

Press Release:

Today, on the occasion of 2010 International Women’s Day (March 8), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) honors leaders, who are at the forefront of women’s empowerment in climate change solutions.

Climate change is a great challenge of our time, negatively impacting sustainable development and all sectors of society, such as, environment, economy, human health, disaster management, and food security. The field of gender and climate change is important, because women and men are affected by climate change differently. Women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because worldwide the majority of women are poor and have limited access and control over resources, such as, land, credit, information, technology, and decision making. At the same time, women are powerful agents of climate change solutions: community leaders, holders of traditional knowledge, food production managers, caregivers, and educators.

In tune with the International Women’s Day theme for 2010: “Equal Opportunities, Equal Rights: Progress for All,” the world cannot afford to miss the opportunity of including women and gender dimensions in climate change debate. Gender equality and empowerment of women are prerequisites for sustainable climate change policies and progress for all. 2010 Women’s Day is a reminder that including gender dimensions in the international climate change treaty to be reached this year in Mexico is ground-breaking.

Today, IUCN celebrates how far women have come in their struggle for advancing gender equality, development and participation of women in climate change. IUCN recognizes the achievements of women, who exemplified their leadership in policy making, advocacy and development of gender-responsive climate change measures. Honorees compiled an extended record of accomplishment in the field of gender and climate change and have been influential on international and national levels by increasing attention, understanding, and political commitment to gender and climate change issues. IUCN acknowledges the past, present, and future accomplishments in the field of gender and climate change of:



Aira Kalela (Finland) is the Special Representative on Climate and Gender in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland. Prior to her current post, Aira Kalela held senior positions in the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland and was the former Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Aira Kalela is an expert in international negotiations, frequent speaker, and author of publications on gender and climate change issues.

Aira Kalela has been influential in gaining global political commitment to gender and climate change issues and empowering women in climate change negotiations.

With Aira Kalela’s leadership, Finland and Nordic countries voiced their support for gender and climate change issues in official statements and submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), international high level meetings, and calls to action.

Thanks to her work, Finland contributed 500 000 Euros in 2009 to the participation and capacity building of women delegates from developing countries in the climate change negotiations process. Recognizing

the positive role women play in addressing the challenges of climate change, Finland boosted gender equality in UNFCCC negotiations, where currently only one third of government delegates are women. For a gender-sensitive climate change regime, it is crucial that women are empowered, contribute and participate effectively at all levels of decision making.

Aira Kalela led the gender and climate change theme in the high level Liberia Colloquium (2009) co-convened by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and President Tarja Halonen of Finland. The Colloquium adopted a Call for Action on Climate Change and Gender, calling on governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders for greater participation of women in climate change decision making, capacity building, and financing.

Contact Information: Aira Kalela, Special Representative Climate and Gender, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, E-mail aira.kalela@formin.fi; Tel 358-40-5061175



Rebecca Pearl (United States) is the Coordinator of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), an initiative led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Rebecca Pearl began her career as community development worker in Nicaragua, then worked with UNIFEM- Andean Region to launch gender budget initiatives in Latin America, and was the Sustainable Development Program Coordinator at WEDO.

Rebecca Pearl was instrumental in the process of launching the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007. The GGCA works to ensure that climate change policies, decision-making, and initiatives at the global, regional, and national levels are gender responsive. Rebecca Pearl was central in expanding the GGCA to include 25 institutions among United Nations and civil society organizations, and numerous allies among governments, donors, and the private sector. Under Rebecca Pearl's leadership, GGCA has been recognized as a unique and effective partnership bringing a human face to climate change decision-making and initiatives.

Thanks to Rebecca Pearl's leadership, the GGCA achieved many successes working towards four complementary objectives:

1. Integrate a gender perspective into policy and decision making in order to ensure international mandates and other legal instruments on gender equality are fully implemented.
2. Ensure that financing mechanisms on mitigation and adaptation address the needs of poor women and men equitably.
3. Build capacity at all levels to design and implement gender-responsive climate change policies, strategies and programmes.
4. Develop, compile, and share practical tools, information, and methodologies to facilitate the integration of gender into policy and programming.

