

Commission on the Status of Women

Recent Developments and Upcoming Events

Over the past year, several milestones have been reached on commitments of the CSW and other women's rights-oriented United Nations goals. Firstly, the celebration of the first International Day of the Girl Child was held on October 11, 2012, and the first resolution to ban female genital mutilation was passed by the General Assembly on December 20, 2012, calling upon Member States to take stronger measures to prevent this practice.¹ However, these successes are overshadowed by the fact that due to divided positions among Member States, the Commission failed to reach a formal agreement on the theme of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication at the 56th CSW session held in March 2012.² Thus, the 57th CSW session, which will be held from March 4-15, 2013, presents an upcoming opportunity for CSW to achieve progress on its extensive mandate in promoting women's rights and gender equality globally.³ The agenda of the 57th CSW session will focus on the "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls."⁴ Other provisional themes will be discussed, such as the key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015 development framework.⁵

In preparation for the session, several events have taken place such as an expert group meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in September 2012 on the issue of violence against women and girls.⁶ The expert panel noted that while the inclusion of a wide range of actors had a positive effect on the achievement of sustainable and broad social changes, government involvement was a prerequisite to spearhead change.⁷ Additionally, the CSW held a Stakeholder's Forum in December 2012 aiming towards appropriate strategies and initiatives relating to the elimination of gender-based violence, the inclusion of men and boys in the process, and the delivery of assistance to victims.⁸ Furthermore, several women's groups have also started to lay the foundations for the 57th session. With financial support from the UN Entity for Gender and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Association of African Women for Research and Development set up a two-day meeting in Ghana on the theme of "Strengthening the participation of West Africa Women's Organization in the CSW through partnership building between players."⁹

Working methods at the 57th CSW session

The 57th CSW session will gather the current 45 representative Member States of the CSW at UN Headquarters.¹⁰ The CSW Bureau is responsible for the preparation, proceedings and successful outcome of each annual session, and will orient the debate and negotiations.¹¹ During the CSW, UN Women serves as the secretariat and supports the CSW and the Bureau by providing regular reports about women's rights and facilitating the coordination between civil society and the UN.¹² UN Women was founded in 2010 as part of a UN reformation process, merging various UN-organizations that focused on women.¹³ Apart from supporting CSW, UN Women assists Member States to implement agreed standards and monitors the fulfillment of the commitments made.¹⁴ NGOs and other civil society representatives will also be present during the session, with a consultative status.¹⁵ The presence of these actors is essential as they hold leaders accountable for the commitments made during the session, and they provide critical

¹ UN Women, *2012 Year in Review*, 2012.

² UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Agreed Conclusions of the CSW on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (1996 – 2011)*, 2013.

³ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women 57th Session*, 2013.

⁴ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, 2012, p. 3.

⁵ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women 57th Session*, 2013.

⁶ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, 2012

⁷ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, 2012, p.17.

⁸ UN Women, *Preventing and eliminating violence against women: Stakeholder's Forum*, 2012, p.1.

⁹ Government of Ghana, *Women's Groups Strategize for 57th CSW meeting in New York.*, 2012.

¹⁰ Commission on the Status of Women, *Membership of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session (2013)*, 2012.

¹¹ UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Overview*, 2012.

¹² UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Overview*, 2012.

¹³ UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2013.

¹⁴ UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2013.

¹⁵ UN Women, *Non-Governmental Organizations Participation in the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2013.

policy guidance and recommendation on the themes discussed.¹⁶ After examining the proposals offered by these different Member States and entities, the Commission will formulate its commitments for the year.¹⁷

Working Method and Output

Since the 50th meeting in 2006, the Commission emphasizes its main objectives by naming one priority theme each year, based on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and its five-year reviews.¹⁸ Each year the commission reviews the progress made on the implementation of the previous sessions' agreed conclusions.¹⁹ The CSW's annual sessions are organized around high-level roundtables, interactive panels, and parallel events, which aim to share lessons-learned, good practices, and highlight the key strategies to foster gender equality and gender mainstreaming.²⁰ The main result of the Commission's work is the formal agreement it reaches during its annual session.²¹ This agreed conclusion contains an assessment of attained progress, a set of initiatives and policies that can be implemented by governments and intergovernmental bodies, as well as future challenges.²² Moreover, during its annual session, CSW also discusses and adopts a number of resolutions on a variety of topics, such as the girl child and HIV/AIDS, ending female genital mutilation, to the current situation of Palestinian women.²³

The Committee at the National Model United Nations Conference

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council which puts its emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW comprises 45 Member States, which are elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution for a four-year period. The Commission submits its annual report to the ECOSOC for adoption.

Format: The CSW is a Resolution Writing Committee.

Voting: In the CSW each member has one vote and it does not allow for special privileges of Member States, such as veto power. All decisions are decided on by majority vote of members present for both procedural and substantive matters.

¹⁶ UN Women, *Non-Governmental Organizations*, 2013.

¹⁷ Commission on the Status of Women, *Communications Procedure of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2013.

