

**Women's statement at the closing plenary session of the
Planet Diversity conference Bonn, Germany, 15 May 2008**

Speaking: Claudia Gimena Roa (Columbia), Rosalie Ouoba (Burkina Faso), Donna Takitimu (New Zealand), Jean Grossholtz (USA), Marina Meneses Velázquez (Mexico), Sabine Brückmann (Germany)

Claudia Gimena Roa:

We are women activists, peasants and indigenous women from different countries. We speak on our own behalf, but also on behalf of all women who have no voice. Because besides the corporate dictatorship and anti-democratic governments that have no respect for women and local populations, we have seen the imposition of a model that makes women invisible, that shows contempt for our decision-making power and our creativity.

This model forgets that besides giving life to men and women that inhabit this planet, we also preserve food sovereignty, work for peace, securing our seeds, maintain our traditions, memories and foods.

Our role as women tells us that we must resist the imposition of models that affect our communities through privatization of life: water, genetic material, monocultures, agrofuels and theft of our cultures.

This struggle of women should not be fragmented: it is ours and that of our male companions. This struggle has to deal with the equality of women, social, environmental and racial equality as well.

Rosalie Ouoba:

I work with rural women from western Burkina Faso and Chad.

I am very glad to have participated in this meeting on biodiversity and it will be a great pleasure for me to share with rural women the following conclusions from this meeting:

- * We want the role of rural women in agricultural production to be recognized and valued.
- * The right of people to decide what they want to produce and to eat what they produce should be respected.
- * We demand that agricultural producers be informed and have the right to say no to GMOs, to the green revolution and to production that does not benefit their communities and themselves.

Donna Takitimu:

I am here representing our indigenous tribal nation of Te Whanau a Apanui. Our ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown in a place you might know of as New Zealand.

We women are here now to assert our basic right as women to biodiversity.

We are not interested in capitalistic giants on our territories.

Crop biodiversity has dominated this week even though 2/3 of the planet is covered with oceans. It's a human centered agenda.

Women have specific roles in crop biodiversity and its not enough to just talk about gender.

Monoculture of the mind has homogenized thought.

We are proud, and we have knowledge from our foremothers, and NOTHING will stop us from being the mothers and the teachers we are; and passing on this traditional knowledge.

Genetic modification, commodification and biopiracy are repulsive.
The western patent system is inadequate for dealing with traditional knowledge.

Development has to respect indigenous peoples' lands, their rights to food and water.

Governments must respect indigenous peoples, our collective knowledge system, and how we are related to the lands, the oceans..

And we WILL influence the future."

Jean Grossholtz:

We want to express our appreciation to the World Bank and the UN for sponsoring a four year study by the IAASTD. The report has come to the conclusion that we are headed for a global disaster if we continue in the present direction. A change is necessary for the continuation of life on our planet and for the environment and life on our planet. Your report concludes that we need a new locally based sustainable agricultural economy made up of organic farms with seed sovereignty and no GMOs, that would be created and maintained by farmers for their local markets. Your former commitments to industrial agriculture and cheap food have made a great mess of things. It is time to listen to those of us who have been struggling for decades against these policies. We need to turn away from an economy of things and money to an economy of life based on needs.

Marina Meneses Velázquez:

Biodiversity is being threatened, as well as women, indigenous cultures and humanity in general. Not by chance, the patriarchal vision has been based on contempt for the role of women in the production and core of biodiversity and thus this work done by women has been rendered invisible, as well as the fact that women are biodiversity and culture.

In this workshop we were able to listen and exchange experiences with women of diverse cultures from all over the world, and it was wonderful to see and value the efforts of all of them to survive and defend biodiversity and related knowledge.

It was also important to see that all, in the North and in the South, have suffered the impacts of the patriarchal vision with which the economy and food production projects and industrial production in general have been conducted

One conclusion is that we must change these patriarchal parameters that have only led to the destruction of biodiversity and the cultures of the world. GMOs, agrofuels and monocultures are only oriented to the accumulation of money, not to resolve the true necessities of communities. We must turn our eyes to the local cultures and the work of women, for thanks to them, what is still left has been preserved.

We say now that our priority must be an economy based on diversity and dignity, cultural identity, and above all, life.

Sabine Brückmann:

Women in Europe for a Common Future has a motto: "We need two eyes to see clearly." One of them can't be a glass eye, or blinded. It is just the same with diversity and the recognition of the value of women, whose contributions should be as equally regarded as those of men. The women in our workshops also agreed that we want to live diversity and have diversity in our daily lives. Not hidden away in gene banks, not locked in safes as patents, not in museums or reservations. We women want to be able to live our diversity.