenible, Spain

WECF asked me to tell about our NGO Futura, which I do happily, but it will be rather short, as we founded Futura only a few months ago. Sustainable development is a new concept for most people in Spain. We have scarce social participation on public issues. This is probably due to our recent history under the Franco regime. In general we have a lack of participatory processes. On top of that, women's associations have a very low profile.

The region where we work and live, La Rioja, is relatively small with only 5.045 Km<sup>2</sup> or 1% Spain's surface. Most of you will know it because of the wines which we produce. Rioja has a population of 263.644 of which half (47,6%) live in the capital, Logroño. Rioja's main economic sectors are food processing industry, agriculture and services. Agriculture is the main user of land but employs only 9% of the population.

A regional strategy for sustainable development process is currently being led by the Department of the Environment of the Government of La Rioja. The main steps have been that in June 2001 the regional Government endorsed an initial document, in November 2001 a first participatory process was organised with seminars about Sustainable Development in which different sectors took part. We participated with several women. In April 2002 a reference document was published.

Several groups have formed during the seminars, i.e. agriculture and rural development. But we have had no

further response to proposals to the regional government. Sustainable development is not "an issue".

A group for women's activities was set up as part of the process of developing a regional strategy for sustainable development. So far it has had a rather low profile and has been quite self-oriented, not decision making oriented. We also noticed that the other actors do not see Women as an influence group.

Our response has been to create the NGO Futura. Our aim is to promote participation of women, as a group, on sustainable development. We also want to raise awareness in society about the need to include participation of women and other under-represented groups. And last but not least, we want to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Futura is planning several activities to raise awareness on sustainable development. We want to organise a seminar for women of the region to identify and develop opportunities of sustainable development. We will take part in networking activities and liaising with existing women organisations.

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**Isabel Ripa**

Futura - Mujeres para un Desarrollo  
Sostenible,  
isabel.ripa@terra.com



# International Women's Co-operation - the Clean Clothes Campaign

## **Frieda de Koninck**

Clean Clothes Campaign, Belgium

The title of my presentation is Clean Clothes Campaign. This is NOT ABOUT washing clothes. It is also NOT ABOUT recycling clothes. It is about making clothes in decent working conditions.

Women make clothes and women buy clothes. Women buy more clothes than men. Most of the textile industry workers are women. The women in the textile sector work under terrible conditions to produce clothes for the market in industrialized countries. We use our consumer power to defend their labour rights. We link consumers' interests with workers' interest. The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) started 10 years ago in the Netherlands. A Dutch NGO, SOMO, did research on how the clothes of C&A, a large clothes company you probably all know, were being produced. We have been extending this research to many more companies and countries. We are now a network of 200 NGOs in Europe, covering 11 countries. The main secretariat is based in Amsterdam. We are an international network of NGOs and trade unions.

CCC focuses on the garment and sportswear sector and on labour rights of the workers in these sectors. The garment and sportswear sector is completely globalized. Whenever the economy of a country improved, the garment sector would relocate its production to a poorer country. In the 1970' the garment sector moved away from Western Europe to South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Tunisia. When the economy in these country improved, and labourers starting asking labour rights and higher wages, the sector moved away

again. Thus in the 1980' it was based mainly in Thailand, Philippines, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Then it moved to Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Vietnam and China. In the last years we see that it has also started to move to Eastern Europe. The wages are not as low as in Vietnam, but still lower than in Western Europe and the delivery time is shorter because of the distance. Two African countries (Zimbabwe, Madagascar) produce specifically for the European market. The Central American countries produce specifically for the Northern American market. Most of the contracts are small local companies subcontracting for multinationals

The working conditions are extremely bad. Wages are very low and working hours are very long. Health and safety norms are not respected and many accidents happen. The workers have no freedom of association or right to collective bargaining. There is discrimination of women, and a high level of child labour. Women workers make up 75% of the workforce. Apart from the appalling working conditions the women also suffer from insecurity, discrimination and sexual harassment. Women are often forced to take a pregnancy test and are dismissed right away if found pregnant. And women have no access to management positions. A lot of the work is done as work at home. The women are paid even lower salaries (piece rate) than if they would work in a factory. They have no social security. If they are ill they have no income, and they mostly have no insurance to pay for medical care. The women workers are exposed to lots of health damaging chemicals. Which often lead to respiratory illnesses. But there are also acute injury hazards and exposure to excessive heat and noise. Sick leaves are unpaid. CCC tries to improve the situation of the workers in the garment

industry by consumer actions, pressure on companies and political lobby. In consumer actions we will identify a target group, for example a national women's association, we will hold workshops and give them the information. Then we will together with them organise several actions. For example, we will hold an action with banners and leaflets in front of large departments stores to raise awareness with people buying there about the terrible conditions in which the products they want to buy have been made. Mostly these actions get us quite some media attention.

