

“Sustainable Societies: Responsive citizens”

64th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference

Workshop “Rio+20 - A Window of Opportunity for a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership on Global Commons Growth”

Bonn, Germany, 5 September 2011

NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND/OR GOOD GOVERNANCE WITHOUT THE RESPECT OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

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The topic of this conference is of particular importance for me as a representative of an international women's organization - International Alliance of Women - with its over hundred years of vision about equal rights and equal responsibilities.

In analyzing this topic in preparing my intervention today I soon discovered that I have to clarify the notions first. What makes a society sustainable and is responsive citizenship possible under unsustainable conditions?

It is evident that you may be responsive when you happen to live in a sustainable society. As a representative of an umbrella organization of women's associations around the globe I have to say: But not all of us enjoy this privilege. What if you are living in an unsustainable society? How would you respond to such a society? **Responsively or responsible?** What shall I report back from this conference to my sisters from member organizations in countries with income inequalities, political mismanagement and inefficient policy making?

What makes a society sustainable?

In 2007, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) held an inspiring conference in Vienna linking governance with the Millennium Development Goals. Its deliberations and output encouraged me to link sustainable societies with good governance and sustainable development¹.

What is good governance all about?

Here is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's description of good governance in his report to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations: We the Peoples, Report A/54/2000, para. 84, page 15.

“...comprising the rule of law, effective State institutions, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, respect for human rights, and the participation of all citizens in the decisions that affect their lives“.

Good governance lays the foundation for the enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms at national level – and in consequence at international level through intergovernmental processes of negotiation. Women's rights are Human Rights and part of the global social commons.

¹ Governance for the Millennium Development Goals: Core Issues and Good Practices, UN, 2007, ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/99

There may be debates about the most appropriate forms this good governance should take, there can be no disputing the importance of these principles.

Yet, in large parts of the world women are not given the means and opportunities to act as responsive or responsible citizens or to sustain their engagement – what I would call that they are living in unsustainable societies.

Here are three examples:

Slaughtering Eve – The Hidden Gendercide

- UN: up to 200 million women and girls are demographically “missing”
- IAW: An estimated 536,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year
- DCAF²: An estimated 5.000 women are burnt to death each year in „kitchen accidents“
- SIPRI³: Global military expenditure is estimated at \$ 1,630 billion in 2010. The highest number ever

Given the biological norm of 100 new-born girls to every 103 new-born boys millions more women should be living amongst us. If not, if they are „missing“; they have been killed or have died through neglect and mistreatment.

Yes, women live in a very insecure world. They fall victim to gender selective abortion and infanticide, others do not receive the same amount of food and medical attention as their brothers, others fall prey to sexual offenders, to „honour killings“, domestic violence and acid attacks.

The global maternal mortality ratio of 400 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births has barely changed since 1990. This is the MDG most likely not to be reached, which is a shame as most of these deaths would be avoidable under conditions respecting women's Human Rights. Rape and sexual exploitation remain; millions are trafficked, some women sold like cattle.

The World Bank estimates that it would take between 35 to 76 billion USD per year for the world community to be able to live up to the MDGs. Compare these amounts to the 1,630 billion USD spent on world military expenditures last year. It is nothing.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is a legally binding document.

It has three main requirements:

- to include women in all decision making processes in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, post-conflict peace building etc
- to prevent and deal with gender-based and sexual violence, particularly when used as a weapon of war
- to incorporate a gender perspective into all peace and security policies and processes, as a recognition of the different needs of women and men

It also calls for the development of national action plans.

Out of 192 member states, only 25 have developed national action plans towards its implementation.

² Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005, „Women in an Insecure World“

³ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Moreover, statistics show that even with 1325 and its succeeding resolutions; women make up less than 8% of participants in formal peace process. Even more glaring is the continued occurrence of sexual violence in conflict situations.

Only an estimated 5 percent of post-conflict funds – where women’s organizations struggle to bring their members to the peace negotiation tables and national redress processes – is made available for activities specific to women and gender equality.

Sustainable development:

This year’s UN Food and Agricultural Organization Conference main theme was The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture - closing the gender gap for development.

„Agriculture is underperforming in many developing countries for a number of reasons. Among these is the fact that women lack the resources and opportunities they need to make the most productive use of their time⁴.”

When sustainable development is about „empowering people to get involved”, it certainly misses out women's capabilities in large parts of the world. What my organization underlined in its statement to the FAO conference is the fact that the „theoretical” acceptance of the value of women in agriculture and rural development results in very little practical programme support by the international community. In fact, what women do not see happening, in any substantive manner, are ways and means to implement commitments already made in MDG1 and 3 and in CEDAW, article 14.

1 in 6 people have not enough to eat. About three quarters of the world’s poor live in rural areas. Among those, women constitute a particularly vulnerable, yet important group for social and economic development

Now comes a positive example of what I am talking about (there are many others also):

RWANDA

- 51% of parliamentarians are women
- half of Supreme Court judges are women, including the president of the Court
- legislation criminalizes gender-based violence and marital rape
- Gender equality in inheritance and property ownership as well as in statutory and customary land ownership

Seventeen years after the Rwandan genocide between the Hutus and the Tutsis, the country is now one of the top performers in achieving the MDGs. And women lead for progress.

Some basic proposals for a “Charter for Shared Social Responsibilities for Global Commons”:

- Increase women’s access to high-level decision-making
- Repeal laws that discriminate against women
- Put gender equality at the heart of the Millenium Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.