

**PETITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OF
THE NETHERLANDS REGARDING ACTIONS ON MDG3**

Those of us before you today thank you for your time and for this opportunity to speak to you about issues of great concern to us in this room as well as to our thousands of members, allies and colleagues around the world: women working for more peaceful communities, for equitable distribution of land and economic resources, for full access to quality education and employment and participation in decision-making.

Not only are gender equality and the empowerment of women (MDG3) critical development objectives in and of themselves, they are a necessary requirement to achieve every other Millennium Development Goal. The entrenched systems of power that keep things unjust for women demand multi-faceted responses, such as those laid out in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Our core message to you today is: strengthen your resolve. The government of the Netherlands has been an important champion and ally in efforts to advance women's rights and gender equality. **We urgently need your continued commitment and action to promote greater political will and resource commitments within the international community** to make serious advances on these existing internationally agreed development goals.

Remember too that women's organizations and movements are a key development partner in these efforts, playing an indispensable role in their communities, nations and regions as agents of change and advocates for justice. Research¹ confirms that most of these groups are severely under-resourced and yet even so, they continue to provide vital services, education, leadership development, advocacy and much more for women around the world.

The demands of our current context—growing economic insecurity, widespread conflict and militarization, deepening backlash against basic human rights in the name of security or nationalism—make this a particularly important moment to invest in women. In 2005, of the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) of approximately USD 107 bn,² about one-third was screened with a “gender equality policy marker” to track spending for gender equality. Of this, only USD 9.3bn focused on gender equality. Marred by complex allocation and disbursement processes, a small fraction of these funds directly reached civil society organizations.

It is urgent that donor countries increase their allocation to ODA, particularly for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. A tri-track approach is encouraged to ensure that these goals are integrated throughout all sectors and that specific

¹ See Kerr, Joanna (2007) *The Second FundHer Report: Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements Worldwide*, available at <http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-News/Financial-Sustainability-for-Women-s-Movement-s-Worldwide-Second-FundHer-Report>

² Expert Group on Financing for Gender Equality - the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Oslo, September 2007, page 24, available at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/financing_gender_equality/egm_financing_gender_equality.htm

support for women's rights work is available (mainstreaming + specific actions/programs + support for women's organizations).

The Netherlands is one of the few countries reaching the international commitment of 0.7% of Gross National Income allocated to ODA³ and it also channels the most money directly to non-governmental organizations, with the recent MDG3 Fund standing as a prime example of this effort. As a leader among the donor countries, the Dutch government can play a crucial role in ensuring that gender equality is at the center of the Review of the Monterrey Consensus taking place in Doha later this year. A successful outcome in Doha will create a global economic governance system that is able to minimize recurring financial crises and respond to uncertainties produced by economic instability.

Especially at this time of economic crisis, citizens around the world are concerned about effective use of public monies. We are in fact suffering the consequences of a heavy emphasis on the expansion of finance and production and an undervaluation of social reproduction—that part of the economy that takes care of everyone else. Women are the first to bear the brunt of these imbalances. Invest in women and in our power to make change.

In sum, we call for your strong leadership in:

- **Ensuring that women's rights are at the center of all development goals** with clear, time-bound work plans and targets that reflect the various facets of women's empowerment, recognizing the critical role played by women's organizations;
- **Encouraging and supporting that donor countries agree to allocate at least 10% of ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment by 2010 and 20% by 2015.**⁴ Strategies for reaching these targets, monitoring performance and evaluating impact should be incorporated into the action plans of donors and developing countries without recourse to the imposition of policy conditionalities that undermine women's empowerment and leadership.
- **Supporting an integrated, publicly accessible and accountable process** (such as the UN could provide), to promote coherence in trade, financial and monetary policies and where the inclusive participation of all stakeholders, including civil society organizations and women's organizations, is guaranteed.

³ This commitment is crucial to making good on MDG8 *Delivering on the Global Partnership for Achieving the MDGs*.

⁴ Expert Group on Financing for Gender Equality - the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Oslo, September 2007, and endorsed by participants in the International Consultation of Women's Organizations and Networks and Aid Effectiveness held in Ottawa in January 2008.