114

In our company actions we will first put together a case with facts and testimonies about the work conditions of the workers in the subcontracted companies. We will inform the companies about this and request meetings. We will provide them with a code of conduct, based on the International Labour Organisations standards, and ask them to voluntarily follow this code. We are currently doing pilot projects in 5 countries where we develop verification systems to see if the codes of conduct are being implemented. Due to our actions a number of companies have accepted corporate social responsibility. They have introduced the code of conduct, set up a department to investigate complaints and verify the code is being followed by suppliers.

We also have a strategy called 'international solidarity'. We exchange information about companies and their activities with many NGOs and labour unions in a lot of countries. We will send them "urgent appeals" where we present one really bad case of a worker who has been dismissed or otherwise unjustly treated, and we will call on our network to contact the responsible company to re-employ the worker and improve the working conditions. We also have an international legal working group which prepares court case under OECD guidelines. We will come up for the rights of workers in the sector. And we will participate in political debates at national, European and international levels. We ask from our governments that they introduce legislation on the right to obtain information, or in other words, mandatory reporting of companies, on labour conditions but also on use of chemicals. This is a way to also protect the consumers. And we ask from our governments that they set new standards for public procurement, so that they purchase only products of com-

panies which have introduced the code of conduct and use eco and social labels.

Relocation to Eastern Europe of garment production is increasing, as time is the most important factor for the manufacturers. This is leading to informalization and lower organisation of the work force in these countries. There are no links seen between a social situation and globalisation and deregulation. We see it as our aim to strengthen the social movements in our countries, also in Eastern Europe and the NIS. A regional CCC project is about to start in Bulgaria and Romania. The first aim is to raise awareness and to gather information. We need to know the supply chains, the working conditions and the codes and labour rights. We have already carried out a number of consumer actions, among others concerning the Puma factory in Bulgaria, with positive results.

In the 10 years of our work we have seen that in general consumer power is not the strongest instrument. Few people are ready to change their shopping habits. What has worked best are our "Urgent Appeals". Not only have companies improve labour situations as a results of our appeals, but it has also strengthened the workers organisation nationally because of our support.

Social standards for production are an essential constituent of sustainable development.



**Frieda de Koninck**  
Clean Clothes Campaign, Belgium  
frieda.dekoninck@wsm.be

# Experiences of a youth representative on the Dutch delegation

## Merel Bierkens

Dutch Youth Council, Netherlands

I am chosen by the Dutch Youth Council to be one of two youth representatives who are part of the official delegation to the WSSD from the Dutch government. I thus represent 1 million young people.

As a delegate member I have to follow the national and international process of preparation of the WSSD.

I went with the delegation to the UN Commission for Sustainable Development meeting in New York which focussed on energy and transport. I also went to the UN-ECE preparatory meeting for Johannesburg in September 2001 in Geneva, as well as the Prepcom II last month in New York. And I will be going to Prepcom III, Prepcom IV and the WSSD summit itself.

As a member of the official delegation I can go to all the official meetings, which NGOs who are not on the delegation cannot do. But of course I also take part in the daily youth caucus of the youth NGOs. And I will try to join the energy caucus, and the women's caucus.

As I am in the delegation itself, I have the possibility to influence the EU delegation. So my role is often that of a moderator. I will bring the viewpoints of NGOs into the delegation. At the moment we have an excellent minister of environment in the Netherlands, Pronk. He finds the opinion of youth important. He came to prepcom II and spoke to the youth representatives for 1,5 hours, even though he was very busy.

My task as a representative is that I have to report back to the Dutch youth council. Together with the 2nd youth representative I am organising a meeting where

we are inviting all Dutch youth, and where we will discuss the preparations for the WSSD and decide what we want to achieve in Johannesburg.

For the Prepcom II we prepared a youth statement, where we state what the youth wants to have achieved, what our priorities are. This has been listened to. Education is now more on the agenda than it was before. Youth poverty and youth employment are two other issues which have been stressed a lot, particularly by youth from Southern and Eastern Europe.

