

Arab Region Women's Statement on Rio+20

The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting

16-17 October 2011 in Cairo, Egypt

Approximately 100 participants, including representatives of governments, international and regional organizations, and Major Groups, attended the meeting.

According to the Earth Negotiation Bulletin (vol 27.no 8) „Major Groups actively and eloquently engaged in this meeting in an unprecedented manner for UN regional processes, according to some delegates, who were quite surprised at the level of participation“.

Due to lack of funding, out of the 4 nominated women candidates, only one representative of the Women's major group, based in Egypt, participated in the two days Regional meeting 16-17 October, Dr. Hala Yousry, Head of the Rural Sociology Department at the Desert Research Center and expert on women's leadership development, agriculture and desertification. Dr. Yousry also participated in the training that was held in LAS on the 15th and the preparatory meeting for Arab Network for Environment and Development on the 14th.

Dr. Hala gave 2 interventions during the meetings on the 15th and the 16th, which received broad support from the civil society women representatives from the Arab Region.

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- Implementation of the CEDAW convention as the basis for a Green Economy and Sustainable Development.
- Integration of Gender issues in the Monitoring & Evaluation indicators to assure social justice of fair distribution of wealth.
- A striking observation is that the “Arab Spring” has resulted in a withdrawal of women activities from the public life. Therefore, institutional tools are needed to support women participation on all levels, up to the highest decision making levels, including on emerging issues such as Green Economy and Sustainable Development.

Arab women's position on farming and agriculture

As half of the rural population are women, and between 59 – 80% of food is produced by women, of which the majority are poor, it is important to highlight the Arab women's position on agriculture and rural development.

- There is a strong need to establish social associations, networks, co-operatives and syndicate as an institutional way of protection and creating pressure groups to help rural and farming communities stand for their own rights identity and to improve farmers' lives.

- The right to access data and information to help rural and farming communities to take better decisions.
- Appropriate technology (economical, social, culture and environmental) should be available and capacity building should be supported, to assure the sector contributes to Green Economy and Sustainable Development.
- Developed countries should take their environmental commitments seriously if we want to have peace on Earth.