

Intervention women major group, May 7, 2010 – Interlinkages & crosscutting issues and means of implementation (by Catherine Skopic – text edited/ corrected by Lesha Witmer)

Thank you chair and everybody here today. We agree with the statements of the NGOs and Youth & children in their emphasis on education and gender equality.

Women are the first teachers in homes in every country around the globe. We have the opportunity to teach our children the basic principles of life – to respect all life – peoples, plants, animals and earth's resources, to recognize the beauty of creation and to change behavior so that individuals become "conscious consumers", as described yesterday by Mr. Helio Battar.

Addressing the questions assigned, I will include in so doing some of the Interlinkages, crosscutting issues and implementation.

#1. Key challenges and obstacles we face in dealing with the five thematic areas are lack of information, knowledge, education, organizational structures, actual and equal representation and participation for all stakeholders in the decision-making processes on all levels, local and global.

#2. In teaching the life cycle perspective, it must first be understood that what is taken from earth must be replaced (as much as possible). For every tree cut down, a tree will be planted. With this basic understanding, reusing, reducing and recycling becomes a natural part of life as a way of giving back. Everything in both the natural and person-made environment is valued. Materials used in production of goods is seen as future potential resources of subsequent products or as energy. Implementation of this is hampered by narrow definitions of words and concepts.

#3. In capacity development and technology transfer, we must recognize traditional knowledge and look for ways to effectively combine this with modern technology. An example of this is the way small-scale (sometimes illegal) gold mining is "educated" in Surinam. Here in consultation with local people, contemporary practices were adapted and taught to the miners.

In the area of chemicals it would be helpful if the UN would create a platform and act as facilitator in the honest and transparent labeling of products, enabling companies to overcome obstacles of having to decide again and again on regulations of common labeling, particularly as product travel from country to country.

Some elements, like GMOs are not included in labeling at all. Accurate labeling, as implementation of the right to information (based upon the Rio Principles and the Aarhus Convention), enables women to make informed decisions and better ensure the health of our families.

Accurate scientific information also promotes good communication, part and parcel of capacity for sustainability – this applies to the areas of mining, waste, transport and chemicals.

#4. As women represent the majority of informal workers, an increasingly larger percentage of formal workers and 70% of the world's farmers, it is essential that we are participants in decision-making processes. Having the structures and support for organizing, communication, financial credit opportunities, marketing and the sharing of technologies will assist in overcoming present obstacles.

In closing, we thank you for this opportunity to share our views and to remind you of the pivotal role women play in shaping the future.