I would like to give an example of how youth cooperated with women's organisations at prepcom II. We had an agreement with the women's caucus. The women had a proposal on organic farming. They went to all the NGO caucuses and asked if the others agreed and wanted to promote it too. The youth caucus were the only ones to say yes straight away. So we put out a joint statement from the women's NGO caucus and the youth caucus in which we proposed that governments and international financial institutions should support small scale farmers, particularly women farmers and young farmers, in the transition and maintenance towards organic farming methods. This is just one issue on which we cooperated with the women. Of course we have many more possibilities as we have many of the same goals.

## French women's action plan

116

### Céline Ostyn

Femmes & Changements  
France

My organisation, Femmes & Changements (Women & Change) have been preparing a joined statement of women. We want to:

- Ensure women's real and active participation in the preparation process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and beyond.
- Contribute to the recognition of women as active and creative opinion formers about social questions both at the local and international levels.

The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development is taking place ten years after the Rio summit within a context of economic globalization led by free market forces. This globalization has resulted in the perpetuation of uncontrolled exploitation of resources, widened the gap between rich and poor, and increased poverty, violence and environmental degradation. There is a risk that the difficulties will be consolidated, or even that the states, United Nations and civil society who participated in the great conferences of the 1990's will lose their influence over an economic system which accentuates non-equitable distribution of wealth and the means of production between countries, social groups and genders – over consumption, irresponsible use of common natural resources or even war. During the 1990s, global inequalities caused a growing number of the poor, especially women, to be excluded, not by accident, but from the predominance of economic concerns over social concerns.

The dominant discourse makes profit the goal, whereas it is only an indicator of means.

A good many "development" indicators are biased in this application of exclusion. However, their very multiplicity poses a problem, as does the fact that several of them completely exclude the gender perspective. This blinkered view of women's situations and their needs is the root cause of the failure of a very large number of projects and serious aggravation of the situation, not just for the women themselves, but for their children, their families and the communities as a whole.

Women's circumstances are often less favourable than men's; this is not confined to wealth distribution – they have to deal with pollution, failing resources and faulty decision making in different sectors. Women's impoverishment generally has dramatic consequences on the nutrition and health of all the people they care for.

The problem of the debt system remains unchanged, and the impact of conditionalities and structural adjustments on developing countries, and women in particular, will continue. The decline of public services due to the effects of structural adjustment policies endangers the progress that women have managed to make. Privatization threatens access to basic services by prioritizing economic rather than social profitability, or handing the obligations for the protection and care of others to the family, and thus to women. Women bear the brunt on several levels, juggling an increase in both their workload on the job in the home, and a reduction in income.

Furthermore, women's domestic work is still unacknowledged in the national accounting process, as is their contribution to the collective management of the community, production of services for the social good

and preservation of the human race, environmental conservation, hygiene, health, children's education, feeding the family or construction of the common habitat and social fabric. In 1995, women's unpaid domestic work was estimated by the UNDP at 11,000 billion dollars, which is almost half of the GDP, evaluated at 23,000 billion.

Other figures serve to illustrate the breadth of the task when aiming towards fair and sustainable development.

UNDP 2000, BIT 2000, Wistat 2001 statistics  
 2/3 of the 867 million adult illiterates are women.  
 2/3 of children without education are girls, more than 30% of women suffer domestic violence.

In Southeast Asia in the last ten years, 70 million women and children were victims of sex trafficking. During the 1998 crisis, 80% of the 2 million people who lost their jobs in Thailand were women (ICFTU).

### **Peace and justice**

Sustainable development will never be achieved without these two key elements. They are all the more important as the production and legal trade in arms increases, as the emphasis is now on the production of ever-increasingly sophisticated armaments, an increase which the superpowers justify by stressing the need to fight against terrorism, while reducing the damage caused to the environment and local populations to "collateral damage". Women and children are particularly affected by this and are mostly likely to be refugees or displaced persons.

About 80% of the 27 million refugees registered globally are women.

UNDP 2000, BIT 2000, Wistat 2001 statistics

Women are the ones who suffer war rape, a crime against humanity, mass rapes and ethnic violence. But the majority of people fighting for peace throughout the world are women. Through their engagement they have proved that women refuse to be passive victims, that they have a fundamental role in the management and non-violent resolution of conflicts, in replacing a culture of war with the culture of peace.

We must look at our States' budgets through the eyes

of women who have suffered, and still suffer, from conflicts worldwide. The women at Rio already demanded a drastic reduction in military spending with reallocation to financial, technological, production and human resources to socially useful ends that will not damage the environment.

The themes of peace, justice, the history of women's struggle and non-violent movements must be introduced as full subjects in schools' educational programs.

