



MEDIA ADVISORY

Inquiries:

Rosemary Musumba, WEDO – 646.291.7826 / rosemary@wedo.org

Kim Mance, Council of Women World Leaders - 202-736-2531 / kim.mance@cwvl.org

Interviews:

Laura Liswood, Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders

June Zeitlin, Executive Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization

INTERNATIONAL LEADERS BRING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON WOMEN TO THE WORLD AGENDA

Natural Disasters Amplify Gender Inequalities; Global Roundtable to Inform Secretary General Ban's High-Level Climate Change Event

New York, N.Y.—September 21: Women need to be at the center of the climate change debate and policymaking. That is the message participants of a high-level roundtable on women and climate change intend to bring to Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's High-Level Climate Change Event scheduled for Monday, September 24.

Women throughout the world are responsible for community resource management, make up the majority of agricultural laborers, are the primary family caretakers, and are the first to rebuild households and communities following disasters and conflicts.

“We not only want women to have a voice in the debate on the phenomenon of climate change that impacts so immensely on our lives, and livelihoods,” said Irene Dankelman, Vice-chair of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). “We are also convinced that this will actually change the effectiveness of the global and local climate change agenda.”

Women are particularly at risk when it comes to the negative consequences of climate change. Historic disadvantages such as restricted access to resources and information and limited power in decision-making, make women more susceptible to the dangers of extreme weather events.

“Disasters, like poverty, have a woman's face,” said June Zeitlin, Executive Director of WEDO. “The Asian Tsunami, hurricanes in Central America, cyclones in Bangladesh, droughts in Africa, Hurricane Katrina—in all of these examples, women and children made up the majority of the fatalities and displaced persons.”

The purpose of the Roundtable, organized by the Council of Women World Leaders, WEDO, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, is to ensure that the impacts

of climate change on women, as well as women's roles in curbing climate change, are reflected in the outcome of the Secretary-General's High-Level Event.

“The UN has yet to catalyze a global response to the fact that existing gender inequalities are a critical determinant in who is impacted by natural disasters and climate change,” said Zeitlin. “Currently the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other global meetings on climate change don't include a gender perspective and are focused on emissions reductions while ignoring the fact that climate change is already heavily impacting poor people around the world.”

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Change, and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, will lead the Roundtable discussion. Participants include 50 high-level government, UN, and civil society representatives.

Founded in 1991, the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) is an international organization that advocates for gender equality in global policy. Working in key global forums such as the UN, WEDO advocates for and seeks to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice, a healthy, peaceful planet and human rights for all. Find more information about WEDO's work on climate change and gender equality in the press packet and at www.wedo.org (click on “sustainable development”).

The Council of Women World Leaders is a network of current and former women presidents and prime ministers. The Council's mission is to mobilize the highest-level women leaders globally for collective action on issues of critical importance to women and equitable development. A ministerial initiative that engages sitting and former women ministers and cabinet members is an integral and essential part of promoting good governance and enhancing the experience of democracy globally by increasing the number, effectiveness, and visibility of women world leaders. Find more information about the Council of Women World Leaders in the available press packet and at www.cwwl.org.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is a non-profit organization striving to promote democracy, civil society, human rights, international understanding and a healthy environment internationally. The Heinrich Böll Foundation is affiliated with the German Green Party and is headquartered in Berlin, Germany with 25 offices worldwide and cooperative partnerships with more than 200 organizations in more than 60 countries. Find more information about the Foundation at www.boell.org or www.boell.de.

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