¹⁸ Commission on the Status of Women, *Methods of Work*, 2013.

¹⁹ Commission on the Status of Women, *Methods of Work*, 2013.

²⁰ Commission on the Status of Women, *Methods of Work*, 2013.

²¹ UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Overview*, 2013.

²² UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Overview*, 2013.

²³ UN Commission on the Status of Women, *Overview*, 2013.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. (2013). *Agreed Conclusions of the CSW on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (1996 – 2011)*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/agreedconclusions.html>

As seen above, the principal outcome of CSW are the agreed conclusions and resolutions made annually. This website provides access to all the formal agreements taken by the Commission from 1996 to 2011. This represents a great overview of the work of the Commission, its achievements and targets in the last years and sessions.

UN Women. (2012). *2012 Year in Review*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/timeline/2012-year-in-review.html>

This Timeline published by Women Watch under the aegis of UN Women is a concise and rapid overview of every milestone achieved in 2012 regarding the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. Single accomplishments and events are pointed out to illustrate the progress made on women empowerment and gender equality, but also to remember the necessity to remain seized on the topic. The timeline includes adopted legal frameworks and laws to strengthen women's rights just as single positive developments on women's situation.

UN Women. (2012). *Annual Report 2011-2012*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/UN-Women-AR-2012.pdf>

The annual report is a summary the work and achievement of UN Women during the last year. Various factors are identified as priority areas of intervention and the changing situation of international and local politics, societies and cultural circumstances are evaluated. Each sections briefly examine the environment for women in the regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and in a global perspective.

UN Women. (2012). *Preventing and eliminating violence against women: Stakeholder's Forum*. Retrieved January 10, 2013 from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/pdf/CSW-Programme_NOTES-3P.pdf

In December 2012, UN Women organized a Stakeholder's Forum on the prevention of gender-based violence. This document provides an overview of the five panels where participants were able to discuss further commitment and objectives on the topic of violence on women. Results and agreements are forwarded to the 57th session of CSW in March 2013, in order to implement the discussions and opinions of stakeholders to the Committee's meeting.

UN Women. (2012). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

A panel of experts met in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2012, with the cooperation of UN Women, ESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, to discuss CSW 57th Priority theme: The Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. This report is a summary of the key findings and recommendations that were settled upon during the conference. Various factors which concern the status and the development of violence on women are identified and evaluated, such as legal frameworks, media and urban, gang and armed violence.

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United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. (2013). *Agreed Conclusions of the CSW on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (1996 – 2011)*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/agreedconclusions.html>

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UN Women. (2013). *Non-Governmental Organizations*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/ngo/index.html>

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UN Women. (2012). *Preventing and eliminating violence against women: Stakeholder's Forum*. Retrieved January 10, 2013 from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/pdf/CSW-Programme_NOTES-3P.pdf

UN Women. (2012). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

I. Economic, Social and Political Empowerment of Women in the Context of Political Transition

Recent Developments

Times of political upheaval and transition are difficult to navigate for all parties involved, but such times can also be positive: providing opportunities for active change to governmental, societal, and cultural processes, especially with respect for women. While implementing new policies of transitioning governments, there is room to address economic disparities between genders, such as the gender gap in science and technology. Because of preconceptions of what work is suitable for women in various countries, many women lack the access to or encouragement to pursue advanced academic training and jobs in science and technology.²⁴ As equality in education continues to be a key factor to women's political, economic, and social empowerment, the barriers women face in getting training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) should be considered in states facing political restructuring because of the opportunities to build better options for women that situation can provide.²⁵ With such training comes better jobs and therefore, economic sustainability – not just for women, but for entire economic systems.²⁶ Governments in transition have an interest in quelling economic uncertainty and it follows that development policy should move women into training programs that will provide them with more and equal work on state levels and a pathway to sustainable development and growth.²⁷

At the Vienna Policy Dialogue in December 2012, Wu Hongbo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, addressed attendees with a clear reminder of the issues that continue to plague women, who “continue to face discrimination in access to education, work and economic assets. Women's participation in decision making at all level remains far from adequate. Violence against women continues to undermine efforts to empower women and to ensure respect for their equal rights.”²⁸ With an eye to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) intended to be met by 2015, the Dialogue engaged world leaders on an agenda of gender equality and empowerment both in terms of progress that has been made and progress that is still to come.²⁹ Building upon the progress achieved due to the MDGs, the work of the conference encouraged the international community to begin to address the systemic (political and societal) causes of gender equality.³⁰ Recognizing that equality of rights and access for women is central to the development of any state, delegates to the Dialogue agreed that in post-2015 goal setting, gender equality must be a goal of its own.³¹ It was also emphasized that gender equality should be incorporated into all other goals set, to ensure a holistic approach to gender issues.³²

UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality continues its work to disburse grants starting from \$200,000 to organizations specifically seeking funds for on-the-ground programs to enhance women's economic and political empowerment around the world.³³ Such a focus on regional-level initiatives is welcome as this provides specific opportunities for women in the midst of political transition to air their concerns and be heard in the process of reconstructing or restructuring political systems.³⁴ An exemplar of this grant program is a 2012 recipient with an

²⁴ UN News Centre, *Countries Must Address Lack of Women in Science and Technology Fields - UN*, 2013.

