

Submission for intervention for the opening plenary by the organising partners of the Women's Major Group; VAM – Voices of African Mothers, and WECF Women in Europe for a Common Future

2 May 2011, New York

Thank you Chair,

I speak on behalf of the women's major group, my name is Regina Amadi-Njoku, I am from Nigeria, and was a former ILO Regional Director for Africa and West-African Regional Director for UNIFEM, and before that I worked at the World Bank. Currently, I preside a women's NGO, where we mentor women to plan and balance their work and family life.

With my many years of experience in development, I have seen that in particular the mining and extraction sector cause great violence against women and children, we call this environmental violence, to distinguish it from domestic violence.

The environment is women's bank, it is women's stock exchange. The environment assures the survival and livelihood for most women in this world. When its mango time, women sell and earn their livelihoods from mango's. When its shellfish time, they earn their livelihood from shellfish.

But the mining and extraction sectors destroy these livelihoods. In my country, the oil companies have polluted the Niger Delta region with chemicals and oil, the water is so polluted with chemicals, that fisher-women are increasingly getting cancers. There are more women dying now than men. Before it was the opposite. We are acquiring what were traditionally men's diseases from environmental pollution. Women absorb the waste and pollution and transfer it to the children in their wombs, who are even more vulnerable to chemical and mining pollution.

The corporate industries are earning stupendous profits, on the backs of our women's health and future generations.

You delegates, here at the CSD19, are the only one's who can change this. We need you to agree here on international binding guidelines on social, economic and environmental responsibility for corporations, in particular in the mining and extraction sector. Voluntary commitments are not enough, they need to be legally binding.

Thank you, chair