

*“Gender inequality - A constraint to economic growth, environment protection, poverty reduction and sustainable development: Linkages between MDG 1, 3, and 7.”*

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,

It is an honour to co-host this event here today along with IUCN, the Government of Finland and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Gender inequality is a constraint to economic growth, poverty reduction, environment protection and sustainable development.

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.

Why is gender mainstreaming important for the Convention? Mainstreaming gender in biodiversity initiatives: Increases efficiency and effectiveness; ensures the incorporation of knowledge, skills and experiences; Enhances sustainability; improves credibility and accountability; Contributes to reduce poverty; Guarantees compliance with human rights standards; Promotes social justice and most importantly prevents increasing gender inequality.

90 percent of the world’s staple crops (rice, wheat, maize) are produced by women, this in turn provides up to 90 percent of the rural poor’s food intake and women produce 60–80 percent of food in most developing countries.

In the MDG report released in June, it was reported that despite the fact that, globally, women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased, in sub-Saharan Africa only one in three paid jobs outside of agriculture are occupied by women. The report also tell us that in predominantly agricultural sector countries, “women are mostly employed in agriculture and largely in vulnerable jobs – in subsistence farming, as unpaid family workers or as own-account workers- with no or little financial security or social benefits”

Two months ago, we held a similar dialogue, in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Council at the margins of its Annual Ministerial Review we discussed, *Harnessing the gender dimensions of biodiversity, sustainable land management and climate change to achieve environment protection and sustainable development*. We concluded 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, but also for advancing global peace and security.

In line with the mandate outlined in UNGA resolution 63/219 to commemorate and contribute to the International Year of Biodiversity, this event is also part of our support to the United Nations General Assembly resolution that the UN system be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

It is our hope that the discussions here today on the linkage between MDG 1, 3, and 7, will contribute to the internationally agreed development agenda (IADA), where world leaders and development partners have recognized the synergies among various development goals and targets, and the need for an integrated approach for achieving them. Through your discussions you will assess the state of implementation of gender-related goals and the UN development agenda and explore key challenges in achieving the international goals and commitments in the area of gender equality.