

# **Proposals to Create a Gender-equal and Sustainable Society and Conserve the Global Environment**

from **Roundtable Discussion in Tokyo**

Organized by **Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW)**

February 17, 2002, Tokyo

We participants of the Tokyo Roundtable Discussion, as a preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in 2002, propose the following, in order to create a gender-equal and sustainable society focusing on human dignity and thereby realize a wholesome global environment.

The term “gender-equal and sustainable society” refers to a global community where the lives of people in every part of the world, including those of future generations, are fully respected, free from poverty, and where both men and women can equally participate in the policy-making processes concerning environment and development. In such a community, both the ecosystems and human, developing and industrialized nations, and civil society and governments, are involving in various activities including economic activities on equal relationships under the fundamental principle of guaranteeing every right.

However, reflecting on the decade after the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro, we can see the rapid progress of profit-oriented economic globalization has enlarged the gap between the rich and the poor and led to growing poverty with more intensified conflicts and wider regional gaps, threatening peace, human rights, and human security. Japan is no exception. Here the socio-economic system characterized by unsustainable mass production, consumption, and waste disposal continues to prevail. This is possible not only at the sacrifice of many people including indigenous peoples in other parts of Asia but also through the inequality between men and women. Despite its high economic status, Japan is far from our goal in that the representation of women participating in the decision-making process is low, men and women have a limited range of options for their life course due to the deep-rooted notion of stereotyped sexual division of labor, and incidents violating human rights such as violence against women are now everyday occurrences.

Facing up to such a reality, committed to protect the global environment and build a sustainable society, we the participants of the Tokyo Roundtable Discussion present the following nine proposals.

**We call on international organizations, every national government, especially the Japanese government, together with actors of civil society to agree on the following proposals and implement them:**

**I. Conserving the global environment and building a gender equal and sustainable society**

1. The human rights of all men and women should be guaranteed to create a gender-equal and sustainable society respecting the lives of living things. The concept of human rights embodies reproductive and sexual health/rights, and the rights of men and women to have equal access to land and other natural resources.
2. In view of protecting the lives of present and future generations, governments are urged to reduce the use of fossil fuels and nuclear energy, eventually ban them while developing renewable energy sources such as natural energy and shift to policies to promote their use.
3. Governments and NGO's should explicitly address the reassessment of the unsustainable economy and society founded on mass production, consumption, and waste disposals, as well as actions undertaken to build a sustainable society
4. Governments should recognize the importance of economic and non-economic activities led by civil society for building a sustainable society, give financial assistance and also integrate those activities into their policies.

**II. Eliminating poverty and the negative effects of economic globalization**

1. Governmental leaders of each nation, who are gravely concerned about the extremely harmful impacts on people's lives and the health of global environment, should publicly announce at the Johannesburg Summit their commitments to fundamentally transform the adverse trends caused by a rapid progress of profit-oriented globalization of the economy during the decade after the Rio Summit, such as an enlarging gap between the rich and the poor, a sharp increase in the poor population, and aggravating environmental degeneration.
2. We make the following suggestions for each specific issue.
  - 1) Understanding that the profit-oriented globalization of the economy has triggered the collapse of the existing social security and has put the socially disadvantaged including women in further difficulties, governments should encourage active individuals and groups to develop and adopt global safety networks for human security based on equality between men and women and give financial assistance to such efforts.
  - 2) In line with the progress of economic globalization and deregulation, water and other resources essential to maintain life are being privatized, which in turn has become a greater burden on the socially disadvantaged. Therefore, governments should recognize water, forests and other resources as public goods and manage them from the viewpoint of protecting nature.
  - 3) Speculative international exchange transactions have accelerated the destabilization of the economy, made people's lives more unstable, and furthermore brought about the inequality

between men and women. To restrain such trends, governments should introduce the system of Tobin tax and make it effective immediately.

- 4) Opposing to those multinational corporations whose goal is to gain the greatest possible profit, governments should promote and support the economic activities of cooperatives, mutual aid associations, and NPO's and NGO's, such as microcredit and local currency, which are grounded in partnerships among people and conducive to achieving gender equality.
- 5) Subsistence in food production in developing nations is at a risk because of SAP (Structural Adjustment Programs) and the luxurious food demand by industrialized nations. Moreover, excessive food import by industrialized nations is endangering food security. As one solution to deal with this situation, governments should promote local production and consumption, while banning the production and import of genetically modified food in order to secure food safety.
- 6) The acquisition of intellectual property of seeds by multinational corporations is threatening the subsistence agriculture of the poor in developing nations as well as biodiversity. Respecting the knowledge and wisdom inherited by people in developing nations, especially women and indigenous peoples, over generations, governments should revise WTO's TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) so as to guarantee their traditional skills and knowledge about seeds as intellectual property.