²⁵ UN News Centre, *Countries Must Address Lack of Women in Science and Technology Fields - UN*, 2013.

²⁶ UN Women: Women's Economic Empowerment Section, Policy Division and ILO: Gender Equality Bureau, *Policy Brief: Decent Work and Women's Economic Empowerment: Good Policy and Practice*, 2012.

²⁷ UN Women: Women's Economic Empowerment Section, Policy Division and ILO: Gender Equality Bureau, *Policy Brief: Decent Work and Women's Economic Empowerment: Good Policy and Practice*, 2012.

²⁸ UN News Centre, *At Policy Discussion, UN Official Highlights Need for More Effort to Achieve Gender Equality*, 2012.

²⁹ UN News Centre, *At Policy Discussion, UN Official Highlights Need for More Effort to Achieve Gender Equality*, 2012.

³⁰ UN News Centre, *At Policy Discussion, UN Official Highlights Need for More Effort to Achieve Gender Equality*, 2012.

³¹ UN Information Service, *Empowerment of Women Should Be at the Heart of the Future United Nations Development Agenda*, 2012.

³² UN Information Service, *Empowerment of Women Should Be at the Heart of the Future United Nations Development Agenda*, 2012.

³³ UN Women, *Press Release: UN Women Fund for Gender Equality Announces USD 12.5 Million in Grants for Women's Economic and Political Participation*, 2012.

³⁴ UN Women, *Press Release: UN Women Fund for Gender Equality Announces USD 12.5 Million in Grants for Women's Economic and Political Participation*, 2012.

initiative focusing on “conflict resolution and peace building training to improve the livelihoods of internally displaced women and their host communities in the South Kordofan region of Sudan.”³⁵

In October 2012, a strategic partnership between UN Women and the European Commission was forged, called Spring Forward for Women.³⁶ Responding to the transformational events of the Arab Spring of 2011, the program will respect the need for change to come at a local level in order to be meaningful and will share knowledge with regional organizations on how to guarantee political engagement of women and their economic empowerment.³⁷ The Spring Forward program highlights the importance of the international community’s efforts to complement and support the change happening on regional levels while making all the best efforts to find ways to further incorporate a gender perspective in regions in political transition.³⁸ This partnership is focusing on increasing women’s political participation, enhancing government services for those in poverty, and improving the economic opportunities for women in countries undertaking governmental transition and reform, such as Tunisia and Egypt.³⁹ Currently, these two organizations are regular partners on the issues of political participation, peace and security, and gender responsive budgeting, particularly in regions in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southwest Asia.⁴⁰

The difficulty women face in having their perspectives considered has been great in the months following the Arab Spring. The efforts of protestors and revolutionaries in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria (among others) will be diminished without fundamental, grassroots change among citizens on where and how women fit into these societies when political protests turn to political negotiations.⁴¹ Women in Egypt who protested in Tahrir Square against the Hosni Mubarak regime have been reporting street harassment and assaults despite their solidarity against a dictatorial regime.⁴² When women are driven out of public spaces due to the threat of such harassment and violence, it is even more difficult for them to have a political presence in the rebuilding and restructuring of the governments in the hands of those who are now, and were previously mistreating them.⁴³ In the case of Egypt post-political regime change, women who protested in the streets and prominent women in politics alike were encouraged to follow the will of the people rather than challenge the norms of the society in the revolution’s prime time.⁴⁴

In current or post-conflict situations such as in the Great Lakes region of Africa, women have been brought into the political fold only to be marginalized in different ways.⁴⁵ For example, in Uganda, women have achieved higher economic status but are not to the point of economic security, which have inhibited their full political participation in the country’s decision-making.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, work toward implementing quotas for women in governing bodies was successful when women were involved in the peace processes but actual enforcement was never achieved.⁴⁷ Such case studies provide important lessons to be reflected on when moving forward with work on this topic.

³⁵ UN Women, *Press Release: UN Women Fund for Gender Equality Announces USD 12.5 Million in Grants for Women’s Economic and Political Participation*, 2012.

³⁶ UN Women, *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*, 2012.

³⁷ UN Women, *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*, 2012.

³⁸ UN Women, *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*, 2012.

³⁹ UN Women, *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*, 2012.

⁴⁰ UN Women, *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*, 2012.

⁴¹ Slavin, *No Arab Spring Without the “Flower” of Women’s Rights*, Al-Monitor, 2012.

⁴² BBC News, *Egypt’s Sexual Harassment of Women “Epidemic,”* BBC News Middle East, 2012.

⁴³ Danahar, *Egyptian Revolution “Failing to Deliver for Women”* BBC News Middle East, 2012.

