

**Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol**

**Submission by the Republic of Vanuatu**

1. Welcoming the invitation from decision 23/CP.18 to provide views on options and ways to advance the gender balance goal adopted by the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties in this decision, the Republic of Vanuatu acknowledges the great advancement made by Parties at COP18 on gender by adopting the above mentioned decision stating “Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol”.
2. Reminding the Parties of the central role played by women in climate change adaptation, mitigation, scientific research, policy and decision making, but also in the pursuit of sustainable development, peace and democracy, the Republic of Vanuatu also recognises the importance of including women in all levels of climate change decisions and frameworks, while ensuring that their voice, views and priorities are taken into account and that gender-sensitive approaches are used to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.
3. Underlining that women’s participation has been undermined throughout the history of the UNFCCC and that women continue to be underrepresented in the bodies of the Convention, the Republic of Vanuatu recalls that from 2008 to 2012, the ratios of women in the UNFCCC delegations (30%) and in all bodies and boards of the UNFCCC (10%) have remained steady, highlighting the lack of progress on the issue<sup>1</sup>. Even though gender imbalances are common to all countries, significant differences have been identified between Annex I and non Annex I countries. For example, 42% of the national delegations of Eastern and Western Europe are women, whereas in Africa and Asia-Pacific this ratio only reaches 21%<sup>2</sup>. This significant gap between Annex I and Non Annex I countries is a reflection of the difficulty encountered by women in developing countries to break through strong structural and cultural barriers. However, considering the dual status of women, especially in developing countries, as both one of the most vulnerable groups and key actors of change, it is all the more crucial to address gender imbalances and support women in becoming more fairly and equally part of the UNFCCC negotiations.
4. Informing the UNFCCC Secretariat and the Parties of the significant efforts that have been made to place women at the core of the development of the nation, through, for instance, the drafting of a National Gender Policy which is to be completed by September 2013, with extensive consultations throughout the Provinces and with all stakeholders within Government and civil society organisations, the Republic of Vanuatu calls on the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties to consider the following components in their discussions towards gender balance at the 19th session of the Conference of Parties (COP).

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<sup>1</sup> Women’s Participation in UN Climate Negotiations 2008-2012, WEDO – 2013

<sup>2</sup> The Full View, Advancing the Goal of Gender Balance in Multilateral and Intergovernmental Processes, UN Women & Mary Robinson Foundation – May 2013

## **1. Substantive Equality Principle in the Processes towards Gender Balance**

The Republic of Vanuatu requests more clarity and specificity in the statements made under decision 23/CP.18, adopting the goal of “gender balance”, referring to the participation of women in high-level decision-making processes. Although the Republic of Vanuatu agrees with the vision that is carried by this terminology, the nation suggests that more clarity be brought in regards to the processes and efforts undertaken by Parties on the issue.

The Republic of Vanuatu calls for this commitment to be more specific on its implications. Indeed, adopting the terminology “gender balance” does not imply that Substantive Equality, as defined in the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), referring to the actions taken to provide equal opportunities and to correct the inequality of power between men and women, has been fulfilled. The Republic of Vanuatu therefore suggests that the principle of Substantive Equality be explicitly included in Decision 23/CP.18, emphasizing the two different kinds of efforts that will be needed to achieve gender balance.

Also, considering the contextual differences between Annex I and Non Annex I parties in the achievement of Substantive Equality, and the difficulties faced in the latter to transcend a male-dominated political life and break through heavy cultural barriers, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests that Parties adopt nationally relevant processes to reach gender balance, therefore aligning with the principle of Equality of Results as defined in CEDAW.

## **2. Using Temporary Special Measures to Reach a “Critical Mass” of Women in the UNFCCC Bodies**

Reminding the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties that across the Pacific, excluding Australia and New Zealand, only 3% of the Members of Parliament are women<sup>3</sup>, the Republic of Vanuatu calls on the Parties to acknowledge the alarming scale of women’s underrepresentation in high level decision making spheres and the need to urgently reverse this current trend. Considering the substantial underrepresentation of women in all bodies of the UNCCC, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests that Parties take decisive actions to reach a “critical mass” of women in the bodies pursuant to the Convention.

Recalling paragraph 1 of Decision 23/CP.18, stating that “additional efforts need to be made by all Parties to improve the participation of women”, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests that the Parties adopt “temporary special measures” as presented in Article 4.1 of the CEDAW adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and ratified by Vanuatu in 1995. These measures, represented under the terminology “Positive Discrimination”, are part of the legal framework that has already been agreed on by Parties at the seventh session of CEDAW in 1988. Quoting the above mentioned article, the Republic of Vanuatu reminds the Parties that such measures would enable the UNFCCC to “accelerate the improvement of the position of women to achieve their de facto or substantive

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<sup>3</sup> The Full View, Advancing the Goal of Gender Balance in Multilateral and Intergovernmental Processes, UN Women & Mary Robinson Foundation – May 2013

equality with men”, while simultaneously implementing longer term efforts to ensure sustainable gender balance.

Recalling the General Recommendation No. 5 of the seventh session of CEDAW, the Republic of Vanuatu recommends that Parties use “temporary special measures such as positive action, preferential treatment or quota systems”. Lessons learned on women’s empowerment show that these measures and, more specifically, the use of numerical targets, have a more effective impact on the advancement of gender balance. Therefore, acknowledging that countries should have their own aspirations and common but differentiated processes to achieve gender balance, the Republic of Vanuatu recommends that temporary special measures be adopted by the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties. More specifically, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests that Parties discuss the establishment of a numerical target to be included in Decision 23/CP.18. The Republic of Vanuatu also suggests that an incentive mechanism be put in place to grant bonuses to the Parties that implement and meet such numerical gender targets, whilst taking into consideration national contexts, reminding that achieving modest targets in very patriarchal settings may be much more impressive than achieving close to, or equal gender balance in other countries.

