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ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG



Convention on
Biological Diversity

UN Environment Management Group Nexus Dialogues



Convention on
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Outcome Document

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation pose significant threats to the enjoyment of human rights. These impacts are disproportionately felt by those already in vulnerable situations, including women and girls. The costs and benefits behind efforts dedicated towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are not distributed equally, which is a result of decision-making processes that inadvertently maintain existing power imbalances and leave out women's voices and leadership.

2020 was intended to be a "[super year for nature and biodiversity](#)", and ground-breaking for gender equality as it marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic has been shown to have [disproportionate impacts on women](#), and risks rolling back the limited gains made in recent decades, deepening pre-existing inequalities. While many intergovernmental processes, including the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD ("COP 15") and the 26th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change were postponed, the fragility of the relationship between people and nature has risen in the global consciousness. The UN Secretary-General has also called for solidarity in response to the pandemic, highlighting the need to focus on people, and the most vulnerable – in particular, emphasizing that "[women and girls \[should be put\] at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19](#)".

Against this background, the UN Environment Management Group ("EMG"), in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), organised a two-part series of virtual Nexus Dialogues on gender and biodiversity, in alignment with UNEP's [COVID-19 response](#) which emphasizes modernizing environmental governance and multilateralism.

Unpacking Linkages with Gender and Biodiversity in UN System Efforts provided an overview of priority objectives to address persistent gender and biodiversity challenges, and their linkages with the broader environmental and sustainable development agenda. ***Towards Gender Responsive Biodiversity Action and Outcomes*** focused on the gaps, opportunities and next steps for collaboration and synergies in implementation of a new gender plan of action for biodiversity, and for gender responsive implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Key messages noted during the Nexus Dialogues, include:

Unpacking Linkages with Gender and Biodiversity in UN System Efforts (29 March 2021)

Representatives from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (**CBD**), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (**UN Women**), the Global Environment Facility (**GEF**), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) spoke about institutional and systemic challenges underlying the gender and biodiversity nexus, including:

- The perception of women and girls as *vulnerable*, instead of: **Women and girls are made vulnerable due to institutional norms and systemic customs which constrain their decision-making power/abilities**, especially as it relates to **access to- and control of- land and natural resources, financial support, and technical capacities**. Women's *effective and meaningful* participation, voice and agency in decision making at all levels for biodiversity, climate and environment is an essential aspect of enabling their livelihoods, well-being and resilience.
- **Ongoing biodiversity and habitat loss contribute to a loss of human rights and violations of those rights, which affect women and girls disproportionately**, as they are already subject to exclusion and discrimination.
- **A whole of government and society approach is essential** for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in ways that sustain the livelihoods and present and future well-being of all.

Specific capacity gaps which directly influence the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in biodiversity issues were identified, as well as opportunities going forward:

- Under the most recent CBD Gender Plan of Action, **the focus was largely on the means through which gender should be mainstreamed in biodiversity issues, but there is a need and value in clarifying intended results**. This is important to enable more effective monitoring of progress towards demonstrable outcomes for gender and biodiversity in the coming decade.
- Within the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, **while gender is mentioned as a critical cross-cutting component, it is not explicitly referred to within the biodiversity-related goals and targets, which impacts the extent to which gender is considered and addressed in these efforts**.
- **Member States need to address cultural norms surrounding gender**, which may influence whether gender is a political priority across the environmental sectors. The level of political priority is also an important factor in addressing capacity and funding gaps in the collection of sex-disaggregated data on women's meaningful participation in natural resource governance.

Despite challenges and capacity gaps, the rising awareness of and action taken to address persistent gender and biodiversity issues is resulting in solutions and initiatives that can advance gender-responsive implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):



