

Statement on the International Day of Rural Women
15 October

Women produce between 60-80 per cent of food in developing countries and play a critical role in managing natural resources. Rural women are crucial to the viability of global food production systems. The importance of their role contrasts with their vulnerability stemming from systemic gender inequalities and exposure to the impacts of the environmental poly-crisis afflicting the planet. Indigenous peoples and local communities, rural peoples, peoples in the global South and women and girls are particularly exposed.

From the loss of livelihoods caused by biodiversity loss, extreme weather events or land degradation to health hazards from exposure to pesticides and chemicals used in agriculture, rural women are in the eye of the storm. They are also part of the solution and are taking action.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) recognizes that empowered women can contribute to halting and reversing biodiversity loss in a significant fashion. Adopted alongside the KMGBF at COP 15, the Gender Plan of Action under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) aims to achieve the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all actions related to biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use.

We expect Parties to reflect the Gender Plan of Action in the formulation and implementation of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), the main vehicles of national planning and implementation under the CBD. In national implementation, the pursuit of gender equality is a natural ally of the implementation of the KMGBF. The world's masterplan to halt and reverse biodiversity loss can only be achieved through a whole-of-society endeavour including women and girls.

SDG 5—the Sustainable Development Goal about achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls—can be paired with Target 23 of the KMGBF: ensuring gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for biodiversity action. Target 10 completes the jigsaw by seeking to enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry. One of its elements is nature's contributions to people—including rural women and girls.

Rooted in a human-rights based approach, the KMGBF addresses gender equality as a cross-cutting consideration. Beyond linkages with SDG-5, empowering women and girls can secure progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This endeavour also constitutes a fertile ground for synergies among the “Rio Trio”—which, in addition to

the CBD, includes the global Multilateral Environmental Agreements on climate change and desertification.

Both synergies and women's empowerment are on the agenda of COP 16 of the CBD, which will get underway in a week from now. Under the theme of "Peace with nature", the UN Biodiversity Summit in Cali, Colombia will see the largest public participation in the history of the Convention.

Taking part in COP 16 alongside parliamentarians, business and finance professionals, environmental defenders, indigenous peoples and local communities, afrodescendent communities, campesinos and many other actors of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, representatives of women and girls will contribute to a whole-of-society dialogue about policies, corporate strategies and individual actions that can bend current biodiversity loss trajectories and set the world on a path to living in harmony with nature.

Rural women are at the forefront of the endeavour for transformational change. Today and every day, let us empower them to contribute to shaping our sustainable and resilient common future.