### **3. Providing an Enabling Environment Leading to Sustainable Gender Balance**

The representation and participation of women will not improve as long as the underlying causes of inequality and inequity are not properly addressed. For this reason, the Republic of Vanuatu has identified four main areas on which the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties could focus their efforts to make progress towards gender balance.

#### **A. Education and Capacity Building**

Studies on women’s participation in high-level decision-making, such as *The Full View* published this year by UN Women and Mary Robinson Foundation, added to lessons learned from the experiences of regional actors such as the African Union or the Quito Consensus<sup>4</sup>, reveal that women’s empowerment cannot be achieved without capacity-building activities.

The Republic of Vanuatu therefore encourages the UNFCCC to make proactive efforts in supporting women’s education and skills building. This could take the form of including gender issues and gender sensitisation in the capacity building training and workshops organised under the UNFCCC, targeting both men and women, and taking measures ensuring that women have every opportunity to play an active role in these sessions.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Full View, Advancing the Goal of Gender Balance in Multilateral and Intergovernmental Processes*, UN Women & Mary Robinson Foundation – May 2013

## **B. Financial Resources**

In Non Annex I countries where financial resources are limited, it is common that opportunities are given to men as they traditionally hold political and economic power. In our efforts towards gender balance, it is crucial to ensure that women are not discriminated against for financial reasons.

Consequently, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests to the UNFCCC Secretariat to consider gender balance in the allocation of funds, especially regarding the delegates attending the Conference of Parties as statistics show that women's participation is lower at these meetings than at others<sup>5</sup>. While acknowledging that governments have sovereignty on the nomination of the attending delegates, the Republic of Vanuatu urges the UNFCCC Secretariat to allocate specific resources to ensure that women have every opportunity to participate in and attend the Conference of Parties every year.

## **C. Policy and Reporting**

Considering the stakes of the UNFCCC negotiations, gender balance cannot be solely considered as an end goal, but rather as a means towards the development of fairer and more comprehensive policies and legal frameworks enabling the Parties to address climate change issues. The Republic of Vanuatu therefore welcomes the paragraph 9 of Decision 23/CP.18 adding "the issue of gender and climate change as a standing item on the agenda of sessions of the Conference of the Parties" and suggests that discussions on gender are included in all panel discussions.

In order to assess and ensure progress of Parties on the issue, the Republic of Vanuatu urges the UNFCCC Secretariat to establish strong monitoring and reporting mechanisms. The Republic of Vanuatu suggests that all reports submitted by Parties to the UNFCCC have a gender section, outlining actions and measures undertaken to reach gender balance and reporting on their progress to date. In return, the Republic of Vanuatu insists that all UNFCCC reports made by Parties contain sex-disaggregated data. The Republic of Vanuatu also suggests that the UNFCCC Secretariat maintain a ranking of countries and regions progressing towards greater gender balance and that this data be made publicly available, therefore encouraging a friendly spirit of competition between Parties.

## **D. Culture and Sociology**

As highlighted in the introduction, one of the strongest structural barriers to overcome in most of Non Annex I countries deals with negative gender-based stereotypes prevalent in the culture and society. Women's empowerment cannot be fully achieved as long as these negative stereotypes persist and until the broader society accepts the role women can play at high decision-making levels.

While welcoming the paragraph 10 of Decision 23/CP.18 and the organisation of an in-session gender workshop, the Republic of Vanuatu suggests that gender equity and the weight of negative gender stereotypes be addressed in the agenda. In addition, given the high number of applications for Side Events at the Conference of Parties this year, and the new selection process established by the Secretariat, the Republic of Vanuatu proposes that, for the 19th session and future Conference of Parties, one of the selection criteria for Side Events include how the proposed

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<sup>5</sup> Women's Participation in UN Climate Negotiations 2008-2012, WEDO – 2013

side event discusses gender impact or analysis or integration. Finally, the Republic of Vanuatu reminds the Parties of the importance of gender awareness amongst the UNFCCC bodies themselves, and suggests that all UNFCCC staff undergo gender sensitisation training and/or workshops.

Although the Republic of Vanuatu has not yet been able to display high levels of gender balance, the nation is committed to place gender at the core of national development. In June this year, the Vanuatu Government lead by the Hon. Prime Minister Moana Carcasses Kalosil after 33 years of independence marked a historical event in unanimously approving the tabling of bills in the next Parliament session to introduce a Temporary Special Measure of a 16-year quota of 30-34% to be allocated for women's seats in all Municipal Councils. This Quota Bill has been passed by Vanuatu Parliament on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2013, making of the Port Vila Municipal Council the first to be elected with this quota in place.

The Republic of Vanuatu is also committed to integrating gender into climate change policies, as outlined in the National Priorities and Actions Agenda, National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Land-Based Resources 2012-2022 and in the draft National Climate Change and Disaster Risks Reduction Policy of the National Advisory Board on Climate Change and Disaster Risks Reduction (NAB). Beyond the development of a National Gender Policy, the Republic of Vanuatu has taken ambitious measures to make progress on the issue in its approach to the UNFCCC process. This year, the Republic of Vanuatu set up a numerical target for full gender equality, e.g. 50% women, in the composition of the national delegation. It should also be noted that the Republic of Vanuatu entered the process of submissions with this very submission focused on gender balance, reflecting the determination of the country to push the gender agenda at both national and international levels.

In spite of these great efforts to achieve gender balance, the Republic of Vanuatu reminds the UNFCCC Secretariat, Parties and partners that comprehensive support and effective measures will be needed, in particular in Non Annex I countries where structural barriers keep challenging the role of women in political life.