

DHAKA DECLARATION: SWAN (South Asia Women's Network)'s Positions on an emerging Green Economy

Preamble

We, the women of South Asia, gathered in Dhaka, Bangladesh on July 2 and 3, 2011, for the Third Annual Conference of SWAN (South Asia Women's Network), which was dedicated to the theme of "Women of South Asia and the Green Economy". We come from nine South Asian countries : Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The SWAN Annual Conference brings together eight individual SWAN networks, respectively on Arts and Literature; Women in Peacemaking; Health, Nutrition, and Food Security; Education; Crafts and Textiles; Microcredit, Livelihood, and Development; Environment; and Women in Media. Women working in each of these areas make vital contributions to the Green Economy. There can be no Green Economy without Arts and Literature that express our local traditions, and women play a central role in preserving and disseminating these traditions. There can be no Green Economy without Peace. Armed conflict, terrorism and all violent acts are destructive of the Green Economy. The peace we ask for cannot ever be at the expense of women's rights. A Green Economy is the only enduring basis for good health, and for ensuring adequate nutrition and food security. Education for an authentic Green Economy is our commitment. Our rich tradition of crafts and textiles does not just contribute to our rich culture, it is the very basis of green livelihoods. Facilitating local sustainable livelihoods is the real role of microcredit and financial systems. We will use the media to show to our region and the world that the women of South Asia bring solutions to the ecological and poverty crises. We will define the Green Economy on our terms, through our cultures and our lives.

South Asia is the region that bears a heavy burden of the global ecological crisis, including climate change and species extinction. The melting of the Himalayan glaciers, the intensification of droughts, floods, and cyclones, and the rising sea level aggravate the already-serious ecological stresses in our region. Despite the differences and diversity within our region, we all share and depend on one geographical space. During periods of deep catastrophe and uncertainty, we need to recognize a multiplicity of perspectives that will offer diverse and plural solutions.

South Asia is one of the richest regions in terms of bio-cultural diversity, but this diversity is under threat of monocultures pushed through the Green Revolution and genetic engineering. These non-sustainable and failed technologies are being forced on our people, driving them deeper into debt and poverty. Our

rich biodiversity and knowledge heritage is being patented and pirated, depriving our people of the benefits of their own heritage and resources. When environmental crises force us to migrate to cities, we also experience loss of livelihoods due to lack of access to urban space, materials and new forms of urban management. Our bodies are imprinted with toxics from unsustainable consumption of others. The right to sustainable development should be inalienable. This is vital for women's empowerment and for preserving our planet for future generations

Women of South Asia bear the highest burden of climate change, biodiversity erosion and unsustainable forms of urbanization. But we also bring solutions to these global crises with our knowledge, skills, wisdom, and experience. We seek to work in harmony with nature, rather than resorting to geo-engineering that could further aggravate the ecosystem balance. That is why we bring something unique to the global discussion on sustainable development and the Green Economy in the lead-up to Rio+20 and visions beyond.

Statement and Commitment

A Green Economy should be an economic system that ensures social justice and equity, protects the ecological balance and creates economic sufficiency. Such a Green Economy should replace the current economic order, which is based on inequity, environmental destruction and greed, which has resulted in keeping nearly half the world's population in poverty, and has brought the planet to the point of a severe environmental catastrophe through climate change. The core idea of a Green Economy must be poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability through maintaining biodiversity, and the well-being of all the people.

As SWANs, we embrace such a Green Economy. We commit ourselves to raising our collective voices for it. We will transcend the fragmenting boundaries that attempt to divide us, and will unify our energies to create a better world for all.

Our local economies have always been in harmony with nature. We have used resources prudently, and shared them equitably. SWAN believes that agriculturists and craftspeople around the world have always worked in tandem with the seasons and in harmony with nature. A craftswoman carries with her the wisdom of generations that did not pillage the planet for profit. She has a deep commitment towards nurturing the natural world for sustaining livelihoods. The only raw materials needed to keep millions employed is a thriving green environment with rich forests, wild grasses, clean waters, and unravaged hillsides. The dignity and creativity of hand-work greatly contributes towards sound rural economies. This work of women across the South Asian region must be acknowledged by all those who wish to build an inclusive and truly integrated, ecologically balanced world.

Today, those who have created the ecological crisis talk of the Green Economy. For them, the Green Economy means appropriating the remaining resources of the planet for profit — from seed and biodiversity to land and water as well as our skills, such as the environmental services we provide.

For us, the privatization and commodification of nature, her species, her ecosystems, and her ecosystem services cannot be part of a Green Economy, for such an approach cannot take into account our traditions. The resources of the Earth are for the welfare of all, not the profits of a few.

