



Promoting Gender Equality in Sustainable Development and Post-2015 Agenda

Recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Fifth Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting

(Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 20–25 October 2013)

From 20 to 24 October 2013, more than 200 people met in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, to discuss how commitments towards gender equality in the region have progressed. The overall aim of the conference was to bring together government ministers and senior decision makers, development partners, research institutions and civil society organisations to review and develop strategies for accelerating progress in the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights in our region. This is in line with *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015* and other regional commitments on gender equality, including most recently the *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration* of 2012.

12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women

With the theme Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World, the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women was the biggest on record; representatives of 21 SPC member countries and territories attended. The conference was convened by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and hosted by the government of Cook Islands.

There are areas of progress in achieving women's human rights and gender equality in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). More and more countries have adopted laws to protect women and children against domestic violence; there is a better understanding of the need to integrate a gender perspective across all sectors of development; there are new initiatives promoting women's political leadership; overall, women's health and women's access to education are improving; and women's contribution in the economy has started to be recognised. However, there is still a long road to travel before Pacific Island women have all their human rights protected, benefit equally from development outcomes, and can fulfil their aspirations.



The 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women made a number of recommendations regarding the priority areas to accelerate gender equality in the region, notably in the sector of education.

Post-2015 agenda

With the MDGs set to expire in 2015, global discussions are well under way regarding the replacement MDGs, termed the 'post-2015 development agenda'. In a parallel process, the Rio+20 Summit has recognised the importance and utility of developing a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), to be integrated into the post-2015 agenda. These two processes will be merged, with the UN Secretary General expected to define a path for combining these goals by early 2014.

Whilst there have been many discussions and proposals regarding the post-2015 agenda, the UN High Level Panel on Post-2015 (HLP) has been a key reference point. The HLP has proposed 12 goals and corresponding targets, which include MDGs that require further focus, such as those relating to poverty, gender, education and health, as well as goals for water and sanitation, food security, energy, jobs and equitable growth, sustainable resource management, good governance, peace and security, and finance.

The discussions of the SDGs Open Working Group (OWG), mandated by the Rio+20 Summit, also provide important insights into the direction that the intergovernmental process is taking in determining the SDGs. The OWG has met four times and discussed the conceptualisation of the SDGs, in relation to poverty eradication, food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation and drought, water and sanitation, employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture, and health and population dynamics.



A key related global process called for at the Rio+20 Summit, was the convening of a third international conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states (SIDS) in Samoa in 2014. A Pacific regional meeting held in preparation for the 2014 SIDS conference highlighted key issues for the Pacific region in relation to the post-2015 agenda and SDGs. Collectively, SIDS later agreed on key priorities for inclusion in the post-2015 agenda at the inter-regional meeting in Barbados. These include: consideration of the special case of SIDS; the need for a people-centred agenda that focuses on eradicating poverty, engendering equality, and achieving environmental sustainability; sustainable resources management in the context of land, water and food security, agriculture and biodiversity; the emerging NCD health crisis; commitment to sustainable consumption patterns; vulnerability indices to better represent SIDS' situation; targets and indicators relevant to SIDS; climate change as a cross-cutting issue; and oceans as a thematic priority. Furthermore, at their recent meeting in Majuro, Forum Leaders also highlighted the importance of disaster risk management, culture and mental health as important priorities for the Pacific.

Recommendations from the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women

Applauding development partners' support to gender equality in the region, PICTs called for more support and shared strategies to advance regional issues into international processes, with particular attention to the special circumstances of SIDS and LDCs in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Conference called for the leaders of Pacific Islands countries and territories, regional organisations and development partners to actively promote gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 agenda, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas.

The Conference supported the strengthening of national women's machineries and civil society to ensure the

voices and experiences of women, young women, and women with disabilities in the Pacific are reflected in regional and global processes.

Recommendations from the Fifth Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting

At the Fifth Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting held from 24-25 of October 2013 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, following the 12th Triennial Conference, the ministers;

- ❖ recognised that climate change is one of the most serious threats to the lives of Pacific people, as it can have a devastating impact on people, their land, and their culture. Climate change affects women and men differently. Recognising this, the ministers called for a fundamental shift in policy approach to an approach that incorporates a gender perspective in climate change programmes and initiatives, as well as in regional and international negotiations to support the advancement of gender equality.
- ❖ recognised that there will be an opportunity at the 2014 Third International Conference on small island developing states (to be held in Samoa) to further promote gender equality in the context of sustainable development.
- ❖ called for the post-2015 development agenda to adopt a transformative stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas of the post-2015 development agenda

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