Contact Information: Rebecca Pearl, Coordinator, Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), E-mail info@gender-climate.org; Tel 1-917-755-7111



H.E. Dr. Dessima Williams (Grenada) is the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations and Chair of Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition representing the interests of low lying small island states in global negotiations on climate change. Ambassador Williams is an expert on sustainable development and gender and has extensive academic experience, as an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at Brandeis University, and author of Gender Dimensions of HIV/AIDS in Grenada report, and co-author of a multi-volume United Kingdom Department for International Development: Realization of Human Rights in the Caribbean Territories report. She serves on the board of the Inter-Agency Group of Development Organizations in Grenada, and the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C., among others.

Ambassador Williams has been an influential leader, supporter, and frequent keynote speaker on gender dimensions of climate change. Ambassador Williams emphasized that climate change is not only an environmental problem, but also a human problem; caused by humans and affecting humans. The current debate on climate change has to center on human development and include gender considerations. Ambassador Williams called for the most vulnerable states, members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), to take up the issues of most vulnerable people. Ambassador Williams demonstrated that gender equality can offer protection to societies in climate change induced disaster, therefore gender equality strategies before disasters struck, and part of disaster risk mitigation, are the most important ways to maximize this protection. Experiences of men and women in category 4 Hurricane Ivan, which devastated Grenada in 2004, highlight different levels of vulnerability among genders during and after disasters. Out of 79% of homes damaged overall in Hurricane Ivan in Grenada, 95% were the homes of poor women and children.

Contact Information: Permanent Representative of Grenada to the United Nations, E-mail grenada[at]un.int; Tel 1-212-599-0301



Cate Owren (United States) is the Program Director at Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). Cate Owren is a lifelong activist on women's rights and environmental issues and has experiences in West Africa and the Caribbean, where she has worked on reproductive health and AIDS education, microfinance, and the global movements towards "ethically" mined gold and fair trade. Cate Owren is a leader in advocacy and research activities on gender and climate change.

Cate Owren has been crucial in leading WEDO and the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) advocacy efforts integrating a gender perspective into United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Cate Owren, was key in mobilizing a diverse group of advocates from different countries integrating WEDOs global network of women's civil society organizations and GGCA partners. Although, there is still no global policy specifically on gender and climate change, much progress was made in 2009: the advocacy team was successful working with government delegates and serving as technical gender and climate change advisers. The outcome draft document of the UNFCCC Copenhagen negotiations has five references to gender and women under adaptation, capacity-building, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), and mitigation.

Cate Owren was one of the drivers in the process of establishing the Gender and Women Constituency, which was given provisional status under UNFCCC in 2009. The Constituency is an important step for advocacy efforts as it grants women and gender equality observer organizations a formal opportunity to work together to influence the negotiations process.

Striving to fill the research gap on climate change impacts on women, Cate Owren reviewed and edited numerous case studies and publications on gender and climate change, and co-authored *Climate Change Connections: Gender, Population and Climate Change Resource Kit*, published by WEDO and the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA).

Contact Information: Cate Owren, Program Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), E-mail [cate\[at\]wedo.org](mailto:cate[at]wedo.org); Tel 1-212-973-0325



Sandra Freitas (Togo) is the Director of Actions en Faveur de l'Homme et de la Nature (AFHON), NGO working on climate change adaptation issues with poor and vulnerable groups in Togo. Sandra Freitas has been influential raising awareness on gender and climate change in her local community using unifying cultural communication tools. Sandra Freitas is a specialist on sustainable development and environmental issues and a government representative of Togo to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations.

Sandra Freitas was one of the experts trained by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as part of Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) capacity building efforts. Sandra Freitas led the French section of the African Regional Training of Trainers and Orientation for Government Delegates in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October, 2009. The training based on GGCA methodology provided tools and methodologies to mainstream gender equality in climate change initiatives at the national, regional and international levels.

