

**Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance  
Theme: Gender in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**Gender and Climate Change: The Impact on Trade**

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**Madame Chair,**

**Hon. Senator Loren Legarda**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I am delighted to be with you this morning. For those of you who are not familiar with UNCTAD, is it eh UN agency responsible for the interface between trade and sustainable development. We have a work programme on gender issues, and in the past two years have published reports on Mainstreaming Gender into Trade and Development Strategies in Africa and Moving Towards Gender Sensitisation of Trade Policy. Gender has now become a cross-cutting issue in UNCTAD.

Today, I have been asked to set the scene by addressing the role of gender in climate change and its impact on trade and economy. This is a very broad topic. In order to do it justice, one would have to cover such areas as human rights, demographics, food security, energy, security, urbanization, migration, informal economy, innovation standards, MDGs, etcetera.

As there is little explicit research on gender and climate change, your Congress offers a valuable forum for highlighting these issues and exploring possible solutions would be

the most material allies of those promoting progressive and significant climate change mitigation and adaptation policies.

In my remarks this morning, I would like to address the following premise:

**Gender and Climate Change can be a vicious circle of worsening inequalities and impact.**

It is well-documented that climate change affects women more than men. This is because of existing inequalities. The vicious cycle is that the more women are affected negatively by climate change, the worse the inequalities get. And the worse, the inequalities get the worse the impact becomes. This is ironic. This vicious cycle has a devastating effect on economic and trade growth, and can significantly delay achievement of the MDGs.

These problems go beyond gender and climate change, they also affect the role of women in the environment, in disasters, in business and in trade. In all these areas, the root cause of the problems is gender inequality.

First of all, let's examine how climate change can worsen gender inequalities. Women and girls in developing countries are more affected by climate change and disasters than men. This is not only because they are weaker physically, but also because social and economic restrictions make them more vulnerable and affect their ability to act and react to adversity.

The World Conservation Union and the Women's Environment and Development Organisation, one of the sponsors of this event, documented that women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during natural disasters. In the 2004, tsunami, more than 2/3s of the victims in 12 countries was women. Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar left 84,500 dead last May; well over half were women and children.

When floods wash away crops and livestock, when massive earthquakes strike or when famine hits, families lose their livelihoods. This unleashes a whole chain of events. Children—especially girls—are taken out of school and put to work. Unemployed youth resort to crime and antisocial behaviour. Domestic violence soars. Ethnic tensions emerge. Property disputes escalate. Men may migrate, or even abandon their families. Women national and international levels still lags far behind that of men; for example, women make up less than one in five parliamentarians worldwide.

Like vulnerability, we must target the factors that contribute to women's and girl's exclusion, from the village up to the highest levels of government. These factors are less understood than those relating to vulnerability; although there are important overlaps. Indeed, this is an area where further investigation and more proactive efforts are required.

However, I can say that the key contributing factors would include: awareness, confidence, ability to secure, use and disseminate information individually and collectively; opportunity to be heard; and opportunity to make a difference. Efforts to overcome exclusion would also have to target men—particularly where social, cultural and religious practices are concerned. We also need to create an enabling environment that allows women to engage in decision-making in a sustained and effective way.

Intensified male migration as a result of climate change and disasters often leaves women with the huge burden of looking after family, home and land. This is both a challenge and an opportunity; a challenge to survive, but an opportunity for women to assume a more influential role in the community—and an opportunity for all of us to help them do so.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are in the world's most disaster-prone region. During 1998-2007, according to a report by ESCAP, OCHA and UNEP, the Asia Pacific accounted for 38% of the world's natural disasters, 86% of people affected and 79% of fatalities. Natural disasters and

climate changes are not a new phenomenon; they have been occurring from time immemorial. People have developed ways of surviving them and getting on with life.

Large-scale international assistance, by contrast, is relatively new phenomenon, and donors are still on a learning curve.

It is increasingly recognized that international responses need to be combined with proven local approaches, in order to ensure more sustainable solutions. This means helping people to better help themselves.