At Johannesburg, we will demand a progressive halt to State armament programs and to all production and sale of arms. We will demand a coherent reform of the United Nations with development of laws and international courts and the application of Security Council Resolution 1325, which ensures equal participation of men and women in conflict prevention and resolution, building and maintaining peace. We will demand that resources be provided to support the actions of women's groups such as the Mothers of Plaza Mayo, Women in Black in Palestine and the Balkans, the Mothers of Russian soldiers, and the Afghan, Pakistan, African and Asian women's groups who confront wars and conflicts in their region.

### **Poverty and access to resources**

Socially, politically and economically, the problems are the same in all continents, but the degree varies from one to another. Taking Mauritania as an example we find that a large section of the female population is still illiterate (74%) and more than 53% do not even have access to the most basic forms of medical care. Thus, for women, access to basic services (health, education, nutrition, etc.) is still a vital priority. Women in rural areas are finding it more and more difficult to be recognized as agricultural producers: this causes them further problems such as lack of access to land, materials, training, social rights (health insurance, maternity leave, pensions etc.) and credit – something which women need as much as men, if not more.

In urban areas they are more likely to be unemployed than men, or more likely to have low paying and low status jobs. In the European Union, unemployment levels are 30 % higher for women than men. Only 33% of unemployed women receive unemployment bene-

fits, compared to the 50% of unemployed men who draw benefits.

In developing countries, women are responsible for a large part of the growth in the informal sector, where social welfare is almost non-existent. The indicators which take the household as the basic unit hide the fact that not everyone has the same living standards or the same consumption. In addition, the number of female heads of households is increasing all the time, especially in cities and in particular in the South, where the rates can be as high as 40 to 50 % in working class areas. These women are the heads of single parent families, whilst the traditional family unit, headed by a man, is almost always a two parent family. Thus, the burdens are very different and the feminization of poverty increases inexorably.

Almost everywhere in the world, women work harder than men but have lower incomes. In 1999, depending on the country, employed women had incomes that were 40% to 80% of men's income. They work two thirds of total hours worked, but have only 10% of the world revenue. This discrepancy is often caused by a failure to apply the rules and conventions of the ILO, of the right to work, and exacerbated by family law in countries where women's status is inferior to men's. This situation of inferiority and personal dependence allows the free market economy to exploit women and children. In Central America there are more than 1,000 "maquiladora" companies (sub-contracting parts assembly) which employ 300,000 people, 70% of whom are women.

### Migration

Economic globalization and the post-colonial geopolitical context have markedly increased the direction and development of migration flow, displacement of individuals, families and populations:

- from countries on the periphery to countries in the center;
- from countryside to cities;
- from city center villages to the edges and working class areas of large and medium-sized cities, urban centres and "megapoles" (centers of strategic decisions and sites of a new gap between both revenues and statutes).

These migration flows are more accentuated in the interior of countries in the southern and eastern continents than between the South and the East, and the North and the West. Improved opportunities and the prospect of better conditions are evidently amongst the more common reasons for migrating to the richest regions – which are also the most closed.

We are seeing a **marked feminization of these migrations**. Migrant women and, in particular, refugee women are the first people affected by the various aspects of this trend. Women are most often found as the focus of dominating/repressive social relationships which occur between the sexes, the classes and different communities, suffering from discrimination and oppression, exploitation, racism, sexual violence, domestic slavery, prostitution and the slave trade.

Rich nations have a common policy to control migration and police their borders.

Despite the service sector requirements of the labour markets in these countries and family employment in the informal sector, migrant women are often the most precariously placed, sometimes even working clandestinely. Their autonomy and personal liberty are functions of conventions between states (in comparison with the personal statute code for example) and of inequality due to patriarchal traditions. Access to housing and regular employment is still linked to their position as a wife or a mother, without them having rights of their own. Their right to citizenship and freedom of movement is dependent on their nationality. In addition, there is no full acknowledgement of the richness of their abilities, knowledge and potential of these women whether they are migrants, immigrants or refugees.

Socially, geographically and in gender relationships, migrant women's opportunities can only be ensured within a context of the right to freedom of movement, to asylum (in particular from violence, repression and persecution which they could suffer because of their sex or sexuality), citizenship, economic and legal autonomy. The fight for these rights is every woman's concern.

