

Keynote Address:
**Levers of Global Security: Examining How a Changing Climate
Impacts Women**
**H.E. Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of
Norway and Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General on
Climate Change**
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Is climate change a global security issue?

Is it a question of freedom and fundamental human rights?

No doubt-

Is it a question key to fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals?

Absolutely-

And not just about the key goal of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Taken as a whole, the MDGs are not least about improving the lives and conditions of women.

Climate change is already an imminent threat. The planet's warming is indisputable. Adverse effects are already felt in many areas, affecting agriculture and food security, oceans and coastal areas, and water resources.

The projected changes in the earth's climate are an environmental concern with severe social and economic implications. Climate change represents a serious challenge to sustainable development, social justice, equity and respect for human rights, also for future generations.

The impacts of climate change disproportionately falls on developing countries and communities with low adaptive capacity. The human impact depends on sex, age, income and occupation.

Poor people are more vulnerable to climate change due to their limited adaptive capacities to a changing environment. Among them, the rural poor, and rural women and girls are the ones most immediately affected by climate change.

In our already deeply divided world, global warming is magnifying disparities between rich and poor, denying people an opportunity to improve their lives.

Climate change is not gender-neutral. Women are generally more vulnerable, representing the majority of the world's poor.

They are also more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. These detrimental effects can already be felt in the short-term - through emergencies such as landslides, floods and hurricanes. More women than men died during the 2003 European heat wave and as a result of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina in the United States.

Some of the factors that influence the higher vulnerability of women to disasters include lack of means and assets to ensure their own safety in situations of flooding, landslides and storms.

In some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, the majority of women are responsible for subsistence food production. With changes in climate, traditional food sources become more unpredictable and scarce. This exposes women to loss of harvests, often their sole sources of food and income. With cash crops becoming scarce, food prices increase and makes the situation even worse.

The risk of contracting a serious illness can also be further aggravated by environmental effects caused by climate change. Almost half of all urban residents in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are victims of diseases associated with poor water and sanitation facilities. Women will not only be affected by the disease itself but also by the increased work caring for sick family members. Not surprisingly, a direct correlation has been observed between women's status in society and their likelihood of receiving adequate health care.

Women often act as agents for change. Last week, here in NY, in the presence of the Secretary General, we celebrated the impressive results of such collaborative action in Senegal and some other African countries, led and inspired by women. Molly Melching, the leader of TOSTAN, received The Hilton Foundation Humanitarian Price, having demonstrated how women can lead effective cultural and societal change, improving the lives of girls and women, securing better lives for all.

Active involvement of women in decision-making at the local, national and international levels is crucial for global governance.

We already have internationally agreed commitments.

Let's move these commitments to reality and make real efforts to involve women. Women will make a difference, using their knowledge and experience, also on issues related to the management of natural resources. Women in leadership positions— at national, local and community levels—have already made a visible difference in natural disaster responses, both in emergency rescue and evacuation efforts and in post-disaster reconstruction. We have seen the same in the management of essential natural resources, such as fresh water.

We all should advocate the participation of all stakeholders in the process leading to a post-2012 agreement. I can convey the support of the Secretary-General for the inclusion of women and their organizations in this vital process.

The Bali Climate Change Conference in should set out a road map for a comprehensive agreement, under the UNFCCC process, an agreement that should be reached by 2009.

In my consultations on Climate Change as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, I have been constantly reminded of the importance for developing countries and vulnerable communities of adapting to climate change, and of the need for resources to build the resilience needed to reduce risks and promote sustainable development.. This must include the promotion of a more gender-sensitive and participatory approach in this area, and I know that the Secretary-General supports us on this.

First, we need to mainstream a gender perspective in all aspects of climate change planning and decision-making. Second, in order to make informed decisions, we need to collect comprehensive data disaggregated by gender.

These efforts will enable us to draw on all our resources, including those from the United Nations system, as we confront and pursue the key challenges of climate change.

Thank you!