

## **WECF** | Women in Europe for a Common Future

For Immediate Release Monday, 10 December 2012

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## Midnight at the Oasis

Women in Europe for a Common Future's Long Vigil in Doha:
"We're Deeply Disappointed in UN Climate Meeting Outcome
for a Lack of Vision and Ambition; However
COP 18's Recognition of Gender Equality is a Bright Spot on a Dark Night"

**Doha, Qatar:** At three am on Friday Night/Saturday morning at the Qatar National Conference Center, after two weeks of non-stop negotiations at the United Nations 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Climate Conference of the Parties (COP 18) to reduce carbon emissions in the atmosphere were slowly winding to a painful and potentially disappointing overtime close, representatives of **Women in Europe for a Common Future** (**WECF**) were keeping watch through to the end on the issues of importance to their international grassroots network of 150 organizations in 50 countries, dismayed by the lack of concrete commitments but glad for the one major agreement on gender balance, the so-called "Doha Miracle".

"Lack of Vision and Ambition Disastrous for the Planet, Especially for Women"

Sabine Bock, Director of WECF's Campaign on Energy and Climate said, "Women in our network came two weeks ago and stayed late into the night and again into the bitter end on the final day because we are extremely worried about climate change impacts that are already underway and we were determined to fight for Gender Equality in the UNFCCC climate framework. We're frightened about the future we face if the lack of ambition [for urgent CO2 reductions] which we see here at the COP continues into future meetings. While are pleased with the agreement here to extend elements of the Kyoto Protocol until 2015, the signers represent only 15% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions. We demand that governments take more immediate and serious action to fight climate change and to include women's perspectives and meaningful participation in mitigation and adaptation efforts, in particular those who are refusing to join common action such as the USA, Canada and Russia. So much time, so many years, have already been wasted."

**Bock** said that the total lack of political will is represented by the continuing Gigatonne Gap in carbon emissions, i.e. industrialised countries that are unwilling to reduce their emissions to dramatically lower

and urgently necessary levels. According to Bock: "The Gigatonne Gap threatens the planet with a global temperature beyond 1.5° rise – degrees of disaster."

"If the Gigatonne Gap is not closed and closed soon, members of WECF's 150 partner groups will be dealing on a daily basis with more droughts, more floods, more fires, more family dislocation as well as unpredictable negative impacts at the local level" **Bock said.** 

A case study of such a phenomenon was reported in a workshop at the COP organized jointly by the governments of **Uganda** and **Iceland** where recent horrific direct and indirect consequences of climate disruption on rural Ugandan women were reported. Unstable weather caused local crops to fail so they could not feed their children causing hunger. Then, the lack of food forced their husbands to leave home to find work elsewhere to provide for their families. Even worse, many of these men came back to visit their rural homes infected with HIV/AIDS bringing yet more tragedy to their wives and children as the adverse impacts of climate change multiply."

**According to Bock,** "This is a disaster scenario that doesn't need to happen, yet the 'equity gap' will continue to rise along with the 'gigatonne gap' unless governments tell their negotiators who come to these meetings to make serious climate deals that deliver meaningful carbon reductions."

**Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director of WECF said** "I just cannot understand the lack of political will from the governments that were here in Doha. It is now almost 2013 and the science is clear, increasing extreme weather is here – just look at the all these recently destroyed coastal areas."

**Gabizon continued:** "This very week, while negotiators were failing to reach meaningful agreements in Doha, Typhoon Bopha was pummeling the coast of the Philippines, causing more than twohundred deaths. And just last month, Hurricane Sandy struck New York City where 30,000 people have been displaced and it is now estimated that it will cost \$60 Billion in federal, state and local aid (USD) for New York to recover."

**Gabizon added** "The \$60 billion (USD) needed to rebuild New York's infrastructure and economy is many times more than the GDP of some of the smallest, rural developing countries of our partner organizations". Tajikistan, for example, has an annual GDP of only \$6 billion USD, one-tenth of what is needed to fix New York.

"That \$60 billion to bring back New York and future dollars like it should have been (and still could be) better invested in global climate disaster prevention. We should be subsidizing the transfer of safe, clean renewable technologies and energy efficiency projects to developing countries and dramatically reducing our own carbon footprint in the Global North. And the North needs to accept its historical responsibility. To say it simple, the hundreds and thousands of deaths, and the billions dollars of damage caused in Southern countries, are a result of the wasteful lifestyles, transport and production processes of the Global North in the last 6 decades. We need to apply the polluter pays principle, and the North needs to pay up as promised in Copenhagen" **Gabizon said,** "but in view of the financial crisis only few countries committed to new and additional funding for the Global Green Fund. We therefore need other direct transfers, such as for example a global tax on aviation/kerosene".

