

April 19 2012

Secretary of State **Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
Cc: Keri Holland, US Department of State, Rio+20

**Re: Concern over effect on women of US positions in Rio+20 negotiations**

Honourable Hillary Rodham Clinton,

The women's major group for Rio+20, an alliance of 200 women organisations worldwide, would like to ask for your attention regarding the position taken by US government negotiators in the preparations of the Rio+20 summit on Sustainable Development. Recognizing the strong leadership role the U.S. can play in these negotiations, we would like to bring to your attention our great concern over the following 3 U.S. negotiating positions:

- 1. Deletion of women's leadership targets** (paragraph 103quat)
- 2. Deletion of proposals regarding Human Rights, Beijing PA and Rio Principle 20** (throughout)
- 3. U.S. trade proposals** that would be extremely detrimental to, among others, smallholder women farmers in developing countries (paragraph pre124 bis alt)

Next week, from 23 April through 4 May, the negotiations will continue at UN Headquarters on the draft Heads of State Declaration for the Rio+20 Conference – which over 100 Heads of State and up to 50,000 participants are expected to attend.

We sincerely appreciate your leadership and profound commitments to women's rights and gender equality. We therefore write to you now to ask for your support to ensure the United States' position on these deletions are **reversed**, and to support a strong and effective outcome document from the Rio+20 summit that reflects and builds upon commitments already made to gender equality and women's rights.

Please find below more details on the US positions and deletions; do not hesitate to contact us for more information, as well as for our priorities for Rio+20.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns,  
and warm regards,

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director  
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Organising Partner for the Women's Major Group  
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*And other members of the Women's Major Group*

### 1. Deletion of women's leadership targets

We are convinced that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for sustainable development. We are confident you agree. Despite US leadership on these issues in many ways, the US is the only country that has proposed deletion of the paragraph on women's leadership. This paragraph (below) had been proposed by Iceland, and was supported in its essence by Canada, New Zealand and the EU, and was not opposed by the G77, not even the Holy See:

[103. quat **We reiterate the need for effective participation of both women and men in decision-making and management at all levels and encourage the use of national mechanisms to increase the number of women in positions of [power/leadership – Holy See]. To reach that goal, we intend to raise the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 40 per cent, with the aim of reaching gender parity.** – Iceland; EU support in principle, revert on language; **US delete**; Canada, New Zealand streamline]

Gender equality and women's empowerment language is often unspecific and vague, not leading to any concrete implementation measures. The aim of the Rio+20 summit is to move implementation forward. Therefore, this proposed paragraph 103quat is the best way forward, setting concrete targets, as has been done for the Millennium Development Goals, to create political will for implementation. All evidence shows that setting specific targets such as this proposal is an effective means for increasing women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

### 2. Deletion of proposals regarding Human rights, Beijing PA and Rio Principle 20

We are very surprised and disappointed that the US is seeking deletion of many parts of the zero draft that address human rights and equity, and reaffirming agreed commitments such as Rio Principle 20 and the Beijing Plan of Action. Rio Principle 20 was one of the historic achievements of the Earth Summit twenty years ago, acknowledging that: *"Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development."* Three years later, the Beijing Platform for Action echoed this important message. The US wants to delete this paragraph:

[102. [We reaffirm **Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration recognizing women's vital role in sustainable development.** [We recall the international community's endorsement for the full and equal integration of women in development activities, including Agenda 21, and the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995**, as well as the Millennium Declaration. – Holy See delete] – G77; **US delete**]

Other examples include the bracketing by US of right to food in paragraph pre64 and 64alt4:

Paragraph [64. alt 4 **We [reaffirm the right of everyone to have access – US bracket] to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food**

### 3. U.S. trade proposals that are detrimental for small women farmers in developing countries

Like many other Observers and delegates, we were surprised to learn of a late-night proposal from the US, supported by Canada, on trade. The **new paragraph (pre 124 bis alt)** on trade will exacerbate inequities: we have seen far too often that this type of trade language has resulted in profoundly detrimental impacts on women, particularly jeopardizing the sustainable livelihoods of smallholder women farmers. The paragraph reads:

[Pre 124. bis alt **We emphasize the need to resist protectionist tendencies and to rectify any trade distorting measures already taken that are inconsistent with World Trade Organization rules,**

**recognizing the right of countries to fully utilize flexibilities consistent with their World Trade Organization commitments and obligations. –US, Canada]**

This paragraph, which would make all sustainable development implementation plans subject to the WTO, appears to be in contradiction to the US goals of advancing gender equality, empowering local communities, and protecting vulnerable communities.