

Intervention Women Major Group 22/01/2009 (Lesha Witmer, Women and Gender Coalition)

We women challenge you to be daring.

We think one important aim of the Forum is to hear and learn from each other, the Forum being the only place where all stakeholders from all walks of life come together around water & sanitation issues. We consider it important that the ministers not only “take note” of the Istanbul water guide / chairman’s paper, but learn from the recommendations in the paper AND the discussions in Istanbul itself.

Secondly we feel that the ministerial declaration as it is phrased now, is not reflecting agreements already reached in Dublin, Rio, Johannesburg and during CSD; it should commit to implementing these agreements and recommendations. Furthermore, “thinking out of the box” also means recognizing and using policies, agreements and practices from other sectors like from Cairo about health and water, from Beijing about water, women and gender, Human rights commission in Geneva (who just appointed a special reporter on the right to water) and resolutions of the GA of the un.

We support our colleagues in this and call for recognition of the right to water and sanitation and implementation at the very least at national level.

We would welcome ministers acknowledging (again) participation of stakeholders from all major groups on all levels and in all stages of the process and committing to facilitating their participation.

Both women and men of all social strata of society should be able to participate in decision making, to ensure appropriate and sustainable technology, systems and processes. To be able to do so, specific attention should be paid to enabling especially women, poor disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people to voice their needs and wishes based on informed choices, their knowledge and experience is acknowledged and heard. For this it is critical to develop capacity of technicians, engineers, agricultural extension workers, decision makers and politicians in gender and cultural issues and the use of a gender approach.

Transboundary cooperation is essential to tackle the water and climate challenges before us. Implementation of available, existing conventions provides a framework that sets the agenda and widens our focus across national and cultural boundaries. It creates accountability and transparency and in this way adds to water security and solidarity, enabling NGO’s and CSO’s to also actively participate.