Sandra Freitas is instrumental in mobilizing the Francophone countries' awareness and attention to gender dimensions of climate change. She translated publications on gender and climate change to French and is a frequent speaker and trainer on environmental international legal mechanisms and gender and climate change issues.

Sandra Freitas' advocacy efforts led to stellar support and increasing political commitment from African countries to gender-responsive climate change policies. With Sandra Freitas' leadership, African countries voiced their support for gender and climate change issues in official statements and submissions to the UNFCCC, international high level meetings, and calls to action. Women in Africa, because of their responsibility for food and water administration, are especially vulnerable to the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, with regard to food security, agriculture, water resource management, energy, forest use and management, and transportation.

Contact Information: Sandra Freitas, Director, Actions en Faveur de l'Homme et de la Nature (AFHON), E-mail [cendrillon_a\[at\]yahoo.fr](mailto:cendrillon_a[at]yahoo.fr); Tel 228-225-6538



Jeannette Gurung (United States) is founder and director of Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), a global network of women and men professionals and farmers in 83 countries who are committed to increasing rural women's access to and control over resources to manage agriculture and natural resources and enhance their livelihoods. Jeannette Gurung is a forester and gender and development expert whose career has focused on leading organizational change for gender equality within agriculture and natural resource management organizations in Asia and Africa. She has expertise in capacity building, action research, gender analysis, organizational analysis, policy advocacy and network building, and has published numerous articles and books. Jeannette Gurung is active in international advocacy within the UN Forum on Forests, the Commission for Sustainable Development, the Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders. She is on the board of directors for the CGIAR Participatory Research and Gender Analysis Program.

Jeannette Gurung has been influential in her extensive work, research, policy development, and advocacy on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) and gender. REDD provides potential opportunities for positive outcomes for forest dependent communities, but also risks serious negative outcomes, especially for women who rely on forest resources to sustain their families' livelihoods. Current discussions on REDD are very weak with respect to the gender dimensions and to its impacts on rural women who have few or no options to use the forest for sources of fuelwood, livestock feed, medicines, and even food in times of scarcity. It is crucial that this gap be addressed so that the policies, financing mechanisms and consultative processes take full account of the differentiated rights, role and responsibilities of women and men, promote gender equality and equity in REDD policy and practice, and reward women who protect and manage forest resources. Women must be recognized as legitimate and key stakeholders who participate in and benefit equally from all REDD related processes.

Contact Information: Jeannette Gurung, Director, WOCAN, E-mail Jeannettegurung@wocan.org; Tel: 1-202-331-9099



Itzá Castañeda (Mexico) is the Senior Gender Adviser at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Mexico Country Office, a Focal Point of the United Nations system gender interagency group for development in Mexico and a member of Mexico Network on Gender and Environment. She is an expert on development cooperation, gender and environment, and gender and climate change. Prior to her current position, Itzá Castañeda was Director of Gender Equity and Environment of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in Mexico and the Federal Liaison with the National Institute of Women (Inmujeres) and the National Population Council (CONAPO).

Itzá Castañeda is co-author of six books and has coordinated several publications on gender, environment, disasters, climate change and human development. She has been a trainer, consultant, and director of various projects on gender and development, gender equality and non-violence against women and legislative harmonization. She participated in numerous national and international forums on the topic of gender equality.

Itzá Castañeda is at the forefront of gender and climate change research. She developed the first Gender Resource Guide on Climate Change in 2008, and reviewed the Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change in 2009. The Training Manual, published by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) in

partnership with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and UNDP, compiles and shares practical tools, information, and methodologies to facilitate the integration of gender into policy and programming on Bali Action Plan building blocks of climate change mitigation, adaptation, technology, and finance.

On the road to achieving a legally binding treaty on climate change in Mexico in December 2010, the leadership of the host country, Mexico government will be crucial in ensuring that for the first time gender language will be included in international climate change policy.

Contact Information Itzá Castañeda, Senior Gender Adviser at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), E-mail itza.castaneda[at]undp.org.mx