Sharing our vital resources equitably and using them sustainably for livelihoods and basic needs is at the heart of our concept of a Green Economy. Our rich knowledge of biodiversity, our ecologically sustainable agriculture, and our crafts techniques are free of fossil fuels and toxics. They generate creative and dignified livelihoods and they provide the basis for poverty alleviation. We stand committed to strengthening these life-giving traditions.

It is of vital importance to spread awareness about these issues through the media and through the educational process, which reaches out to youth and children. Awareness about the Green Economy and the significance of its diverse impacts is essential in order to enable all segments of society to make informed choices. Recognizing the changing face of the media, SWAN encourages the use of new media, including social networking tools, to reach out and support the women of South Asia in their struggle to meet the challenges of ensuring the Green Economy for sustainable development.

Our Green Economies are diverse and decentralized and therefore are a path of empowerment for all. Women are the storehouse of knowledge and provide the cultural base to create and build economies that increase wellbeing and happiness, joy and beauty, sustainability and equity. It is from our region of South Asia that the concept of Gross National Happiness has spread worldwide. We will deepen this concept and make it the basis of the Green Economy.

We stand committed to peace in our region and to strengthening these life-giving traditions. We commit ourselves to defending the ecological integrity of our region — our mountains and rivers, our land and oceans, our natural forests, biodiversity and seeds. We commit ourselves to creating prosperity and peace through the Green Economy that protects and enriches our natural and cultural heritage. We commit ourselves to resisting those irresponsible policies and armed conflicts that directly harm women and children. We commit ourselves to equity and to defending vital resources, like forests, seed and biodiversity, rivers and water, as a commons. We recognize that the Green Economy we envisage will greatly facilitate and strengthen women's empowerment in South Asia and in other parts of the world. We commit ourselves to working together to show that a better world is possible. We commit ourselves to making our voices heard at all important regional and multilateral forums where these issues are being discussed.

Signatories:

- Ms Veena Sikri, Professor, Academy of Third World Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi (India) : Convener of SWAN and Coordinator of the SWAN on Arts and Literature
- Dr Vandana Shiva, Navdanya (Research Foundation for Science, Technology & Ecology), New Delhi (India), and Dr Uchita de Zoysa, Executive Director, Centre for Environment & Development, Colombo (Sri Lanka) : Co-coordinators of the SWAN on the Environment
- Ms Shinkai Zahine Karokhail, Member of the National Assembly of Afghanistan : Coordinator of the SWAN on Women in Peacemaking
- Ms Shaheen Anam, Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Dhaka (Bangladesh) : Coordinator of the SWAN on Microcredit, Livelihood and Development
- Dr Mira Shiva, Director, Initiative for Health, Equity and Society; and Founder Member, Diverse Women for Diversity : Coordinator of the SWAN on Health, Nutrition and Food Security
- Dr Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director, CAMPE (Campaign for Popular Education), Dhaka (Bangladesh) : Coordinator of the SWAN on Education

- Ms Jaya Jaitly, Founder President of the Dastkari Haat Samiti, New Delhi (India) : Coordinator of the SWAN on Crafts and Textiles
- Ms Nandini Sahai, Director, The International Centre, Goa (India) and Founder Director, MICCI (Media Information and Communication Centre of India) : Coordinator of the SWAN on Women in Media.
- AFGHANISTAN :
Ms Razia Sadat, Member of the National Assembly of Afghanistan
Ms Elay Ershad, Member of the National Assembly of Afghanistan
Asila Wardak Jamal, Director, Human Rights & Women's International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul
Ms Monireh Hashemi, Theatre Director, Simorgh Film Association of Culture and Art (SFACA), Herat,
Ms Frozan Rahmani, Correspondent, Pajhwok News Agency, Kabul

Ms Hasina Safi, Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC), Kabul.

- BANGLADESH

- Ms Sabrina Islam, President, Women Entrepreneur's Association, Dhaka
- Ms Farida Zaman, Professor & Chairman, Deptt of Drawing and Painting, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka
- Ms Tropa Majumdar, Theatre Director, Dhaka.
- Ms Munni Saha, Head of News, ATN News, Dhaka.
- Ms Lubna Marium, Creative Director, Sadhana, Dhaka
- Ms Khushi Kabir, Coordinator, Nijera Kori, Dhaka
- Dr Kaosar Afsana, Associate Director Health, BRAC, Dhaka
- Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, Dhaka
- Dr Niaz Zaman, Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka
- Ms Rubi Ghaznavi, Managing Director, Arannya Crafts, Dhaka
- Sara Zaker, Deputy Managing Director, Asiatic Marketing Communications, Dhaka
- Suraiya Chowdhury, Director of Design, Prokritee, Dhaka
- Ms Rokeya Sultana, professor, Department of Print Making, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of