In this way, climate change impacts can sometimes be turned into new opportunities. For example, as you know, women are heavily involved in agriculture in areas often ravaged by adverse climatic events. In sub-Saharan Africa, women produce 80% of the food primarily on small holdings. Being industrious and innovative, many of them have found ways of adapting their farming to the changing environment. In Latin America and Africa, UNCTAD is working with SMEs, including women's associations, to develop sustainable practices that contribute to reforestation, conservation of habitats and poverty alleviation through development of biotrade products and services, such as eco-tourism. One such initiative in Ecuador has delivered a 25% increase in income, revitalization of traditional knowledge and export market access for an SME involving 62 communities and managed by a woman. Assisting women like these to help themselves and to share their knowledge with others will go a long way towards improving food security and developing business and trade.

Governments, NGOs, women's groups and the international community must act quickly and cohesively to provide the necessary encouragement, training and financial and moral support to enable women to maximize their contributions and overcome long standing constraints.

Ensuring the active participation of half of the population considerably enhances an economy's production and growth potential. Guaranteeing an education for all girls

doubles the potential knowledge base. Providing fora for women to share their knowledge and experience on coping with climate change and disasters can mitigate the negative impacts and halt the rise in vulnerability. And, with the right type of policies, trade can help reduce gender inequalities and serve as an engine of growth.

## **Action**

In this context, I would like to share with you some ideas for action. These focus mainly on improving inclusion of women in participatory processes, improving their access to information and training, and encouraging entrepreneurship.

For international action, I have three (3) suggestions:

1. It is important to document good practices emerging around the developing world, and disseminate them widely among donors, NGOs and women's self-help groups. This is already happening to some extent, but a more cohesive and inclusive approach would increase the impact.
2. Design Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects so that they meet dual climate and gender objectives. (Perhaps UNCTAD's CDM Expert Meeting in February could take up this issue.)
3. Develop appropriate statistics methodologies to set benchmarks and measure impacts.

At the national level, I would like to suggest the following:

1. Prioritize the role of women in donor programmes focusing on policy formulation and implementation

2. Encourage regular, structured consultation of women by NGOs and donors, including formal participation of women in decision-making bodies. This must include direct assistance to facilitate their participation.
3. Carry out awareness-building at national, subnational and village level on the important role women can play in climate change mitigation, natural disaster preparedness and environmental ethics.
4. Design innovative outreach projects for men and boys, to address female exclusion issues.
5. Develop information dissemination programmes for women and children, including through schools and women's groups.
6. Deliver training programmes on disaster prevention and reconstruction for women and girls, possibly as part of early-warning systems development.
7. Prepare climate change mitigation programmes and strategies aimed specifically at females.
8. Offer mobile legal advisory services to help women and girls understand their rights and to provide advice on such matters as property titles, inheritance, land rights, etcetera.
9. Create funds to offer women "climate credit" for more environmentally friendly household, energy, cottage industry, farming techniques, food processing, wood processing, water use, etcetera. This could include assistance to meet stricter standards and certification requirements.
10. Offer mobile' management and finance mentoring' services for families, with built-in conditions to ensure the participation of women and adolescents.

11. Create prizes for women and girls who develop innovative ways to adapt a climate change.
12. Create programmes that will provide direct assistance to women who become responsible for households and land. With appropriate help and encouragement, they can assume a more influential role in community and national affairs.
13. Offer land and property mapping and titling advisory services with the aim of improving transparency, accountability and predictability---crucial factors for sustainable investment. This challenging task would have to involve all stakeholders, including local and national authorities.
14. Finally, to maximize the reach of such efforts, it will be important to enlist the support of multiplier entities such as teachers, health care workers, religious authorities, business chambers, extension agents, NGOs, women's self-help groups, farmers clubs, garden clubs, etcetera.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I began by expressing my deep concern about the intensification of gender inequalities in relation to climate change. I end now by reiterating that concern, but at the same time, sharing my hope that prompt action can and will reverse this tendency.

Your Congress is a vital step in the right direction and I hope that your **proposals for action by parliamentarians, policy advocates and women leaders** will be carried through and implemented with the urgency they deserve. The good practices that emerge from that process should be replicated around the world.

Given the clear links to trade and development, UNCTAD is proud to collaborate in your endeavours. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to our Expert Group Meeting on *Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy*, to take place next March in Geneva. I look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you.