*We must move towards a new concept of land ownership, one that includes women and children. Women need long-term security on property and/or the use of*

*the land and its resources, in particular forests, but also water.*

*The role and the power of the International Labour Organization (ILO) must be reinforced so it has the ability to impose social and cultural economic rights on all countries and to sanction those companies and States who do not comply.*

### **Food insecurity and biodiversity**

Produce what, for whom, and how?

On the one hand, there are the cultivation techniques which when used regularly destroy the soil, pollute the water and attack the resources required to meet the needs of the population. On the other hand, there are the initiatives which are intended to re-establish/maintain cultural diversity, restore ecosystems and prove that ecological agriculture offers a viable alternative.

There is an erroneous idea – defended by industrialized countries, that “food security in the Third World” is based on the availability of cereals – which has contributed to the erosion of biodiversity. Throughout the world, one of the strategies used to manage risk factors (due to climate uncertainty) is to cultivate various different plants and a range of varieties of these plants. In addition, for many of the traditional farmers, the plant grown is only one element in a whole system that includes manure, biological insect control, water management and livestock breeding. Traditional agricultural practices have developed in harmony with the climate, the degree of soil fertility, water supply and so forth. As such, the introduction of a monoculture has undermined that equilibrium.

### **Women refuse to let agroindustries run off with their livelihoods**

The emergence of a movement to curb the loss of biodiversity. Women have a high profile in the biodiversity preservation initiatives, in India and Bangladesh in particular, which focus on preserving the ecosystems within the environment where the diversity of life developed. These projects are anchored in the reality of everyday practices of the farming community. They have a crucial role to play in the development of seed distribution networks and the maintenance of the

traditional ways of managing agricultural diversity.

The convention on biological diversity is an important treaty for women. They have been intractable in showing their resistance to homogenization and in their opposition to the reinforcement of intellectual property rights during negotiations at the WTO.

The protocol on biosafety is one of the first international agreements on the environment which seeks to impose the rules restraining the signatory states on the WTO commercial exchanges.

The general framework of the protocol foresees, as a precautionary principle, the right of a country to ban the WTO from entering a territory to protect against risks to the environment or human health, but the negotiations stalled on the means to put this into practice!

Unfortunately, there is no doubt that the productivist drift continues to lay down a dual agricultural path. We are even finding that there is recolonization at the international level. This is not just true for the countries that are commonly defined as Southern, but also for countries that are hoping to become part of the European Union. A number of these countries, such as Slovenia and Croatia, share relatively extensive agriculturalization with low recourse to agrochemicals in regions with very high biodiversity. These countries will not only have to deal with uncontrolled foreign investment, but also WTO requirements and the rules laid down by the European Commission (conditionalities, opening of their markets, standards and standardization of products), conditions which will not allow them to preserve what would be distinct advantages if the development model were different – organic agriculture, a range of activities and traditional practices held in high regard.

Recently, Croatia found itself on the receiving end of a disagreement with the WTO because it did not want to plant GMOs!

Many developing countries have problems with opening up their national markets to products from outside to the detriment of their own products and/or goods (wheat, maize, rice, fruit and vegetables, milk, soap, furniture, etc.), not to mention all the risks it would entail

(Dioxin, GMOs, etc.) without any controls (manufacturing and expiration dates, storage conditions, colours and even raw materials, etc.), nor the damage done to local producers and traditional know-how – particularly of the female population. Lowering tariff barriers, a key measure for freeing markets and the WTO's objective, and the obligations for minimal access to markets (the proportion of imports entering the country at reduced duty rates is between 4 - 5% for developing countries) contribute to these countries reliance on imported food.

120

*We want systems that recognize women's knowledge, know-how, abilities and experience, positive action in all situations where discrimination based on the difference between the sexes is found.*

*Decisions about what type of production to use should be debated in public: it is a choice that society as a whole should make, since it impacts food safety sovereignty and environmental health. These decisions cannot be taken by farmers alone, by politicians alone, nor by the chemical and genetics industry.*

Production areas will need to be re-established at the global level to achieve real international and local food security, running counter to globalization by reducing monocultures and developing products which suit their environment and traditional know-how, particularly that of women. Food sovereignty is vital for these countries, thus it is fundamental that they have control over their choice of what they produce, what they eat and what they import, and control over the most important local resources such as land, water and seeds.

Social and ecological imperatives must come before commercial interest in the areas of agriculture and food production. We reject GMOs and patents on living organisms and repeat our conviction that biological diversity and traditional knowledge and know-how – women's in particular – must be preserved and used with care, not stolen by the multinationals for their own use.