Dhaka

- Ms Kanak Champa Chakma, Contemporary Free Lance artist
- Ms Jharna Dhara Chowdhury, Secretary, Gandhi Ashram Trust, Jayag, Noakhali

- BHUTAN

- Ms Kunzang Choden Tshering, Chief HR Officer, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Thimphu
- Ms Roseleen Gurung, Microfinance Specialist, Tarayana Foundation, Thimphu.
- Ms Namgay Wangmo, Project Officer, Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE), Thimphu
- Ms Meena Rai, Programme Officer, Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE), Thimphu

- INDIA

- Ms Bharati Chaturvedi, Director, Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, New Delhi.
- Professor Madhu Khanna, Director, Centre for Comparative Religions and Civilisations, Jamia Millia Islamia University

Dr Saryu Doshi, Author and Art Historian, Mumbai

Ms Shalini Joshi, Co-Director, Nirantar, Centre for Gender and Education, New Delhi

Dr Sabiha Hussain, Associate Professor, Dr KR Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minority Studies,
Jamia Millia Islamia University

Ms Sohaila Kapur, Theatre Director and Playright, New Delhi

Ms Sarita Kumari, Social Activist, Ghanerao, Rajasthan

Ms Sadia Dehlvi, Editor, Curator, Author and Art Historian, New Delhi

Ms Usha Ganguli, Theatre Director, Rangakarmee, Kolkata. Email :

Ms Arati Jerath, The Crest Edition, Times of India, New Delhi

MALDIVES

Ms Yudhra Abdul Latheef, Attorney-at-Law, Deputy State Attorney, Attorney General's Office

Ms. Aminath Shaneez Saeed, National President 2011, Junior Chamber International, Maldives,

Ms Thoiba Saeedh, Director, Encore Theatre Productions, Male

Ms. Aishath Rishtha, Programme Mannager, SWAD, Society for Women Against Drugs, Male

MYANMAR

Ms Cherie Aung Khyn, CEO & Designer, Elephant House Co. Ltd,
Yangon

Ms. Nu Nu Yee, Vice President, Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association, Yangon

Mr Isaac Khen, Executive Director, Gender and Development Initiatives, Yangon,

NEPAL

Ms Pramila Acharya Rijal, Chairperson, SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs' Council (SCWEC).

Mr Bidur Thapa, Director of Field Programmes and Operations, SEARCH-Nepal, Kathmandu

Ms Prativa Shrestha, Coordinator, Status of Women in Nepal Report, Shtrii Shakti, kathmandu,

Ms Radha Kayastha, Madhesh Foundation for Peace and Development, Kathmandu

Ms Abha Jha, Madhesh Foundation for Peace and Development, Kathmandu

PAKISTAN

Professor Salima Hashmi, Dean, School of Visual Arts and Design, Beaconhouse National University,
Lahore

Ms Madeeha Gauhar, Artistic Director, Ajoka Theatre, Lahore.

Ms Madiha Kazi, Textile Designer, Thardeep Rural Development Programme, Karachi

Dr. Durre Sameena Ahmed, Chairperson and Senior Research Fellow, Center for the Study of Gender
and Culture, Lahore

Ms Marianna Baabar, Diplomatic Editor, The News, 27 A, Harkey Street, Rawalpindi

Ms Zoia Tariq, CEO, ZEST Media/Events/Publications, Lahore
Ms Ambreen Waheed, Executive Director, Responsible Business Initiative, Lahore
Dr Faiz H Shah, Head, Development Management, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok.
Ms Tabinda Alkans Jaffery, CEO, Asasah Microfinance, Lahore
Ms Zehra Arshad, National Coordinator, Pakistan Coalition for Education, Islamabad.

SRI LANKA

Hon'ble Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane, Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, Colombo 2.

Ms Vidyani Hettigoda, Chairperson, Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Colombo.

Ms Nishani Jessica Marina Dissanayake, Foreign News Editor, Lakbima (Sinhala daily), and Editor, Samudra (Sinhala magazine)

Ms Mano Alles, Managing Director, Abans Financial Services, Colombo

.Ms Rohini Nanayyakara, Chairperson and Board Member, Lanka Orix Leasing Company Ltd, and Lanka Orix Microcredit Limited, Colombo

Ms Chandramali Liyanage, National Crafts Council of Sri Lanka, Colombo. Email : buddhincc@sltnet.lk

|