

Global Assembly Recognizes Role of Women(***)

The Global Assembly held recently in Miami, Florida, reminded the international community that women in the developing world have a critical role as managers of the environment.

More than 400 delegates from every region heard some 300 success stories about women who had made a difference by developing products, technologies and community systems which were environmentally friendly.

In much of the developing world, women cultivate food crops, are responsible for domestic water supplies, and gather fuel. The majority of these women are also poor. They are rarely consulted on matters of critical importance to the environment and they are commonly ignored by Governments and other agencies. Although they could have an impact on national productivity and development, they seldom receive

technologies and know how which could lighten their workload and boost their output.

Delegates to the Assembly were reminded that women, representing 50 per cent of the population, wielded enormous power as producers and consumers. They could determine energy use, and influence the protection of natural resources and the disposal of wastes. Policy-makers, however, tended to ignore their needs and their potential to reshape the environment locally and globally.

Mrs. Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Director of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), said that as long as third world politicians and statisticians ignore the role for women in their societies and fail to measure their productivity in cash terms, many millions of women would remain *invisible*. Meanwhile, women had become both agents and victims of

environmental degradation.

In urging women attending the Assembly to develop their success stories into models which could be shared and replicated, the Director of UNIFEM said: *Where we appear to be weakest, is our ability to convince policy-makers that women do indeed have solutions to social problems. While we claim that development will occur more rapidly and effectively if women are integrated into all areas of human endeavor, we have only limited success demonstrating that point. As yet we have only a few models, a few effective strategies which others might replicate. We have to establish many of our experiences as facts* •

(***) Reproduced in part from update, United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development, No. 48, Winter 1991/92, p. 3.

International Conference on Women and Environment

The High Institute of Public Health at Alexandria University is holding an International Conference on Women and Environment in Alexandria, Egypt, on December 1st-3rd 1992.

The objectives of the Conference include focusing on women as the traditional invisible work-force and backbone of the family; emphasizing the role women should lead as environmental conservationists; examining the barriers hindering women from leading their roles in environment and development and scope needed efforts; identifying the

role women should take in environmentally disastered areas; and providing a forum for critical review of literature published in the neglected area of the environment degradation, impacts on women and children and analyzing specific case studies in order to achieve lessons and guidelines for these cases. . . .

The papers at the Conference will address issues related to women as conservationists for the environment and natural resources and women's role in water, sanitation, food, fuel, environmental pollution, tropical diseases, human settlements; and the

role of international, governmental and NGOs in promoting the role of women in environment.

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