### **III. Promoting the equal participation of women and men in planning, policy-making, and management of the global environmental conservation**

1. In order to achieve equality between men and women in the decision-making processes at all national and international levels, governmental leaders of every nation should designate action plans to set the sex ratio of decision makers at 50 to 50 and implement them by 2015.
2. Governments should adopt affirmative action programs in order to ensure the participation of those who have socially limited opportunities to have their voice, including women.
3. Governments should recognize NGO's and citizens as equal partners and offer them more opportunities to officially voice their opinions as well as establish a system where their views are reflected in policy making.
4. Valuing the experience and intuition of women engaged in science technology in the field; establish a system to reflect them on decision-making.
5. Disseminate substantial information required for participating in decision-making and guarantee the equal access of men and women to information.
6. To improve women's capabilities in planning, decision-making, and implementation, promote and support educational and training programs.
7. Transform the decision-making mechanism from the existing exclusively centralized one into a multi-dimensional and widely participatory one.
8. Respect voluntary decision-making in local communities and share innovative activities for building a sustainable society.

9. Recognizing that women are playing a significant role as major agricultural producers, further affirmative policies to enable them to participate in various decision-making occasions related to agriculture and rural communities.

#### **IV. Achieving equality between women and men through women's economic empowerment and thereby creating a sustainable society**

1. Governments, employers, and trade unions should set up the legal framework to guarantee every right of men and women workers, both regular and non-regular, and to achieve equal treatment, equal pay for equal work, and reduction of working hours.
2. Review the present social security system, which limits women's paid work, and adopt an individual-based, sex-neutral tax and pension system.
3. In working for building a sustainable society, make sure that women are not the only ones to be responsible for unpaid work.
4. Promote effective policies to enable men and women to equally share paid and unpaid work together and manage both family responsibilities and individual career.
5. Employ more women as managers of natural resources such as forestry, so as to promote women's economic independence.
6. Through the introduction of microfinance and support for entrepreneurs, advance programs, which realize both environmental conservation and women's economic independence.

#### **V. Protecting the lives of present and future generations**

1. In the past decade after the Rio Summit, more evidence points to the scientific view that endocrine disruptors have serious impacts on people's, especially women's reproductive health. Accordingly, ban the production, use, and disposal of products containing endocrine disruptors, highlighting the importance of the reproductive health of parent generations for protecting the lives of future generations.
2. Make public all the information regarding the impact of natural and social phenomena on the health of girl children, girls, and mother's body as a key element for the earth's future, promote educational programs needed to understand those impacts, and take necessary actions. From social, educational, and political perspectives assess the recognition on the importance of maternal health among other things and work on the necessary policies and programs including training of women specialists.

#### **VI. Creating a gender equal and sustainable society through education and information access**

1. To deepen the understanding for the value of life, advance environmental education at school, home, as well as in lifelong education. Through environmental education, raise people's awareness that human activities tend to destroy environment and that equality between men and women is crucial to creating a sustainable society; and empower them to be able to understand diverse problems on a global scale and solve them.
2. Reflecting women's significant influences at home and in local communities, increase

women's access to information on creating a sustainable society and provide more opportunities for training, so that women can actively function as environmental educators.

3. As a part of efforts for creating a sustainable society, promote gender education to reconsider the fixed division of labor between sexes, so that people would understand the important roles the media plays and simultaneously nurture the ability to criticize it.

## **VII. Mitigating the damage caused by conflicts and disasters**

1. Men and women suffer differently from the damages caused by natural disasters, which are frequently linked to human factors, and their needs at the time of emergencies also differ. In addition, women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of abuse. To cope with this situation, conduct research on the effects of disasters on people's life and health, taking into account the differences of sex, age, and contexts and adopt necessary measures.
2. Considering the gender-specific emergence of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorders) resulting from disasters, conduct research from gender perspectives on the long-term effects on mental, physical, and social health and take necessary steps.
3. Increase the participation of women, including girls, in the recovery efforts from conflicts and disasters, and provide and support the necessary education and training programs.

