

After 13 years of lobbying & campaigning, the Women's World Summit Foundation WWSF is happy to announce that the 2007 UN General Assembly declared:

## 15 October - International Day of Rural Women – Now a UN Resolution Day –



### WWSF Open Letter to Rural Women of the World – 2008

*Annual global awareness campaign to increase knowledge and empowerment.*

## Theme: Claim the Right to Development as a Women's Right!

Dear Sisters living in rural communities around the world,

2008 is a very special year.

**Firstly**, because in November 2007, the **United Nations General Assembly declared 15 October as International Day of Rural women**. This is a real boost to you and we wish to acknowledge the United Nations General Assembly for this timely Resolution. It means that UN Member States are called to officially mark the Day in their respective countries. Therefore, you need to find out what your government is doing to address your right to development, to acknowledge your contributions and help improve your conditions. We thank the Mongolian Ambassador to the UN for introducing the resolution A/C.3/62/L.19 and the sponsors, which include China, Ghana, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**Secondly**, because this year marks the **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**, which is a year-long campaign for the promotion of the UDHR ideals and principles and a tribute to an extraordinary human achievement under the leadership of an extraordinary woman, Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the Human Rights Commission in 1948. The Anniversary is a reminder of the task of making the UDHR a living reality for everyone to enjoy (<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/>). It expresses an understanding of what governments should not inflict on their people, as well as a recognition of their positive duty to empower and protect all citizens. The process of adopting the UDHR norms, translating them into law, and putting them into effect is still ongoing.

**Thirdly**, WWSF has chosen the theme **"Claim the Right to Development as a Women's Right"** for its 2008 International Day campaign. Our aim is to draw your attention to the **Declaration on the Right to Development** (<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/74.htm>). Recognized at the international level by the UN General Assembly Resolution 41/128 on 4 December 1986, this declaration constitutes an instrument of primary importance. It asserts the right to development as your human right in all its dimensions and unequivocally clarifies the principles that should regulate international relations, all in a spirit of equality and mutual respect tending toward its full realization. It emphasizes collective rights, the right for you to choose your own development model, and insists on international cooperation among countries. The **Declaration on the Right to Development** constitutes for your groups and networks a significant moral and legal reference that you can cite with confidence and claim as your own. It enables you to remind your government of the commitments made in approving it.

The following key points in the **Declaration on the Right to Development** are especially relevant for you:

**Art. 1** "The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural, and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully developed". Economic, social and cultural rights have a particular significance due to the disproportionate effect of poverty and social and cultural marginalization of women and in particular of rural women.

**Art. 2** asserts that "States have the right and duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and all individuals, on the basis of their active, free, and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting there of".

**Art. 3** states that governments are the main agents in implementing the declaration, which gives them "the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favorable to the realization of the right to development".

**Art. 8** gives the constituent elements of this right, the right to food, health, education, adequate housing, employment, etc. Also included are the right to participation by the people, the right to an equitable distribution of income and the right to the elimination of all social injustices through economic and social reforms. Section 2 demonstrates that all people, including you, have a right to participate in national developmental policy. It is **your** right to influence the government's actions in any policy relating to your right to development which includes economic equality, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, education, food, housing, water and work.

The **Declaration on the Right to Development** accords great importance to the duty of states "to co-operate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development".

Your vital contribution to development, food production, food security and peace deserves recognition, acknowledgement, and support. Use the International Day of Rural Women - 15 October to claim the Right to Development as your right and ensure that your Government

- **Commits** to further and enhance your right to development
- **Meets** its obligation under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law
- **Addresses** to further and enhance your right to development
- **Includes** you in development planning at all levels
- **Protects** you from actions of others that might violate your right to development
- **Makes** available to you training, education, and extension services in order to increase your technical efficiency
- **Invests** in eradicating hunger. The right to food is about ensuring that you and your families have the capacity to feed yourselves
- **Provides** you with access to technology, adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling, and family planning services; with access to land essential to food production and income generation
- **Dedicates** resources for sanitation and adequate housing
- **Provides** you with better and greater agricultural credits and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal, better and greater treatment in land and agrarian reform
- **Implements** the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Art. 14), ratifies the Optional Protocol and implements the strategic objectives and actions set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

The **Declaration on the Right to Development** is a synthesis of all human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights entered into force 30 years ago and is legally binding (<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cpr.html>). This Covenant, along with the Covenant of economic, social and cultural rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations - constitute the very basis of international law regarding human rights. For this reason, the **Declaration on the Right to Development** should be considered on an equal footing with the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It constitutes the only internal instrument that reflects the broadly accepted approach of this right. It is also accepted that peace, development and human rights are interdependent.

**The real power of this Declaration is that upon its acceptance it became international law.** Complementary rights enable you to improve your access to adequate housing, safe food and water, safe working conditions, health care, and financial credit, as outlined in the **1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, which is the most important UN Convention dedicated to women's rights. 186 UN member states are party to this Convention. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

What you can do is to mobilize so that the **Declaration on the Right to Development** is widely known, supported and achieved. It should be pointed out that this right cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of material needs and that there is no single development model applicable to all countries, given their individual situation and needs. All the same, any development policy worthy of its name should be based on the terms of the **Declaration on the Right to Development** and should promote human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural).