Gabizon continued: "This endless debating over numbers and responsibilities went on in the wee hours in Doha while the earth's atmosphere is speeding towards n immense temperature rise which we know, from the scientific models now available, will ensure a global climate catastrophe of unacceptable proportions, projections speak of 200 million climate-displaced peoples, entire countries disappearing from the face of the earth -- our democratic governance structures will not be able to deal with this

extend of devastation and we will be seeing the end of freedom, human rights and culture if we don't take immediate measures now."

## A Bright Moment: UNFCCC Decision on Inclusion of Gender Equality

WECF believes it's crucial for locally impacted women and youth to be present at these international climate negotiations as they put a human face on the discussion. All too often the negotiators and political leaders seem to forget what and who this agreement is really about – impacted communities and future generations.

The members of WECF say that the threat of climate change needs to be tackled jointly by women and men from around the world, at both the political and grassroots levels. To WECF, it is of the utmost importance to include the perspectives of women to tackle climate change as they often have valuable experience to offer due to their societal roles and different perceptions of the crisis. WECF insists that the UNFCCC agreements must give women equal access to opportunities for capacity building, decision making, technology and finance.

A small but significant political success in Doha was encapsulated in the acceptance of the recommendations by the Subsidiary Body of "Promoting gender balance and improved participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol" (decision FCCC/SBI/2012/L.36), one of the few items roundly applauded after it was adopted by vote in the late night plenary.

**Sascha Gabizon** remarked: "We welcome what may be one of the few forward-looking decisions impacting women taken here: the COP agreed to include Gender Balance in implementation and decision making throughout the UNFCCC. Some women are calling this a "Doha miracle."

**Gabizon** continued – "However, to make this truly meaningful, we also need them to agree to make dedicated dollars for women's projects available in the Green Climate Fund. We need financing that will reach women directly to provide funding for their climate adaptation and mitigation activities, particularly in rural areas that have been heavily impacted by climate disruption."

Sabine Bock added "As an organizational network involving one hundred and fifty grassroots mostly women-led organizations working "on the ground" on mitigation and adaptation projects – we sadly experience that women bear a greater burden than men from the impacts of climate disruption in their communities. "Further," Bock said, "we believe that women's leadership in the climate debate – not only at the UNFCCC but also in their home countries – is critical to ensuring that the rights and needs of women are taken into account. Of special importance is the equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of such strategies, not only between countries and generations but also between men and women. We call for the integration of the non-discrimination principle throughout the Climate Programmes such as the ADP resulting from Durban COP17. Sabine Bock "WECF's experience on the ground has consistently shown the importance of taking social, gender, geographic, economic and educational disparities into account in developing effective and sustainable climate solutions".

## International Delegation of Women Gains Experience, Makes a Difference

WECF's Doha delegation is comprised of 5 grassroots women leaders from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Paraguay, and India, and WECF staff and allies from Germany, the Netherlands and the US. The grassroots leaders testified in front of NGOs, government delegates, and UN Agency leaders at the COP about their first-hand experience of climate disruption and the disastrous impacts of continuing to

develop high-risk energy technologies like nuclear power on women and men, e.g. the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining in Kazakhstan.

Key concerns for the WECF delegation included urgent and dramatic reductions of greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere, access to safe energy technologies and energy efficiency practices, gender equality in finance for climate solutions, policy making and implementation of the UN climate agreements, and addressing the overall regime of equity between the historic major emitters and the most negatively impacted nations

**Sascha Gabizon** noted: "On Tuesday November 27<sup>th</sup>, our WECF team participated in a "Gender Day" of presentations and panel discussions where they co-facilitated working-groups on women's access to climate-related technology, finance and mitigation here at COP 18. Sadly, the testimony on this day made it crystal clear that the world is still far from achieving gender equality in spite of some encouraging positive examples. This state of affairs shows how climate disruption disproportionately impacts women as they often live in the most vulnerable conditions. At WECF, this inequity inspires us to work harder to win access for women to international, national and local climate-related resources."

**Sabine Bock** added: "Social equity is not just a co-benefit of this process. The UNFCCC should consider it as a core element of mitigation actions. By prioritizing human rights and gender equality we can achieve a profound transformation towards equitable low-risk, low-carbon societies leading to worldwide sustainable development, communities of well being (buen vivir) including sustainable livelihoods for women and men."

**Gabizon** concluded: "We may have lost some sleep here in Doha, but it was in the interest of waking up the delegates. And although we are deeply disappointed in the overall outcome of the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, we will keep campaigning at the local, national and international level as we can accept nothing less than global economic equity, women's rights and, most importantly, a sustainable, liveable planet. We have no time to lose."

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Photos and videos are available and interviews with WECF leaders and/or delegation members arranged by request.