⁴⁴ Slavin, *No Arab Spring Without the “Flower” of Women’s Rights*, Al-Monitor, 2012.

⁴⁵ International Alert, *Women’s Political Participation and Economic Empowerment in Post-Conflict Countries: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region in Africa*, 2012.

⁴⁶ International Alert, *Women’s Political Participation and Economic Empowerment in Post-Conflict Countries: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region in Africa*, 2012.

⁴⁷ International Alert, *Women’s Political Participation and Economic Empowerment in Post-Conflict Countries: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region in Africa*, 2012.

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Danahar, P. (2012). Egyptian revolution 'failing to deliver for women.' *BBC News Middle East*. Retrieved January 10, 2013, from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18861958>.

The author of this article brings out voices of women who have been affected by sexual and gender-based violence in Egypt since the 2011 uprising that resulted in then-president Hosni Mubarak's removal from power. The article reflects the struggle to lay the blame for the harassment women have been subject to in Egypt with either the regime or Egyptian society as a whole, which is important to keep in mind when attempting to solve such problems.

International Alert. (2012). *Women's Political Participation and Economic Empowerment in Post-Conflict Countries: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region in Africa*. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from:

http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/201209WomenEmpowermentEN_0.pdf.

With a focus on the Great Lakes region of Africa, the report explores case studies of women's participation in post-conflict situations and negotiations. While women's participation in peace talks helped cover their concerns in terms of representation and other policies such as health care, mechanisms for implementation were at times left unclear. The report provides important specifics on where and how women's participation might be improved in order to achieve more effective change.

Slavin, B. (2012). *No Arab Spring Without the 'Flower' of Women's Rights*. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved January 13, 2013, from: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/arab-women-fight-for-rights-at-feminist-conference-woodrow-wilson-international-center.html#ixzz28Ffb0kY8>.

This article gives a summary of post-Arab Spring activity and implications for women in different countries affected by the multiple uprisings. Drawing upon information given by women who are prominent in the work on incorporating women's perspectives into post-conflict or transitional governments, specific examples of activity both positive and negative for women are given. These first-hand viewpoints are helpful in understanding what can realistically be expected for women in different kinds of political transition in the Middle East and North Africa.

UN News Centre. (2012). *At Policy Discussion, UN Official Highlights Need for More Effort to Achieve Gender Equality*. Retrieved January 12, 2013, from:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43767&Cr=women&Cr1=gender#.UPN3tm8s4xE>.

Positive progress has been made toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), undertaken in 2000 to be met by the year 2015. However, this progress has not equally benefitted women, who still make up most of the world's impoverished. The article discusses the purpose and activity of the Vienna Policy Dialogue of 2012 which sought to address how to close the gender gap of education and poverty, among other MDGs.

UN Women: Women's Economic Empowerment Section, Policy Division and ILO: Gender Equality Bureau. (2012). *Policy Brief: Decent Work and Women's Economic Empowerment: Good Policy and Practice*. Retrieved December 13, 2012, from:

<http://www.unwomen.org/publications/decent-work-and-womens-economic-empowerment-good-policy-and-practice/>.

A summary on the political, societal, and economic benefits of meaningful and equal job opportunities for women, this document makes a case for development strategies that focus on women. Policies that invest in the economic prosperity of women lead to sustainable growth for local and national economies. The article explores how cultural shifts are important to the economic benefits women get from decent work.

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UN Women. (2012). *Press Release: EU Commission-UN Women Launch New Partnership on Women’s Empowerment*. Retrieved December 14, 2012, from: <http://www.unwomen.org/2012/10/press-release-eu-commission-un-women-launch-new-partnership-on-womens-empowerment/>.

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II. Fostering a Gender-Sensitive Perspective in Sustainable Development

Recent Developments

The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was the twenty-year review and follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit.⁴⁸ It brought together international delegations, representatives from the private sector, and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the goal of strengthening commitments to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.⁴⁹ Women had a substantial presence at the conference, especially with the Women's Major Group (WMG), the official women's platform at Rio+20. However, WMG expressed disappointment about the outcomes of the conference in their final statement on the event.⁵⁰ The Group stated that the Rio+20 outcome, *The Future We Want*, "makes almost no progress for women's rights and rights of future generations in sustainable development," with the most glaring omission in the area of women's sexual and reproductive rights, due to pressure from the Holy See.⁵¹ While there was little progress in the area of women's rights, the Rio+20 outcome document recognizes gender equality as an issue important to sustainable development and dedicates an entire thematic section to gender equality.⁵² This section is important, but the language in the final draft is much weaker than in previous drafts of the document, which WMG claims, causes systematic issues to be inadequately addressed.⁵³ For example, the document recognizes the importance of food security and that rural women are "critical agents for enhancing food security and nutrition" including through traditional sustainable agricultural practices, but fails to address the problems of globalized agriculture businesses that threaten traditional practices and often leave women without employment or livelihoods.⁵⁴