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- **The CBD Secretariat** has put forward a draft outline of the **post-2020 Gender Plan of Action¹**, which includes three overarching priorities/results areas and the means to support their achievement to ensure the gender responsive implementation of the **post-2020 GBF²**: 1. Women's equal access, ownership and control over ecosystem services; 2. Women's equal benefit from efforts to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity; and 3. Biodiversity policy, planning and programming decisions equally address the perspectives, needs, and interests of women and girls. Among other elements, the draft outline identifies linkages with other relevant international commitments, including those of the UNFCCC and UNCCD gender action plans.
- **OHCHR** promotes a human rights-based approach to climate action, environmental action and to biodiversity. Gender considerations are an important part of this approach. OHCHR also promotes biodiversity protection as part of its efforts to advance the human right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment³, which is identified as a priority by the UN Secretary-General's [Call to Action for Human Rights](#) as well as by the High Commissioner of Human Rights herself.
- **A joint report⁴ published by OHCHR and UN Women** drew the following conclusions: 1. Indigenous and rural women hold expert knowledge of ecosystem and sustainable land management practices; 2. Women's human rights, especially those of peasant indigenous women, are undermined when they are excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making, and; 3. Women environmental defenders face risks, including intimidation, criminalization, assault, and assassination, as well as the specific threat of gender-based violence.
- **Based on the joint report, UN Women** suggests three criteria to assess whether policy actions and investments for biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use adequately address gender equality:
 1. Do they support women's capabilities and their enjoyment of rights?
 2. Do they reduce, rather than increase, women's unpaid care work?
 3. Do they embrace women's equal and meaningful participation as actors, leaders, and decision-makers?
- In 2017, **the GEF** reshaped its approach to gender and integrated mechanisms to encourage women's contribution to-, participation in-, and benefit from- its financed projects. For example, project guidelines necessitate a [Gender Analysis](#), and include gender indicators for the expected stakeholder impacts. Since GEF-7, 18 UN entities and NGOs have included gender in early project design, producing a high level of socioeconomic benefits to women and girls.
- **At UNFCCC COP25**, Parties agreed to a 5-year enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan⁵ (Decision 3/CP.25), to advance gender responsive climate action. The five priority areas include: knowledge management, capacity building and communication; gender parity, especially in leadership and participation; UN system-wide coherence; gender-responsive implementation; and monitoring and reporting.

¹ To note, the draft outline of the CBD gender plan of action has been revised since the EMG meeting was held. The most recent version of the outline is now available at [CBD/SBI/3/4/Add.2](#) (Draft outline of a post-2020 gender plan of action)

² [CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1](#) – Update of the zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

³ [A/73/188](#) - Right to a healthy and sustainable environment report

⁴ OHCHR and UN Women (2020) Realizing Women's Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources, 2nd ed.

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/realizing-womens-rights-to-land-and-other-productive-resources-2nd-edition-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4149>

⁵ [FCCC/CP/2019/13/Add.1](#) - Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-fifth session, Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-fifth session



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The following recommendations are suggested as actionable next steps for the international community:

Part A: Key policy entry points to ensure women's equal access to biodiversity and ecosystem services, their related benefits, and/or decision making

- **GEF believes gender analysis to be a necessary step to inform project financing**, as it holds significant potential in facilitating an understanding of underlying barriers and cultural norms that limit meaningful participation and engagement of women and girls in biodiversity issues.
- Developing gender-responsive National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) is an important avenue for effective implementation of gender considerations at the national level. **NBSAPs will be more successfully implemented through a whole of government approach, in partnership with other leading government entities (e.g., Ministry of Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries, Health, Gender, etc.)** – and not siloed within the ministries responsible for environment and biodiversity.
- Women's civil society organizations are allies and are crucial in gaining the political will and momentum within institutions and governments, to take necessary action to mainstream both gender and biodiversity in a concrete way. Adequate funding is required to support civil society and women's associations and groups to engage in this work and support their families/livelihoods.
- There are also opportunities to **strengthen the linkages of NBSAPs with overarching policy imperatives for gender equality and women's empowerment, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action**, to bring attention to gender and biodiversity issues and support more engagement of national level women's ministries and machineries.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities, especially in the workforce, resulting in high numbers of women leaving the workforce to attend to caregiving responsibilities. Measures to reduce and redistribute unpaid household labour are an important part of efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Part B: Opportunities for the UN to promote and ensure that biodiversity policy, planning, and programming addresses the perspectives, interests, and needs of women and girls (equally)

- **In undertaking global environmental assessments and preparing related reports, the UN should aim to develop a theory of change on how addressing gender issues can guide the achievement of environmental objectives.** It is also important to remain cognizant of opportunities to address gender perspectives in new biodiversity issues or those that have not previously had much focus on gender, such as nature-based solutions and payment for ecosystem services.
- **The UN should look into systematically piloting projects (at regional, national, and local levels) around improving statistical capacity for sex-disaggregated data** in the context of environmental issues, in order to build case studies and empirically observe best practice and solutions.
- **Raising the profile of gender issues** relevant to biodiversity and the environmental sphere continues to be important and necessary. **While recognizing the lack of sex-disaggregated data poses a challenge to determining and receiving support for specific actions, publications and reports which elucidate linkages with examples and include available data provide valuable**



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resources. For example, FAO's Report on Women in Agriculture⁶, has been very useful and influential in illustrating the degree to which increasing women's access to land and reducing barriers for women in agriculture can contribute to increased food production and food security.