## **VIII. Achieving the gender issues in conserving environment and creating a sustainable society**

1. Governments of each nation are urged to check the achievements made in gender mainstreaming as specified in international agreements that have been adopted by the UN and other concerned agencies, publicly report the result, and make a commitment to carry out those agreements by setting a time limit.
2. As one index for assessing and monitoring the progress of "Agenda 21" and other international action plans, governments, international agencies, and grant organizations should develop the concept of Global Gender Initiative (GGI)<sup>1</sup> and finance it.
3. To further gender mainstreaming in building a sustainable society, promote citizens' networking and financially support it.
4. To build a sustainable economy and society, review the budget of central and local governments from gender perspectives.
5. Recognizing that terrors, conflicts, political instability, violence of human rights, and environmental degradation are threatening the security of people in developing countries, especially that of women, industrialized nations should make commitments to improve the financial assistance extended to developing nations in terms of quality and quantity, by writing off the debts incurred by the most heavily indebted nations, doubling the amount of ODA and other viable methods. To ensure that this budget is allotted to this specific purpose, introduce such policies as debt-for-sustainability swap<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See the appendix.

<sup>2</sup> It refers to a project, which writes off the debts of the poorest nations and contributes to building a sustainable society by means of local currency to offset the debt.

## **A Proposal for Global Gender Initiative (GGI)**

1. Objectives: To contribute to mainstreaming of gender perspectives through monitoring the implementation of various global commitments, including Agenda 21 and publicizing the results.
2. Who will take the initiatives? A coalition of non-governmental public interest groups of different countries will be formed, which will then conduct the initiatives.
3. Outline of the initiatives:
  - 1) To develop indicators to measure gender mainstreaming.
  - 2) To apply them to pilot projects in some countries, to evaluate effectiveness, to feedback and to improve them.
  - 3) To conduct case studies to identify specific issues in different countries by partner organizations.
  - 4) To monitor and evaluate the progress based on regional and global network.

Through these activities, it is hoped that institutionalization of gender mainstreaming will be promoted.

4. Financial sources:
  - 1) Voluntary contribution by governments
  - 2) Subsidy from private foundations
  - 3) International organizations such as World Bank and UNDP.

(Proposed by K. Matsushita on February 17, 2002)

## **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

(February 17, 2002 in Tokyo)

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## Background Information

### Q1: What is Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women?

Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women (KFAW) is an organization based in Kitakyushu City, western Japan, established in 1990. KFAW aims to improve women's status in Asia through various activities; conducting research, organizing conferences and seminars, implementing trainings, organizing study tours as well as documenting and publishing information on women in Asia, including Japan. KFAW's motto is mutuality; namely, learning, touching and helping each other. The uniqueness of KFAW is its strong foothold in the local community, Kitakyushu and among women's groups in Japan. The major groups of KFAW's Board of Directors are the representatives of community based organizations and women's groups.

Environment has been one of the major areas of activities for KFAW because of the historical women's environmental movement called "We want a Blue Sky", which fought against industrial pollution in the 1960s and 1970s in Kitakyushu City. Those women of the movement were the major driving force for the establishment of KFAW. Thus, since its start, KFAW has worked to make women's voice visible and to mainstream gender perspectives in environmental activities at the local, national and international levels.

Please visit <http://www.kfaw.or.jp> or e-mail to: [kfaw@kfaw.or.jp](mailto:kfaw@kfaw.or.jp)

### Q2: Why did KFAW organize the roundtable discussion?

To organize roundtable discussions was one of KFAW's contributions to the WSSD (World Summit for Sustainable Development) processes to be held in Johannesburg in August 2002. After participating in the regional preparatory process for the WSSD held in Beijing and Phnom Penh in July and November 2001 respectively, KFAW realized the necessity of inputting concerted voices on environment from gender perspectives, especially from Japan. It was also revealed that the necessity for mainstreaming gender perspectives in environmental policies is not widely recognized and the commitment of women's groups for the WSSD processes is not strong.

KFAW called upon environmental activists and women's groups to have round table discussions on WSSD and related issues in Kitakyushu and Tokyo on February 9 and 17, 2002 respectively to increase their mutual understanding and to raise their concerns for the WSSD. The invitation was well received and participants of the two round table discussions had active dialogues from a wide range of viewpoints.

### Q3: Who are the participants of the roundtable discussion-Tokyo?

The participants of roundtable discussions Tokyo were 40 in total from nation wide. Their backgrounds as well as areas of interest are diverse, although majority are very active in various environmental issues.