Since the Rio+20 outcome document was finalized, the discussion has converted to how it can be used to inspire post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that would continue the intentions of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁵⁵ The 67th session of the General Assembly, which started in September 2012, focuses on emphasizing SDGs that would favor the least development countries (LDCs) and allow them to prosper.⁵⁶ The issue of women's positions and the role of gender in the new SDGs were rarely mentioned. Joyce Banda, President of Malawi, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, were the only speakers who mentioned the importance of a gender perspective in the development of post-2015 SDGs.⁵⁷ All three stated that women's empowerment was of the utmost importance in achieving any SDGs and that women's knowledge and talents should be utilized when developing these goals.⁵⁸ While these were the only speakers to mention women in the debates, some discussion around women, specifically violence against women and its effect on the implementation of many of the MDGs and future SDGs, has been brought to the floor.⁵⁹

According to the Women's Environmental and Development Organization's December 2012 report, over the last five years the number of women participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has increased, reaching its peak in 2012 when 33% of all participating delegates were women (up from 19% five years ago) and 23% of delegations had a woman as their head (up from 17% five years ago).⁶⁰ However, increasing women's participation in climate change talks alone will not completely transform the decision making

⁴⁸ AWID Friday Files, *The Word on Women-Rio+20 Outcomes: What Was Agreed And What This Means For Women's Rights Going Forward*, 2012.

⁴⁹ AWID Friday Files, *The Word on Women-Rio+20 Outcomes: What Was Agreed And What This Means For Women's Rights Going Forward*, 2012.

⁵⁰ Women's Major Group, *From the Future We Want to the Future We Need: Women's Major Group Final Statement on the Outcomes of Rio+20*, 2012.

⁵¹ Various women's groups have echoed these concerns. Women's Major Group, *From the Future We Want to the Future We Need: Women's Major Group Final Statement on the Outcomes of Rio+20*, 2012.

⁵² AWID Friday Files, *The Word on Women-Rio+20 Outcomes: What Was Agreed And What This Means For Women's Rights Going Forward*, 2012.

⁵³ Women's Major Group, *From the Future We Want to the Future We Need: Women's Major Group Final Statement on the Outcomes of Rio+20*, 2012.

⁵⁴ United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want*, 2012, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Deen, T., *Wrangling Begins Over New Sustainable Development Blueprint*, 2012.

⁵⁶ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *UNGA Debate Continues Focus on MGDs, Post-2015 Agenda*, 2012.

⁵⁷ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *UNGA Debate Continues Focus on MGDs, Post-2015 Agenda*, 2012.

⁵⁸ International Institute for Sustainable Development, *UNGA Debate Continues Focus on MGDs, Post-2015 Agenda*, 2012.

⁵⁹ The World We Want 2015, *Discussion on Gender Based Violence*, 2012.

⁶⁰ Women's Environment and Development Organization, *Women's Participation in UN Climate Negotiations: 2008-2012*, p.3.

process in the field and it also will not lead to complete gender equality.⁶¹ But this increase in women's participation is promising, because various studies have shown that diversity (not only of gender, but also age, cultures, and ethnicities) leads to more effective and sustainable solutions in regards to adapting to climate change and sustainable development.⁶² This emphasis on diversity and incorporating women's perspectives into climate change and sustainable development debates can clearly be seen in the work done at the Women and Climate Change: Women, Research, and Action Conference sponsored by the Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit.⁶³ The Conference brought together representatives from 24 different countries and various representatives from women's groups, and relevant UN officials to discuss the differences in the way that climate change affects men and women and how these differences can be addressed in State policy development.⁶⁴ The Conference concluded that climate change can be an opportunity from global change, which "incorporates and facilitates gender equality and women's empowerment in programs, research, action, and advocacy."⁶⁵ The group hopes their findings lead to more gender equitable policy in the areas of sustainability throughout the world.⁶⁶

Internationally, various NGOs have also been working towards diversification and the promotion of women's equality; many have been seeing promising results and innovations. In Nigeria, for example, the NGO Enhancing Nigerian Advocacy for a Better Business Environment (ENABLE), which focuses on promoting a better business environment for the poor and emphasizes the need for sustainable business practices, has started working with Nigerian women to enhance their economic independence and use their ideas and talents to increase the amount of sustainable practices being used in the country.⁶⁷ The group has so far been successful in raising awareness of the barriers that women must tackle in order to start a business which resulted in the Nigerian government starting a £400,000 invention fund for women entrepreneurs to start small, sustainable agriculture businesses.⁶⁸ This work and the work of many similar NGOs have helped to further the cause of gender equality in environmental and sustainable practices in both the public and private sectors.

⁶¹ Women's Environment and Development Organization, *Women's Participation in UN Climate Negotiations: 2008-2012*, 2012.

⁶² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Promoting gender equality and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol*, 2012.

⁶³ Alston, M. and K. Whittenbury, *Research, Action, and Policy: Addressing the Gender Impacts of Climate Change*, 2013.

⁶⁴ Alston, M. and K. Whittenbury, *Research, Action, and Policy: Addressing the Gender Impacts of Climate Change*, 2013.