- As awareness of gender and biodiversity linkages and the related multi-faceted impacts continue to grow, **governments will need technical support in building the capacity for gender-responsive budgeting.** Such support can help to ensure that national policies and frameworks are allocated appropriate resources, for the benefit of women, girls, and their communities.

Because of underlying systemic gender inequalities that cut across environmental, social, economic, political and cultural factors, **women and girls are disproportionately placed in situations of greater vulnerability and risk.**

Pervasive gender stereotypes, underlying socio-cultural norms and discriminatory systems and practices are also detrimental to women and girls' right to participation, as well as having a voice, and agency. Society often proclaims women and girls to have the specialized knowledge, skills, and tools to be *stewards of the environment*, and therefore *saviours of biodiversity*, yet care must be taken to ensure that initiatives linked to safeguarding biodiversity do not add to the heavy burden of unpaid work that women are already shouldering. For women and girls to be at the frontlines, **they must be adequately supported, financed, and protected** to ensure they do not risk their lives, livelihoods, bodies, and bodily integrity.

Towards Gender Responsive Biodiversity Action and Outcomes: A Workshop (30 March 2021)

34 experts representing 27 UN and international agencies discussed gaps, opportunities, and actionable next steps for collaboration and synergies in the implementation of a new CBD Gender Plan of Action for the post-2020 period (GPOA)⁷, and for the gender responsive implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)⁸. *For a full list of participants, please visit pages 9-10.*

The draft outline of a GPOA delineates a set of guiding principles which highlight the importance of targeted action to address the needs/priorities of indigenous and rural women and girls and make clear that all references to women and girls in the plan are inclusive of their diversity of age, ethnicity, race, and other factors. The principles also highlight the purpose of the plan to complement and support the implementation of the SDGs, in line with the biodiversity agenda, and to support synergies with gender responsive approaches to address related environmental concerns, notably climate change and land degradation.

⁶ FAO (2011) The state of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture, Closing the gender gap for development, <http://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

⁷ To note, the draft outline of the CBD gender plan of action has been revised since the EMG meeting was held. The most recent version of the outline is now available at [CBD/SBI/3/4/Add.2](#) – Draft outline of a post-2020 gender plan of action

⁸ [CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1](#) – Update of the zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework



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Three results areas were proposed, formulated as: 1. Women and girls have equal access to ownership/control regarding biodiversity and ecosystem services; 2. Women and girls benefit equally from nature and biodiversity; and 3. Biodiversity policy, planning and programming decisions equally address the perspectives, interests, and needs of women and girls.

Four implementation and review mechanisms were proposed in the draft outline, addressing objectives associated with: 1. Knowledge generation, management, and sharing (including strengthening the evidence base, collection, analysis, and use of sex-disaggregated data to support reporting on gender actions); 2. Partnerships and collaboration (specifically with women’s organizations, networks, and gender experts); 3. ensuring monitoring and reporting; and 4. allocation of resources for gender responsive implementation.

UNEP briefly summarized institutional background underlining gender perspectives in biodiversity efforts:

- **At UNEA-4⁹, UNEP’s Executive Director** identified three major gaps in biodiversity efforts, one being the **lack of gender integration and responsiveness**.
- Soo Young, UNEP Legal Officer, and moderator of the workshop, highlighted three ways to support gender integration in biodiversity:
 1. **Adopting a Rights-Based Approach**, to ensure environmental laws/policies are more effective, implementable, legitimate, and sustainable.
 2. **Identifying and addressing the socioeconomic conditions** that predispose women and girls to vulnerability.
 3. **Identifying opportunities and entry points** to concretize action, for example in the Post-2020 GBF and the GPOA.
- **At the 46th session of the Human Rights Council**, a resolution on human rights and the environment called upon States to take a rights-based approach in biodiversity-related matters and to advance the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.¹⁰ The resolution also recognized the importance of gender equality and gender responsive action to address climate change and environmental degradation.

The following recommendations are suggested as actionable next steps for the international community:

Part A: What lessons from the development and implementation of related commitments under the SDGs, UNFCCC, and UNCCD gender action plans, and other processes should be considered for the proposed CBD gender plan of action?