### **Water**

Today, water has become a major challenge for all peoples on our planet. This challenge can only grow, faced

as we are with increasing scarcity, pollution and commercialization of this precious resource. It is absolutely vital that water be treated as one of the world's public assets and that access to it remain a fundamental human right, so that in the future everyone will have enough water of good quality.

In developing countries, it is women who are the main users and managers of water. As water consumers they are responsible for water use, not just for themselves, but for the whole family group. Water use includes not only the domestic sphere – cooking, washing and laundering – but also other sectors such as agriculture, crafts and production of food for sale. Consequently, women are the first victims of scarcity, pollution, price increases, conflict and shortages. This often means that they are overloaded with work as they may have to stop working or walk long distances to find water. When alternative sources of water are not good quality, they may also have to care for sick members of their family, making for an additional family expenditure on health that is not easy to surmount. Thus women in developing countries are often those who have the best understanding of local requirements for and problems with water, and it is vital that they be always consulted when setting up domestic, agricultural and/or other water supply projects.

However, it is not enough to recognize women's role as water users – it is vital that they play their full role as managers and motivators of the development strategies affecting their community. They must be involved at all levels of the decision-making and management processes, with their opinion carrying the same weight as men's: women's participative approach to the decision-making process must be acknowledged when identifying requirements; women must be able to take an active part in meetings and the decision-making process; they should receive training and adequate information; and they should be effectively involved in the technical and economic structure for the work.

Role sharing between men and women can make progress. Some economic activities linked to water, such as transport, are sometime transferred from women to men, often because women do not always have the training to benefit from technological innova-



tions. Women should assume new responsibilities within their community, all the more so if the services are going to be permanent and efficient.

The whole process of involving women in the management of water resources means that measures will need to be taken and sufficient human and financial resources found to develop the required sensitivity, knowledge and competence at all levels. This will include raising gender awareness of development professionals (land agents, researchers, backers) about women's involvement in water supply projects, training in tools and methods so that women are more likely to participate, and also to encouragement for women to take into account constraints and requirements before designing these projects.

This process also includes the populations themselves, raising their awareness about the positive impact it will have for everyone, providing technical and financial training in water based projects, as well as other education (particularly in reading and writing) that is directed more specifically at women, which will give them the skills and self-confidence to take full control of their new tasks.

When budgeting for technical work, sufficient amounts must be allocated for the accompanying social measures, so that the land agents have sufficient time to use their research tools to obtain data broken down by gender (in both the identification and evaluation phases), and to take appropriate measures ensuring that women are involved (discussions, training etc.) and ensure effective follow-up after the project.

*Women play a fundamental role in environmental management and conservation, and must be consulted, listened to and involved in a much more effective way than they are at the moment. We must always start by listening to women: they are the only ones capable of taking into account the constraints that only they know when designing a project, particularly when this project is supposed to be in their interest.*

*At a wider level, women must be involved, particularly in the fundamental issues, in all the design, implementation and follow-up of environmental programs at national levels.*

### **Environmental health**

Women are directly affected, both for themselves and as mothers, by questions of environmental health; not only because it is an area with which they are traditionally involved, but also because their health and lives are directly affected. The devastating effects of nuclear contamination and air pollution, of POPs in the land and the water supply, are a serious preoccupation for women and threaten sustainable development. Women are doubly affected by pesticides, both as agricultural producers who use high toxic pesticides and as consumers, as their health will be affected when consuming water or food contaminated by these pesticides.

Since Rio we have seen that women are often at the head of civil organizations working to have access to information about nuclear or chemical pollution, or, if this is unavailable, they produce this information themselves and publish it widely in a language and form that is accessible to the widest audience. In doing this, they reinforce participation in democracy, often at local level and create public debate around the situation. The research done in the wake of the Rio conference allowed women to highlight the links between pollution and the development of a variety of cancers, in particular breast cancer and cancer of the reproductive system. They also showed that POPs produced serious disorders of the immune and nervous systems, as well as the hormone and reproductive systems of both men and women. Nuclear and chemical contamination cause reductions in fertility, sterility, abortions and foetal malformations in particular, and research has proved that this type of pollution also causes retardation and developmental problems in children.

Women have become involved in movements that seek to rediscover traditional ways of doing things (food-producing methods that are more suitable than monocultures for export purposes) and press for international bans on toxic pesticides and POPs in general. Independent research centers which are not linked to the state or to the companies responsible for this pollution are required; these centers must be supported, but guaranteed absolute independence. The gender sensitive results of all this research must be widely published, populations must be consulted and

their opinions taken seriously, particularly when they are demanding the elimination of pollution sources. We firmly refuse to countenance the debate put forward by GMO producers who would like to make us believe that the use of GMOs will mean a reduction in pesticide use.

