

**COP 17 Pre-Consultative Continental Dialogue**  
**Ms. Bineta Diop**  
**Femmes Africa Solidarité**

**The Impact of Climate Change on Women in Africa**

Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here at this Consultative Continental Dialogue. Thank you to Honorable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, President of COP17 and South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and Honorable Edna Molewa, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs of South Africa, for their commitment to African women and for their work to ensure that African women's voices are heard in the climate change debate.

The Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) network, which is a network of more than 55 organizations, is well-represented here today by WiLDAF, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change, Isis-WICCE, FEMNET, ABANTU for Development, and many others. FAS is the Coordinator of GIMAC and we are happy that the GIMAC network is here to join the Gender and Climate Change network and to support them in the good work that they have been doing on climate change.

Climate Change has also been an important focus for the GIMAC network and the role of African women and youth. We particularly salute youth engagement – both female and male. Indeed our future generations give us hope.



GIMAC held debates on climate change at our Pre-Summit meetings in Addis Ababa and Malabo, and we want to thank the Mary Robinson Foundation on Climate Justice for starting the dialogue of climate change at GIMAC.

- There is no escaping this fact: **Climate change is a reality**. The scientific evidence is there and more importantly, we are seeing and experiencing the effects of climate change ourselves. There is therefore an urgent need to increase our understanding of climate change and how to mitigate and adapt to it.
- The International Food Policy Research Institute says that roughly 65% of sub-Saharan Africa's population relies on subsistence farming. And according to the United Nations, **80% of smallholder farmers are women**. Agriculture provides 70% of employment in sub-Saharan Africa and **women make up almost 50% of the agriculture labour force**. **Women really then are the producers** in Africa and will be the most affected by climate change.
- Women, especially those in rural communities, **need to be integrally involved in designing and implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives**. This is not happening enough and we need to change this. By comparison with men in poor countries, women face historical disadvantages, which include limited access to decision-making and economic assets that compound the challenges of climate change. It is therefore men's perceptions that are taken into account in the planning processes. As a male perspective dominates in



climate protection and climate adaptation planning processes, it fails to take into account the practical and strategic needs of women.

- We know that women are the backbone of the survival of their households. The responsibility of collecting water and firewood is women and girls' responsibility. With climate change, we are faced with a **protection** issue. The further women travel in search of firewood and water, the more their safety decreases, and they face a higher their risk of violence. In addition, due to water scarcity, there is an increased risk of unsafe hygiene practices that can spread water-borne diseases such as cholera and dysentery and children and pregnant women are most at risk.
- Climate Change is affecting **drop out rates among young girls** who quit school to help their struggling mothers.
- **Women are not owners of land** and because access to land is difficult for them, they do not cope easily after a disaster.

In our **response** to climate change, we need to ensure that enough **financial resources** are allocated to adaptation initiatives and innovative techniques towards a **green economy**. Women need to have access to high growth seeds, inputs and soil management techniques.

We need **land reform** that benefits women. Women should be able to inherit and own land. We saw from the example of our dear friend, Wangari Maathai, that women are good caretakers of the environment. They not only



focus on taking care of the land, but they think of sustainability and also take care of everything surrounding the land such as planting trees. I know that our governments are trying to find support for the “**Great Green Wall of Africa**” initiative to halt the advancing Sahara desert. This initiative will result in the planting of a tree belt across Africa from Senegal to Djibouti, and the tree belt will go through 11 countries from east to west.

Our **governments need to be more strategic and effective** in climate change adaptation, as we are now seeing in fuel shortages. Otherwise we will pay the price for it in the long run. **Africa is rich in natural resources** – land, water, minerals. But Africa’s greatest resource are her people and in particular, women. We need to **ensure that women benefit** from our natural resources, especially from the extractive industry, so that not only our generation can benefit, but that we are able to pay it forward to future generations.

Several concrete efforts to address these vulnerabilities in Africa have been cited. A growing interest in gender aspects of climate change has become evident in the climate policy processes, with more awareness raising, more learning and engaging in discussion

Platforms for voices and concerns of women in the climate change debate have been established. Several caucuses and fora like GIMAC are in place, allowing for the **brainstorming and information sharing on best practices in mitigation and adaptation strategies amongst women and gender activists**. The gender and climate change network, a global network has served at the several COPS as an opportunity to interact and the pave



way on the gender dimension in climate protection. Other partners such as FAO, WEDO, the Gender and climate change network Africa, and more serve as support for further advocacy and awareness raising for gender justice in the future climate regime.