- WRI has engaged in the Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDC) process in several countries (including assessing NDCs and the associated policy frameworks), and has learned that even with the **UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and other commitments, policies that support these commitments are not aligned with each other or with other relevant commitments. Gender is**

⁹ Fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, 11-15 March 2019:

<https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea4>

¹⁰ [A/HRC/46/L.6/Rev.1](#) – Agenda item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development: Human rights and the environment



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minimally woven into the language of policies (e.g., energy/waste management policy which supports climate policy) and countries are struggling with internal coordination and policy alignment. Therefore, it is suggested to engage with various government ministries to review commitments/policies and support understanding on how gender commitments could be reflected and reinforced in different national policies.

- The CBD Secretariat noted that effective implementation of a **GPOA at the national level requires integration into the NBSAP process**, to ensure gender is not considered as a standalone issue. This also involves strengthening harmonization of the planning processes across the different Conventions and the SDGs to maximize impact and ensure gender is integrated within central planning exercises.
- Furthermore, the CBD Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC emphasized the **importance of monitoring progress through gender-specific indicators and the collection of sex-disaggregated data**. Data collation and analysis remain priorities, as data is essential for making women's and girls' contributions towards a healthy environment visible, and data provides the evidence base to inform policy change.
- The CBD Women's Caucus advocated for **building synergies between all of the Rio Conventions and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)** (such as through a joint communication or outreach strategy). To ensure implementation, links must be made to monitoring, review, and reporting processes, such as through aligning indicators.
- In UNFCCC's experience, **creating opportunities for regional-level peer-to-peer exchange** has been valuable for engaging in/supporting action at the regional level, including through building relationships between countries and stakeholders and supporting policy alignment.

Part B: Where can we dedicate additional focus to realize gains for gender-responsive environmental action by 2030, in line with the aims of the post-2020 GBF and the SDGs?

- **Raising awareness of the importance of sex-disaggregated data** and making use of gender-specific indicators, which are key to monitor progress towards gender- and biodiversity-related goals and targets.
- **UN-system experts and agencies should encourage including indicators on environmental human rights defenders, gender-based violence, and overall human rights in the post-2020 GBF and the GPOA**, to ensure that Parties give priority to these issues.
- As a result of the pandemic rural women in particular are more dependent on biodiversity. This means more effort must be made to ensure that women, particularly rural women, have secure access to and control over the resources and services they depend on for their livelihoods.
- The **post-2020 GBF should reflect positive/enabling conditions to encourage women's full engagement and meaningful participation in environmental governance**. For example, the digital divide in Latin America means that rural women who are directly involved in biodiversity management have less access to communication, and therefore less opportunities to participate in the governance processes they helped to set up.

Part C: What are some high-impact leverage points that your agency/department can commit to in order to enable larger scale change?



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- While it is important to mainstream gender in the post-2020 GBF and GPOA, **focus should be placed on mainstreaming gender considerations and perspectives into the everyday, working cultures of the UN system** – e.g., in the Convention Secretariats.
- Fostering an enabling environment to advance women’s empowerment involves attention to the organizations that are funded under the mechanisms to support biodiversity commitments. **Organizations who have or are building skills in implementation in a way that builds women’s empowerment, are critical.** WRI has committed to this process and is starting to build it into the work of their teams, which is making a difference in proposals developed and projects carried out.
- **Multi-stakeholder platforms offer potential to support coordination and offset the tendency to work in silos.** For example, existing platforms related to climate change, biodiversity and forest issues provide an opportunity to develop tailored strategies to address gender-biodiversity issues. More identification is needed of the necessary enabling conditions and barriers that women as individuals, and organizations, face related to information flows, capacities and needs.
- At the 40th Session of the High-Level Committee on Programmes the Committee requested the development of a comprehensive UN system common approach on biodiversity¹¹, to be considered for integration into the UN’s policy and programme planning. This common approach **has the potential to support coordination across the different parts of the UN, including at the program/project level, to ensure proposed actions cover a wide range of environmental issues, and address gender dimensions that go beyond participation.**
- In addition to explicitly raising awareness of women’s human rights, **OHCHR recognizes that there is still a need to address the physical, cultural, and/or legal obstacles barring women from enjoying their human rights.** Beyond efforts to ensure legislation is not discriminatory, ensuring effective implementation remains a challenge.

Part D: Moving forward, what should the focus of inter-agency collaboration be to effectively protect women and girls’ Right to a Healthy Environment, in line with the Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights?