### Housing

Women have a direct interest in the development and maintenance of social and housing investments, in particular in the urban environment, as any deterioration in these services means an increase in their workload. Women protest against the decline in investment in urban infrastructure and services. They are opposed to privatization of these services which increases costs while failing to bring about an improvement – often producing deterioration in service instead. There is also good reason to provide the socio-economic measures necessary to supply this right, so that housing can be retained. Access to housing and ownership of housing by female heads of families is an indispensable condition for improvement of their well-being and that of their family.

In Mauritania, the female perspective in matters of housing policy and investment receives no attention whatsoever. Living arrangements are considered to be men's responsibility, and the fact that 36.3% of women are heads of family and that the divorce rate is 44% has no effect on the everyday reality of the housing situation.

*Civic services rely on participatory democracy.  
Housing is a human right.*

### Methods of production and consumption

**One child in a developed country has an ecological impact equivalent to that of 30 children in a developing country!**

Structural measures must be taken so that methods of production and consumption in both the North and the South, in the countryside and cities, do not destroy health or the environment. At the start, this should be done by reducing production and consumption in industrialized countries.

It also requires a change in attitude from citizens and a re-adjustment in the decision-making process between

civil society, the State and industry – and here international organizations have a considerable role. It will involve economic changes on a massive scale, such as an immediate rejection of the present international division of labour, an end to the plundering of the South's resources by the North, an end to the transfer of ecological risks and pollution from the North to the South and the West to the East. Returning to the problems of individual behaviour – consumption in particular – although this should be considered from the moral perspective we must not ignore the structural phenomena which will lead to environmental deterioration and increases in poverty – such as neoliberal globalization and structural adjustment policies – nor should the responsibilities of the multinationals, governments and international events be treated lightly.

Since Rio, technical and scientific innovations have poured onto the goods and services market and the impact of these types of products on our physical and mental health, on society and the environment, is particularly difficult to evaluate. The critical analysis that women have of science and technology is that a responsible, ethical perspective should be brought to bear on new reproduction technologies, experimental biomedicine in general, neurobiology and genetic engineering.

At Rio in 1992, women had already demanded "a halt to research, development of the production and use of nuclear capabilities and uranium extraction, and progress towards the use of non-polluting energy resources and a progressive cessation of the use of nuclear energy". Have we seen any change?

*The precautionary principle must guide any decision that would have social, environmental and cultural consequences. The role that local communities play in the management of ecosystems must be recognized. Women must have the means and resources they require to participate fully in the decision making process. We hope that, at Johannesburg, our governments will undertake to provide equal access to schooling, education and information for women, particularly in technical and scientific areas. We also hope that our governments will reaffirm their willingness to promote women's presence in research and activities linked to technical and scientific*

*ic activities and the decision making process in biomedical, genetic and reproduction sciences.*

*The numerous protests of native peoples must be acted upon: these people have seen their ancestral territory and culture seriously threatened, or completely annihilated, by mining and oil developments. The urgency with which these misappropriations must be remedied cannot be overstated, motivated as they are by multinationals' desire for profits, and by inconsiderate and aberrant use of natural resources by a destructive international production system.*

### **General recommendations**

Women are opposed to the privatization of public natural resources. Resources such as water must remain in the public domain as goods which belong to humanity and should not be used for profit by a few individuals.

International financial institutions (the World Bank, International Monetary Fund) should comply with United Nations international law. The Dispute settlement body of the WTO must respect human and environmental rights before producing economic arbitration (rights hierarchies).

We want:

- Transparent financial institutions, able to be monitored by public representation, and including a growing number of women in management posts;
- World Bank and regional bank loans to be accompanied by human development constraints based on PNUD indicators, or even UNIFEM indicators;
- Speculative transactions to be taxed, with at least 50% of that money going specifically towards the struggle for equality between men and women.

As with other conventions on biodiversity, climate, human rights, children's rights and others, we reiterate that all governments need to ratify and put into practice the following: Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, the UN convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (with the additional protocols), the Beijing platform for action and the Beijing +5 document, resolution 317(4) of 1949 "Convention on the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others", and the new United Nations protocol from the

convention against transnational criminality (2000) aimed at "preventing, suppressing and punishing traffic in persons, in particular women and children", although these conventions must continue to evolve. Follow-up of these conventions and their control systems must be an integral and explicit part of their implementation. Unfortunately, all too often the conventions are not respected.