⁶⁵ Alston, M. and K. Whittenbury, *Research, Action, and Policy: Addressing the Gender Impacts of Climate Change*, 2013, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Alston, M. and K. Whittenbury, *Research, Action, and Policy: Addressing the Gender Impacts of Climate Change*, 2013.

⁶⁷ The Guardian, *Empowering Women through Economic Advocacy and Dialogue*, 2012.

⁶⁸ The Guardian, *Empowering Women through Economic Advocacy and Dialogue*, 2012.

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AWID Friday Files. (2012). *The Word on Women-Rio+20 Outcomes: What Was Agreed and What This Means for Women's Rights Going Forward*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from <http://www.trust.org/trustlaw/blogs/the-word-on-women/rio20-outcomes-what-was-agreed-and-what-this-means-for-womens-rights-going-forward>.

A concise summary of the Rio+20 outcome document and what it means for women's rights, this article gives the viewpoints of various sources and their opinion on the outcome. There is a special emphasis on the good that can come of the document's section on women, although it is acknowledged that much more could have been done. This article does not summarize the other sections of the outcome document; it does, however, discuss the sub-sections that are pertinent to the topic of gender equality. This source serves as an excellent, understandable introduction to the Rio+20 outcome and gender issues.

International Institute for Sustainable Development. (2012). *UNGA Debate Continues on MGDs, Post-2015 Agenda*. Retrieved January 12, 2013 from <http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/unga-debate-continues-focus-on-mdgs-post-2015-agenda/157542/>.

This article offers no commentary or opinion on the post-2015 SDGs debate, it is simply a summary of who spoke at the General Assembly meeting and what they spoke about – direct quotes are given when appropriate. The summarized opinions of international leaders are useful, easy to follow, and clearly show the positions of various Member States on the issue of future SDGs. It is also easy to see how various delegations view women, women's rights, and sustainable development in the context of General Assembly debate. Because this is a summary of the opening day of debate on the issue, all speakers are leaders of Member States and not UN delegates or diplomats.

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. (2012). *The Future We Want*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf.

The Future We Want is the official Rio+20 outcome document. The section on the position of women in sustainable development shows how and why women are a valuable resource to further the cause of sustainable development. The explanation is direct and concise and some solutions are given. However, it is important to note that the language used in this section of the document is the weakest in the entire outcome. This outcome document can be used to determine a stronger path towards women's rights in sustainable development practices and debates.

United Nations Development Programme. (2012). *Powerful Synergies: Gender Equality, Economic Development, and Environmental Sustainability*. Retrieved January 12, 2013 from <http://www.az.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/Powerful-Synergies.pdf#page=46>.

The UNDP's official program on the three pillars of sustainable development and how they relate to women and gender issues. The document offers explanations as to why each pillar is important for both women and sustainable development and what the UNDP is doing to promote them. There is also emphasis on the various NGOs that the UNDP is supporting and notable State government programs are also mentioned. The progress of all programs is summarized and the steps being taken to further their various causes are explained. The document is useful in showing the current programs being utilized to achieve various UN goals and their progress so far.

Women's Major Group. (2012). *From the Future We Want to the Future We Need: Women's Major Group Final Statement on the Outcomes of Rio+20*. Retrieved January 11, 2013 from http://www.wecf.eu/download/2012/june2012/WomensMajorGroupRIO20_FINALSTATEMENT_24June2012.pdf.

The WMG's official closing statement on the Rio+20 conference and its outcome document. The group expresses both its satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the results and explains their reasoning thoroughly. Examples from the outcome document and various occurrences at the conference are given to emphasize their points. This is a useful source because it is written from the perspective of a women's group and shows how and why the outcome was not entirely in favor of women's rights.

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- The World We Want 2015. (2012). *Discussion on Gender Based Violence*. Retrieved January 12, 2013 from <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/280134>.

III. Eliminating Preventable Maternal Mortality through the Empowerment of Women

Recent developments

2012 saw a number of key developments: Next to the inauguration of the International Day of the Girl Child, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) declared access to contraceptives a universal human right in its 2012 annual report.⁶⁹ The action plan of the United Nations Commission on Life-Saving Commodities, a commission convened by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as part of the *Every woman, every child* campaign, was released in September, calling for an increase in access to life-saving medical services for women and children.⁷⁰ A meeting to further the efforts of the July 2012 London Summit on Family Planning was organized by UNFPA in September.⁷¹ The Bali Global Youth Forum defined women's right to sexual and reproductive health as a priority for the United Nations development agenda post-2015.⁷² Another international effort addressing maternal mortality and female reproductive health is the *Washington Declaration*, which emerged from the biennial International AIDS Conference.⁷³ Most recently, the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) organized a special event on "reinforcing the Campaign on accelerated reduction in maternal mortality in Africa" at the 20th Ordinary Session of the assembly of the African Union.⁷⁴ CARMMA, a joint effort of the African Union Commission and UNFPA, also compiled a report for the event highlighting the positive progress of national level commitments in Africa.⁷⁵ Civil society organizations have also contributed to maternal health developments: Save the Children published a report on empowering women for family planning rights, whilst CARE International published a report based on consultations conducted during the London Summit on Family Planning.⁷⁶