- **There is an international legal and regulation complexity which discourages nexus approaches and integrated thinking.** This may be addressed in part through promoting an inter-agency platform across the three Rio Conventions, together with a potential resolution calling for the *Right to a Healthy Environment* at the Human Rights Council. However, interagency collaboration needs to go beyond the Secretariat level to include implementing agencies, and to leverage existing informal and formal networks, in order to influence implementation on the ground.
- **There is value in designing mechanisms to improve collaboration at the national level, to support implementation of the various gender action plans in an integrated manner.** MEAs and agencies are now supporting localization of priorities into National Development Plans and related plans, and engaging stakeholders, but not necessarily in an integrated manner.
- Some countries have nominated National Gender Focal Points (on climate change and gender), in order to break down silos within their governments and promote and leverage cross-cutting action on gender. **The focus should now be on improving the advocacy and technical capacity of these focal points** to support their role and communication with their different government ministries and agencies.

¹¹ [CEB/2020/6](#) – Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its fortieth session



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- The UN system common approach on biodiversity currently being developed could also include the gaps identified thus far in the draft GPOA, to facilitate a broader dialogue on inter-agency collaboration.

It is pertinent to concretize the universal recognition to the *Human Right to a Healthy Environment*¹² to allow women and girls, in all of their intersectional diversities to assert this right. When mobilized together with the post-2020 GBF and GPOA's systems and framework of accountability, this right can further realize gains in gender-responsive biodiversity actions and outcomes.

We would like to thank the following high-level and expert panellists and organizations for their valuable contributions to the Gender & Biodiversity Nexus Dialogue Series.

Unpacking Linkages with Gender and Biodiversity in UN System Efforts (29 March 2021)

Moderator: Mr. Benjamin Schachter, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR

- Ms. Tanya McGregor, Gender Programme Officer, CBD Secretariat
- Ms. Seemin Qayum, OIC, Economic Empowerment Section, UN-Women
- Ms. Gabriella Richardson-Temm, Senior Gender Specialist, Global Environment Facility
- Ms. Fleur Newman, Gender Affairs Officer, UNFCCC

Towards Gender Responsive Biodiversity Action and Outcomes: A Workshop (30 March 2021)

Moderator: Ms. Soo-Young Hwang, Legal Officer, UNEP

Alphabetical by agency

- Ms. Joni Seager, Professor, Global Studies, Bentley University
- Ms. Lijie Cai, Programme Management -National Reports & NBSAPs Officer, CBD Secretariat
- Ms. Jillian Campbell, Head of Monitoring, Review and Reporting, CBD Secretariat
- Ms. Mrinalini Rai, Lead, CBD Secretariat - Women's Caucus
- Ms. Marlene Elias, Gender Research Coordinator, CGIAR
- Mr. Markus Ihalainen, Senior Research Officer, CGIAR
- Ms. Iliana Monterroso, Environmental scientist, Equity, Gender, Justice & Tenures, CIFOR
- Ms. Kame Westerman, Advisor, Gender and Conservation, Center for Environment and Peace, Conservation International
- Ms. Gabriella Richardson-Temm, Senior Gender Specialist, Global Environment Facility
- Ms. Seblewongel Deneke, Gender and Social Specialist, Green Climate Fund
- Ms. Amelia Arreguin, Gender Coordinator, Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN)
- Ms. Monica Castillo, Senior Green Jobs Technical Specialist, ILO
- Ms. Robin Zuercher, Programme Officer, Planning and Strategic Relationships Service, ITU
- Ms. Jackie Siles, Senior Gender Programme Manager, IUCN

¹² [A/73/188](#) - Right to a healthy and sustainable environment report



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- Ms. Therese Arnesen, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR
- Mr. Benjamin Schachter, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR
- Ms. Anna Willingshofer, Policy Advisor, Sustainable Infrastructure & Biodiversity, TNC
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- Ms. Georgina Catacora-Vargas, Faculty member and researcher, Academic Peasant Unit "Tiahuanacu", Catholic Bolivian University
- Ms. Ann Pedersen, Programme Analyst, UNDP
- Ms. Angela Kariuki, Legal Officer, UNEP
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- Ms. Fleur Newman, Gender Affairs Officer, UNFCCC
- Ms. Annette Walgren, Gender and Environment Officer, UNEP ROAP Office
- Ms. Verona Collantes-Leballe, Intergovernmental Specialist, UN Women
- Ms. Barbara De Rosa-Joynt, Division Chief for Biodiversity, Office of Conservation and Water in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Dept of State
- Ms. Bridget Burns, Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
- Ms. Marina Maiero, Technical Officer, WHO
- Ms. Natalie Elwell, Senior Gender Advisor, WRI
- Ms. Alice Ruhweza, Africa Region Director, WWF

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