In the 1992 Rio declaration, considerable emphasis was placed on the "living strength" of civil society, specifically citing women. Since Rio, recognition of women's role as citizens is a tool for real participation: access to information, impact studies, recourse to tribunals. Unfortunately, very few independent instances exist. It is with this in mind that women support the proposition for a global convention on environmental rights, based on Principle 10 (participation of all citizens) of Agenda 21.

Women want their rights to equality and safety respected, they want their invisible contribution to the collective well-being recognized, they want their participation in elections organized at all levels, from the local to the global.



**Céline Ostyn**

Femmes & Changements  
celineo@free.fr

### III. Results and Follow-up



Figure 1  
Caption text describing the figure content.

# Peace Appeal

Peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development

Petition based on the appeal from the European Women's Conference for a Sustainable Future (Celakovice, Czech Republic, March 17, 2002).

**Appeal from Women from areas stricken by war and terrorism, now and in the recent past. This appeal is strongly supported by the participants at the European Women's Conference for a Sustainable Future and is endorsed by the organisations listed below.**

*To Mr. Nitin Desai, Secretary General of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) and to all governments*

*"We, women from Eastern and Western Europe and Central Asia, know the real cost of war. We have seen the suffering and the destruction... Women give birth to children and have no choice but to see them fight and die. Many of us have suffered abuse, so bad we do not wish to talk about it... We are united with all women throughout the world who are suffering from war and terrorism, and their aftermath. For example in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Colombia, Congo, India, Israel, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Sudan".*

These cruelties could not happen without the arms produced and traded by profit-seeking industrialists in many countries, whose actions are possible through the permissiveness of their Governments. Wars are fuelled by the quest for natural resources and power issues, and results in tremendous environmental and nature destruction. Meanwhile, thousands and thousands of families are suffering, women are being raped and children lose their parents. Victims of war are not

only those who are killed on the field, but also their relatives who die of grief and trauma. Victims of war are also those who are affected by mines, radiation from depleted uranium and chemical and biological weapons.

The effects of these atrocities will last for generations to come, causing children yet unborn to suffer. It is immoral that children should witness things that children should never see.

We know that there are alternative ways to resolve conflicts and that there is never a cause to justify terrorism, armed conflict or war. These are three different faces of the same evil.

Aggression will never be stopped by aggression. Aggression will only encourage aggression. The current escalation of wars and increase in militarization are both illegal and immoral. We demand that all wars be stopped immediately.

Funds must be redirected from current militarization to peaceful conflict resolution, to victims of war, and towards the fight to eradicate the root causes of war, such as poverty and unsustainable development - increasing inequality between nations and within nations. Further, the funds should be used for the empowerment of women and for humanitarian actions - for the future of our children and the planet.

We are left on our own to cope with the aftermath of war. We want Governments and all those responsible for terrorism and armed conflict to be made accountable for the suffering and the loss they cause our families and us. We call for those who make profit from the war to be held responsible.

We call on women around the world to join us. As long as our silence prevails, war and suffering will continue. We call on women's active participation in decision-making on conflict resolution and peace negotiations and the implementation of the UN Resolution no. 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

We demand that the United Nations and Governments of the world, especially the governments of the European Union, USA and Russia, ratify and implement the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We demand that Governments of the world respect the will of their people and do everything in their power to stop all wars and armed conflicts in the world. Peace and demilitarization should be included in the World Summit priorities and agenda for action, as an essential prerequisite for Sustainable Development.

It is our money that Governments use for war. As long as we are silent, we are also responsible. We must take action now.

We ask for equal influence for women in questions of peace and security, for example through the creation of a Women's Security Council and increasing the number of women in the United Nations Security Council to 60%.

- Stop war.
- Stop militarization.
- Stop the production, development and trade of arms.
- Make Governments and all those responsible for terrorism and armed conflict accountable for destroying the future of our children and our planet.

***To sign this petition send an email with "I sign the peace petition" and your name and address to: [wecf@wecf.org](mailto:wecf@wecf.org)***

The European Women's Conference for a Sustainable Future was organized by WECF - Women in Europe for a Common Future - in preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development. For more information visit <http://www.wecf.org>

Update: This peace petition was signed by more than 500 people and presented at the WSSD on August 26th

by Muborak Sharipova, Open Asia, Tadjikistan (One of the two initiators of the peace appeal at the European Women's Conference in Celakovice).