The International Day of the Girl Child

In December 2011 the United Nations General Assembly declared October 11th as the "International Day of the Girl Child."⁷⁷ The theme for 2012 focused on combating the child marriage of girls in developing nations. UN Women highlighted the importance of addressing child marriage because of the increasing high prevalence of maternity related deaths of girls married before adulthood, citing that, "[i]n developing countries, 90 per cent of births to adolescents aged 15-19 are to married girls, and pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death for girls in this age group."⁷⁸ UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and Girls not Brides organized a high-level panel discussion.⁷⁹ The joint statement from Anthony Lake, Executive Director UNICEF, Babatunde Osotimehin Executive Director UNFPA, and Michelle Bachelet Executive Director UN Women, also highlighted the importance of empowering girls through education and support services to help them realize their rights.⁸⁰ The statement points to the correlation between high rates of pregnancy-related deaths and health risks associated with child marriages.⁸¹

London Summit on Family Planning

The UNFPA, alongside the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the British Government, organized a major conference in July of 2012, gathering representatives from national governments, international donor agencies, foundations and the private sector.⁸² The conference's main objective was to secure funding and service commitments for access to and education on contraceptives, mainly for women and girls in developing states, with a goal of reaching \$120 million by the 2020.⁸³ The London Summit on Family Planning was successful in not only bringing national governments and civil society together but also in securing specific commitments from each

⁶⁹ The Associated Press, *Access to Contraception Is Supported*, 2012.

⁷⁰ UN News Centre, *UN plan aims to improve access to life-saving health supplies for women and children*, 2012, p 1.

⁷¹ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *Day 1 London Summit on Family Planning Next Steps Meeting*, p 1.

⁷² ICPD, *Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration*, p. 1.

⁷³ International AIDS Society 2012, *AIDS 2012 Ignites Momentum for the Beginning of the End of the AIDS Epidemic*, 2012, p 1.

⁷⁴ African Union Commission, *CARMMA Report 2013*, 2013, p 8.

⁷⁵ African Union Commission, *CARMMA Report 2013*, 2013.

⁷⁶ Save the Children, *Every Woman's Right-How Family Planning Saves Children's Lives*, 2012; CARE International, *Women's Lives, Women's Voices: Empowering women to ensure family planning coverage, quality and equity*, 2012.

⁷⁷ UN Women, *In Focus: International Day of the Girl Child - My Life, My Right, End Child Marriage*, 2012.

⁷⁸ The United Nations, *International Day of the Girl Child*, 2012.

⁷⁹ UN Women, *Joint Statement: International Day of The Girl Child 2012*, 2012, p. 1.

⁸⁰ UN Women, *Joint Statement: International Day of The Girl Child 2012*, 2012, p. 1.

⁸¹ UN Women, *Joint Statement: International Day of The Girl Child 2012*, 2012, p. 1.

⁸² Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *London Summit on Family Planning*, 2012.

⁸³ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *London Summit on Family Planning*, 2012.

organization or country.⁸⁴ Civil society, developing countries, foundations, and donor countries all outlined commitments ranging from capacity building efforts from organizations like Save the Children to increasing family planning budgets from African countries and financial aid by donor agencies and countries.⁸⁵ Additionally, the World Bank and World Health Organization (WHO) recommitted to highlighting and prioritizing efforts to increase programs for reproductive health in years ahead.⁸⁶ In September, a “next steps meeting” was organized by the UNFPA in New York City to develop clear action plans and measure the progress of commitments.⁸⁷

Bali Global Youth Forum

The Bali Global Youth Forum held in December 2012, supported by the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), rallied young leaders from all over the world to come together and define development priorities for the Millennium Development Goals and for the Sustainable Development Goals post 2015.⁸⁸ The final recommendations for the first thematic session “staying healthy” clearly identify reproductive health and maternity care including family planning and the prevention of diseases and infections as areas of prime concern.⁸⁹ The recommendations from the second thematic session on “comprehensive education” underline the importance of girls’ education in sexual health, especially in family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention.⁹⁰ The third thematic session’s final recommendations on “families, youth, rights, well-being and sexuality” identify sexual health as a human right and encourage governments to not only ensure legal protection of that right but to also address social, cultural and religious barriers that prevent the realization of rights reproductive health services.⁹¹

XIX International AIDS Conference

The 2012 session of the International AIDS Conference was held in Washington DC, in late July.⁹² Attended by over 24,000 participants from over 180 countries, the conference engaged in in-depth discussion and action planning on recent developments in efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic.⁹³ The participants signed the Washington D.C. Declaration that vows to “turn the tide” in the provision of health services to prevent the spread of the disease and provide facilities to those affected by it.⁹⁴ Every individual who wishes to commit to its principles can sign the declaration.⁹⁵ Two of the highlight action points under the Washington Declaration address the importance of care of women who are pregnant and HIV positive and additionally investing in treatments for pregnant or nursing women to stop the spread of disease from mother to child and also prevent maternal mortality and other health risks.⁹⁶