**Dear Sisters**, you make up more than a quarter of the world's population and contribute to the wellbeing of your families and the development of rural communities. "You are an integral and vital force in the development processes that are key to socio-economic progress. You form the backbone of the agricultural labor force across much of the developing world and produce 35-45% of Gross Domestic Product and well over 50% of the developing world's food. Yet, half a billion among you are poor and lack access to resources and markets". (*Geneva Declaration for rural women 1992*) <http://www.un-documents.net/gdrw.htm>

**Please remember 15 October** has now become an official UN Day and the new name is '**International Day of Rural Women**'. Use this occasion to demand your basic human right to development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights talks about being free and equal in dignity and rights. The concept of dignity is enormously important for your self-respect, for your caring and nurturing, your less hierarchical ways of organizing and all the contributions you make in taking responsibility for development. The Women's World Summit Foundation salutes you and wishes you a productive Day where you will make your voices heard. WWSF also invites you to nominate candidates for its annual awards, the Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life (344 prizes awarded so far) to continue to honor and award creative women in rural development.

**Elly Pradervand, WWSF CEO & Global campaign coordinator (since 1996) for Intl. Day of Rural Women - 15 October**

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We thank you for sending us reports of local and national activities to mark International Day of Rural Women 2008.

Reference: CETIM publication "The Right to Development" [http://www.cetim.ch/en/publications\\_details.php?pid=147](http://www.cetim.ch/en/publications_details.php?pid=147)

## → WHY A DAY FOR RURAL WOMEN - 15 OCTOBER?

First launched at the UN Beijing Conference on Women (1995) by several international NGOs to honor and recognize rural women's contributions to development in their communities, to acknowledge their centrality in food production and household food security, and in peace building. Since then the Women's World Summit Foundation WWSF, as a worldwide empowerment and mobilization project, annually organizes a global international day campaign. WWSF publishes every year an **'Open Letter to rural women of the world'** on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> of October to empower rural women in knowing their Human rights and demanding that promises made in their name at numerous UN summits and conferences are implemented. Celebrations and events take place annually in more than 100 countries. After many years of WWF lobbying and campaigning, the 2007 **UN General Assembly declared to observe 15 October as 'International Day of Rural Women'**, which means that the World Day is now a *United Nations Resolution Day* with a message from the UN Secretary General to all UN member states.

The Day provides rural women and their organizations with a focal point to raise their profile; sensitize both government and civil society to their crucial yet largely unrecognized roles and to promote action in their support. Initiatives on how to celebrate the International Day are left to individual organizations and communities, according to their own traditions and means. Activities or events should be concrete and visible. Action undertaken by rural and farming women in all parts of the world on the same day, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, strengthens its impact.

## → FACTS ON RURAL WOMEN

- Rural women, mainly farmers, are at least 1.6 billion and represent more than a quarter of the total population
- Rural women produce on average more than half of all the food that is grown: up to 80% in Africa, 60% in Asia, between 30 and 40% in Latin America and in Westerns countries
- Women own only 2% of the land, and receive only 1% of all agricultural credit
- Only 5% of all agricultural extension resources are directed to women
- Women represent two thirds of all illiterate people
- The number of rural women living in poverty has doubled since 1970

(Sources: FAO and IFAD)

## → Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform>

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted at the fourth World Conference on Women. This common agenda for women's empowerment stands as a milestone for the advancement of women. It specified 12 critical areas of concern that require concrete action: **Women and Poverty • Education and Training of Women • Women and Health • Violence against Women • Women and Armed Conflict • Women and the Economy • Women in Power and Decision-making • Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women • Human Rights of Women • Women and the Media • Women and the Environment • The Girl Child.**

## → Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

The MDGs reinforce the Beijing Platform for Action, which commits the international community to achieve a set of development goals by 2015. The 8 goals include: **Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger • Achieve universal primary education • Promote gender equality and empower women • Reduce child mortality • Improve maternal health • Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases • Ensure environmental sustainability • Develop a global partnership for development** (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>). The Millennium Summit (2000) restated familiar statistics: half of the world population lives on under \$ 2 a day; 1 billion live on less than \$1 a day; 600 million will not see their 40th birthday; 800 million cannot get primary health care; 200 million children suffer from lack of food; 140 million people of working age have no jobs; 750-1000 million are under-employed; 500 million young people will arrive on the job market in the next then years seeking jobs.

## → Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

From the women's point of view, CEDAW is the single most important international legal instrument adopted by the UN, also known as the Convention on the Rights of Women. Women around the world are using CEDAW effectively to bring about change in their conditions. It has encouraged the development of inheritance rights, property rights and political participation and fostered development of domestic violence laws.

### Art. 14 - Government commitments

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

- a. To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning
- b. To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling and services in family planning
- c. To benefit directly from social security programs
- d. To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency
- e. To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment
- f. To participate in all community activities
- g. To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.