

**Welcome address by Dr Uschi Eid,  
Parliamentary State Secretary at the  
Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development  
on the occasion of the International Conference**

**‘Gender Perspectives on Earth Summit 2002 -  
Energy, Transport, Information for Decision-Making’  
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**jointly hosted by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and  
Nuclear Safety and the Heinrich Böll Foundation**

**1. Introduction**

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to wish you all a happy new year and, indeed, new millennium. I am pleased to be here and exchange with you today some thoughts on the topic of "Gender and energy, transport and information for decision-making" with reference to Earth Summit 2002. We must start early preparing for the Earth Summit, which is taking place on the tenth anniversary of the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, if we are to bring our influence to bear on the international discussions. So I do welcome this weeks meeting. And I welcome you on my own behalf and on behalf of the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given the situation in which the poor are living at the beginning of the new millennium and the state of the environment, we are still facing great challenges in the run-up to Rio + 10. To pursuit of sustainable development must be the foremost aim of all our political efforts. In his millennium report, "We, the Peoples", the Secretary-General of the United Nations formulated that challenge as follows, "Our goal must be to meet the economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of the planet to provide for the needs of future generations". If development is to have a viable future, it must take account not only of the central principle of "equity between the generations" but also the principle of equity within this generation and thus between men and women.

**2. The gender perspective and sustainable development**

It is of particular importance to me to discuss gender and environment with you today, not only because, as a green politician, it is a topic particularly close to my heart but because, in their everyday lives, women in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America do play an especially important role with regard to the environment.

Firstly, it is women that are particularly hit by environmental degradation. Due to their status within society, the division of labour between men and women and the traditional rules governing inheritance and land ownership, women often have only limited access to and control over natural resources. As the environment changes, the rights and opportunities of women are, in practice, being further eroded in many places. Thus they are more likely to be the victims of negative changes to the environment, for example when water is scarce or of poor quality or when they have to travel long distances to gather firewood and, in doing so, expose themselves to different kind of danger. Poor harvests lead to malnutrition of the family for which they are responsible and often to the serious under-nutrition of the women themselves, as they are often the ones who eat only after the men of the family have eaten. Women at work, employed in most cases as unskilled or low skilled labour, are also exposed to health hazards for example from the environmentally harmful substances used in production.

Secondly, the tragedy is that women then become the perpetrators when accessible sources of energy, fertile soil and water become ever scarcer and as a consequence are overexploited. The consequences of such a development are often quite paradoxical: when women till their fields, graze their stock or collect fuel and water, they are often forced to act in ways that conflict with their own interest in conserving the environment over the long term. This leads to a vicious circle in which environmental degradation becomes both the cause and result of poverty. Consequently, poverty reduction and the protection of the environment and natural resources must be pursued together as part of a "win-win" strategy. The vicious circle in which poverty aggravates environmental degradation and advancing environmental degradation results in greater poverty must be interrupted at as many points as possible.

Thirdly, women offer a great deal of untapped potential in them: their influence on the formation of political will and on the process of political decision-making continues to be minimal that political decisions often fail to take into account their interests and needs and women are prevented from contributing valuable skills, knowledge and experience.

### **3. The gender perspective in environment-related development co-operation programmes and projects**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Gender equality is an objective of international efforts in its own right and must be incorporated into all areas of policy by means of gender mainstreaming – this was laid down at the World Conference on Women in Beijing and reaffirmed last year at Beijing + 5.

As women have a great potential for practising sustainable management of natural resources, women are important partners for us in development co-operation in the field of the environment. Let me state quite clearly that it is not a question of financing a little women's project here and there or of "involving" women in (male-)designed projects. Rather, it is a question of integrating gender analyses into the planning of development projects. Women and men must have an equal say in the design of the project and both should be its target group and beneficiaries to equal degrees.

In development co-operation women's actual social status in the relevant (rural or urban) society as it has developed over time must be taken into account. Yet technological advances and globalisation are opening up new opportunities for them to demand greater freedoms and to adopt new roles. Development projects can build on their potential for change and develop new opportunities.

### **4. Examples of gender-oriented development projects in the energy and transport sectors**

I would like to give you two examples of how the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development is trying to incorporate the gender perspective into development projects. One relates to transport and one to energy.

#### **4.1 Transport**

Means of private transport, such as cars and bicycles, are very often used exclusively by men in some of our partner countries; in some cultures, it is considered improper for women to use them. Thus, women are more dependent on public transport. Yet public transport planning is mostly a male domain; it is to a very large extent tailored to the needs of men and ignores the needs of women. This has economic disadvantages not only for women but for the entire family.

I would like to tell you about a project we implemented in Swaziland to expand the local bus system. Here it was proven that a seemingly gender-neutral project can be highly gender relevant. The routing, scheduling and tariff structure were decisive in determining what social groups were able to use the bus system. In tough and lively negotiations, the market women succeeded in having the buses routed so that they served the places relevant for their work at the market at the appropriate times of day. This was of vital importance for the economic success of their activities, because good transport connections are essential to the market women if they are to sell their goods to the customers at these markets.

## 4.2 Energy sector

In an energy project in Kenya increasing energy efficiency, combating poverty and improving the situation of women was successfully combined. As part of the project, a special kind of cooker was developed that allows 50% less firewood to be used. The women were trained in both craft and trading skills so that they could produce and sell the cookers. Tree nurseries were also established. The project was successful in three ways: the women's living and working conditions were improved, energy consumption was reduced and, not least, women became aware of the important role they have to play in the environment, they have become "active stewards" of nature.

Another aspect is the following:

Although desirable from an ecological and economic point of view, the increase in energy efficiency achieved by many projects to rationalise energy use in the industrial sector often lead to a loss of jobs, particularly at the levels of unskilled or semi-skilled workers. As a disproportionate number of women are employed at these levels it is they that have to bear the social consequences of these energy efficiency projects and that is why it is extremely important to create alternative sources of income for women.

## 5. Conclusions

What are the conclusions for further development cooperation?

- In development cooperation, programmes related to environment must be based on gender analyses. These analyses must take into account how tasks and resources are divided within households.
- The most important socio-economic aims should be: to secure equal rights for men and women to use and to owe for example water, land and forests and to save time to reduce the work load and to use resources efficiently.
- Only with the active participation of the people concerned, solutions that are adapted to local circumstances will be found. Precondition is that women play an active part. In order to do so, women must be supported to develop their skills and organise in groups.
- Governments and international co-operation should support those projects in particular that explicitly incorporate the aspects of poverty reduction and equality into their design stage and that operate in an appropriately gender-specific way.
- Through training and incentives, targeted efforts should encourage women to play a skilled role in the energy and transport sector, so that their interest are taken into account.

## 6. Future

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Earth Summit 2002 on sustainable development gives us a valuable opportunity. In the international discussions on a more sustainable development path for the Earth, gender-specific aspects have to be taken into account and women have to be part in the decision-making processes in all regions of the world.

The task is, to translate this political will into concrete political action.

In order to achieve this, I wish you fruitful discussions in the coming days and enjoyable stay in Berlin.

Welcome again!