Outlook: CSW 57th Session

The upcoming session of the CSW will focus on “Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls” with a review of the agreed conclusions of the 53rd session on “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS.”⁹⁷ Additionally the session will take a look at the key issues for gender equality in the post-2015 agenda.⁹⁸ In preparation for the 57th Session UN Women organized an expert group meeting in September in Bangkok, Thailand where states reviewed the progress on the Beijing Platform for Action and its specific commitment to addressing maternal mortality through the lens of sexual exploitation as a form of violence against women.⁹⁹ Additionally, regional meetings such as the World Health Organization’s (WHO) high-level meeting on “Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge” will take place before the CSW to specifically review progress on the MGDs 4 and 5.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁴ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *London Summit on Family Planning*, 2012.

⁸⁵ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *London Summit on Family Planning Summaries of Commitment*, 2012, p. 9-20.

⁸⁶ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *London Summit on Family Planning Summaries of Commitment*, 2012, p. 24-25.

⁸⁷ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *Day 1 London Summit on Family Planning Next Steps Meeting*, p. 1.

⁸⁸ ICPD, *Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration*, p. 1.

⁸⁹ ICPD, *Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration*, p. 2.

⁹⁰ ICPD, *Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration*, p. 6.

⁹¹ ICPD, *Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration*, p. 9.

⁹² International AIDS Society 2012, *AIDS 2012 Ignites Momentum for the Beginning of the End of the AIDS Epidemic*, 2012, p. 1.

⁹³ International AIDS Society 2012, *AIDS 2012 Ignites Momentum for the Beginning of the End of the AIDS Epidemic*, 2012, p. 1.

⁹⁴ International AIDS Society 2012, *The Washington D.C. Declaration*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ International AIDS Society 2012, *Sign*, 2012

⁹⁶ International AIDS Society 2012, *The Washington D.C. Declaration*, p. 1.

⁹⁷ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women 57th Session*, 2013.

⁹⁸ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women 57th Session*, 2013.

⁹⁹ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, 2012, p. 3

¹⁰⁰ WHO EMRO, *High-level meeting on Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge Concept Note*, 2013.

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http://www.londonfamilyplanningsummit.co.uk/COMMITMENTS_090712.pdf

This document is particularly useful because there many country specific commitments outlined. These commitments were made in response to the discussion outcomes of the London Summit on Family Planning. The commitments are also specialized and divided between developing nations and donor nations as well as civil society and funding agencies.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. (September 2012). Day 1 London Summit on Family Planning Next Steps Meeting. Retrieved on January 15, 2013, from: <http://www.londonfamilyplanningsummit.co.uk/Day%201%20-%20September%20meeting%20materials.pdf>

The Next Steps Meeting organized by the UNFPA in New York City in September was organized to develop an immediate action plan and review the progress of commitments made during the London Summit for Family Planning. The meeting materials shared during the meeting detail the financing arrangements developed under the Summit. The Day 2 meeting materials also identify countries that have made significant commitments for the 2020 family planning goals.

CARE International. (September 2012). *Women's Lives, Women's Voices: Empowering women to ensure family planning coverage, quality and equity*. Retrieved on January 15, 2013, from: <http://www.care-international.org/View-document-details/806-CI-Family-Planning-Conference-Report-2012.html>

CARE International published its report on the outcomes of the discussion of the London Summit on Family Planning highlighting the importance of linking gender equality and family planning. The report provides key recommendations for governments and civil society for the success of the goals and commitments made during the London Summit on Family Planning. Recommendations include, addressing reproductive health in conflict zones and prioritizing women's empowerment in policy making.

Save the Children. (2012). *Every Woman's Right-How Family Planning Saves Children's Lives*. Retrieved on January 15, 2013, from: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/every-womans-right-how-family-planning-saves-children%E2%80%99s-lives>

The Save the Children Report highlights the importance of empowering women in sexual and reproductive health rights in order to protect the lives of children in developing nations. It also outlines the major issues and shortcomings in family planning education for young girls. The conclusion of the report contains an insightful diagram on the relationship between women's empowerment and the availability of family planning services. Additionally, it also presents a five point plan in relation to the London Summit for Family Planning.

United Nations Population Fund. (2012). *State of the World Population 2012; By Choice, Not By Chance: Family Planning, Human Rights and Development*. Retrieved on January 15, 2013, from:

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/12511>

The 2012 UNFPA annual report on the state of the world population clearly establishes the international community's acknowledgment of access to contraceptives and family planning as a universal human right. The report highlights gaps in financial investments from national governments in family planning services and also in addressing cultural restrictions. Additionally, it asserts recommendations for not only increasing financial support but also for programs that education men and boys and includes emergency contraceptives in family planning services.

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