



# Concrete actions towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 3

## Background

In an effort to highlight the inter-linkages between the three Rio Conventions, from gender perspectives in particular, and how this contributes to sustainable development, the Secretariat organised a high-level lunch-time panel discussion on Harnessing the gender dimensions of biodiversity, sustainable land management and climate change to achieve environment protection and sustainable development in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), on 2 July 2010. Participants included, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro; H.E. Ms. Ritva Koukko-Ronde, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland; H.E. Ms. Elza Pais, Secretary of State for Equality, Portugal; H.E. Ms. Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State – via video message; Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary, CBD; Mr. Narinder Kakar, UN Permanent Observer, IUCN; Mr. Nikil Seth, Director, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination and Mr. Melchiade Bukuru, Chief, UNCCD Liaison Office.

The discussions demonstrated the inter-linkages between climate change, biodiversity and sustainable land management (SLM), as well as how gender-sensitive approaches to these issues contribute to sustainable livelihoods, environment protection and sustainable development. In highlighting the implications for biodiversity and the people who manage and rely upon it, in (inter)government, business and other decision-making bodies, the panel members brought the issue to the forefront, similarly to what is currently being done for climate change. Through the interventions it was clear that the political, economic, and social empowerment of women is of vital importance and that investing in women and girls is key not only for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development as a whole, but also for advancing global peace and security. It was also clear that governments need to provide financial support to gender equality initiatives within the responsible (environment) ministries as well as within the Rio Conventions.

Building on these discussions and as support to the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/289 which aims to help the UN system be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress, the inter linkages between biodiversity, climate change and



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sustainable land management from a gender perspective, the Secretariat of the CBD and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) ,in partnership with the Government of Finland and the Millennium Challenge Corporation facilitated a luncheon discussion on Gender inequality - A constraint to economic growth, biodiversity protection, poverty reduction and sustainable development: Linkages between MDG 1, 3, and 7 on 21 September 2010 at the margins of the MDG Summit. The luncheon was made possible thanks to the financial support from the Netherlands, Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOs).

## Summary of Discussions

As moderator of the event, Ms. Lorena Aguilar, Senior Global Gender Advisor, IUCN, in introducing the subject, highlighted that according to the Millennium Development Goals 2010 report, "Gender equality and the empowerment of women are at the heart of the MDGs and are preconditions for overcoming poverty, hunger and disease. But progress has been sluggish on all fronts—from education to access to political decision making." She further stressed that under the present pressures that the world is experiencing in relation to climate change and biodiversity loss, never before has the environmental sector had such a responsibility in ensuring that projects, initiatives and policies are not gender blind.

The keynote speakers, Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary, CBD; Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General, IUCN; Ms. Cassandra Butts, Senior Advisor MCC; Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary UNCCD; H.E. Ms Tarja Reponen, Ambassador for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland and H.E. Ms. Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, each presented a review of successes, best practices and lessons learned, obstacles and gaps, challenges and opportunities faced in the last ten years in achieving the MDGs in particular, with regard to the integration of MDG 3 .

Ahmed Djoghlaf, stated that, the Convention on Biological Diversity, through its partnership with IUCN, is unique among Multi-lateral Environment Agreements in having established a Gender Plan of Action and guidance to countries on mainstreaming gender in the planning of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and called for coordination among the three Rio Conventions on the integration of gender perspectives.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, highlighted that "IUCN is the international environmental institution with the longest record in the promotion of gender equality – since 1984. Long before the world made a commitment to the MDGs, IUCN stated its intention to ensure that gender equality considerations would be fully reflected into the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources." She also stressed that in looking at MDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8, it is clear that none of them are possible without the inclusion of gender considerations and an improved situation for the women of the world. She noted that poverty and hunger can be eradicated, only if women's voices are heard in decisions that are made on, for example, agriculture and biodiversity, as they provide up to 90% of food for the rural poor and up to 80% of food in developing countries.



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Luc Gnacadja, noted that drylands make up 33 to 41% of the earth's surface according to different indicators and are home to around two billion people, among the poorest and most vulnerable communities of the planet. Gender inequality in the drylands remains a constraint to economic growth, biodiversity protection, poverty reduction and sustainable development as insufficient attention is placed at the local level and the role of women and their contribution to sustainable land management (SLM) practices. The vulnerability dimensions of women in drylands are considerable. He emphasized that in order to effectively combat desertification / land degradation and drought (DLDD) and achieve economic growth, biodiversity protection, poverty reduction and sustainable development, a full and equal participation of both men and women is required and that the UNCCD recognizes that empowering and investing in women is the key to combating the effects of DLDD and paving the way for rural sustainable land management economic development and poverty alleviation. He also called for a common strategy between the Rio Conventions on gender mainstreaming.

Cassandra Butts, in her statement outlined that, the Millennium Challenge Corporation recognizes that gender equality is fundamental to sustainability and that empowering, educating, and employing women, can lead to significant long-term benefits for overall human welfare in the poorest countries, including sustaining the natural resource base. That is why MCC analyzes gender differences and inequalities to design and implement the best possible programs aimed at achieving our mission of poverty reduction through economic growth. The bottom line is that gender equality is key to poverty reduction.

H.E. Tarja Reponen, shared with participants the relationship between poverty, gender and sustainable development throughout Finland's history. Finland's history has been a battlefield for neighboring nations. Men were soldiers, hunters and traders and women were the caregivers. Women learnt to manage farms, harvest crops and prepare ingredients for food as many women do around the world today. The capacity and wit of Finnish women was fully utilized for societal and economic development as the new challenges meant new requests for education, independence and full political rights. This in turn materialized into economic rights (i.e. legislation on inheritance and ownership of land) and the right to choose one's profession freely, be it agriculture, forestry, law, biotechnology or research. She stressed the need to recognize the knowledge and information women around the world have on the environment and the use of this information to cope with the challenges we face .

H.E. Ms. Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, Sweden made a thought-provoking statement to participants regarding the investment of all donor money into women and gender issues. She noted that it is very possible to spend all money on gender equality which can have a positive effect on all MDGs but unsure if it is politically feasible.

MISIA, Japanese Singer and Honorary Ambassador for the CBD COP 10, emphasized the link between people and the environment and stressed the importance of biodiversity. She used the Japanese Kanji to express the symbolic connection between humans and nature.



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## Conclusions

Through the roundtable discussions there were several common actions that were called for towards the achievement of MDG 3 (Table discussion actions are in Annex I). Amongst these are:

1. Two prong education for all stakeholders at all levels: from infancy through adulthood
2. Finance:
  - a. Strengthening of micro-credit schemes for women to access loans
  - b. More funding for community/grass roots gender activities
  - c. More women needed in decision-making positions in the finance world
3. Legislation for resource rights to be transferred to women
4. Land and inheritance rights for women
5. Integration of traditional and cultural rights into the gender debate
6. Coordination among the Rio Conventions on gender

The report including its annexes is available at [www.cbd.int/gender](http://www.cbd.int/gender) and at

[www.generoyambiente.org/home.php](http://www.generoyambiente.org/home.php)

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

413, Saint Jacques Street, suite 800  
Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1N9  
Canada

Tel.: +1 514 288 2220  
Fax: +1 514 288 6588  
[secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int)

[www.cbd.int/gender](http://www.cbd.int/gender)