

Working group ‘feminist approach’ @ COP17’s women’s caucus

This paper does NOT necessarily reflect the opinion of the women’s caucus, nor the organizations involved in the women and gender constituency. It is the preliminary result of an ongoing debate. Those who want to contribute, or to endorse the paper, please feel free to do so.

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To achieve gender and climate justice, a fundamental transformation in how women and gender issues are conceptualized and included in climate change policies and negotiations is essential to ensure that women are included at the heart of the deliberations and their outcomes. As representatives of half of the world’s population, we want to be at the centre, not the margins.

As awareness on gender issues continues to grow in the climate change arena, the organizations who have worked to raise awareness in this area are now working hard to ensure the use of “gender” remains elevated as a framework for transformation towards equality and not simply as an add-on to the process.

Our feminist perspective on the climate negotiations is based in an understanding that market mechanisms have not contributed to the construction of equality between men and women. Nor have they created a sustainable partnership with nature that meets the needs of all the people on the planet. Instead, current market mechanisms work to maintain a global economic system which has historically been based in exploitation and domination of people and the earth’s resource; for the profit of a few.

Moreover, our current economic system is based on a gendered international division of labor that is sexist, racist and destroys nature. This division of labor constitutes the material basis of inequality between men and women and cannot bring about the transformation needed to progress towards a just and sustainable future. Including gender on the basis of this logic turns women and their labor into commodities to serve the efficient implementation of market mechanisms- and imposes ever greater workloads and responsibilities on women.

In this context, as we deploy “gender” in the climate negotiations, we must avoid the instrumentalization of gender roles and responsibilities. Simply recognizing gender “differences” within the current framework does not result in more autonomy for women and will not lead to substantive transformation to achieve gender equality,

Here at COP17, from initiatives of observer organizations to the media and the negotiations themselves, it is clear that progress in raising awareness on gender has progressed significantly. However, we must recognize that this is only a starting point. Every crisis can be an opportunity for addressing the root causes. Our challenge now is to move towards a real transformation for a fair, sustainable and equal society.