

Statement Dutch UN Women's Representative 2016 – Marije Cornelissen

11 October – New York

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address you today, as Women's Representative of the Netherlands and also as the Executive Director of the brand new Dutch National Committee of UN Women. In the past year, I've talked to many people about women and climate change, and I would like to introduce you to two wonderful women farmers.

The first is Sushila Khari, a woman farmer from Nepal. Due to climate change, her crops are often ruined by extreme weather. Moreover, as a woman, she is responsible for fetching water, but especially in winter, the water sources near her village often dry out. She spends increasing hours working and walking to provide for her family. The local agriculture office does offer knowledge on adaptation strategies, but, only to male farmers.

What Sushila needs is a dependable water source near her home and knowledge on how to farm her changing land. For her, you have all committed to ensure availability of water, as well as learning opportunities for all.

The second is Marielle Gijbers, a woman farmer from the Netherlands who grows flowers and asparagus. Two weeks before my visit to her farm this summer, torrential rains and hail stones as big as ping-pong balls destroyed her greenhouses, with great damage and the loss of the plants she lovingly cares for.

What Marielle needs is for this sort of destructive weather to remain an exception instead of become the rule. For her, you have promised in Paris last year to do everything possible to stop further global heating.

These stories show that climate change is happening now. And it is happening everywhere.

However, there *is* a difference between richer and poorer countries. As Dutch farmer Marielle said to me: 'For me its a question of lying awake at night wondering whether the insurance will cover the rebuilding of my farm. For a colleague like Sushila in Nepal, its a question of lying awake at night wondering whether her family will live or die'.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year, you took on some great responsibilities; the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Climate Change. You recognised that climate change is the most important challenge of today.

Floods, draughts, deforestation, mud slides, acid rains, torrential weather, water and fuel shortage, they're already happening around the world. And, unfortunately unsurprisingly, those who are hit worst are women.

I am not here though to convince you that women are victims. You *know* that women are *over*represented as food-providers, farmhands, water haulers, fuel gatherers and family care-givers, and therefore the ones to suffer from climate change the most.

What I want to point out is that women are *under*represented as land-owners, as decision-makers, as entrepreneurs, as bank managers, as scientists; women are underrepresented among those with the means to face climate change and conquer it.

What women need is access to knowledge, to political power, to funding, to corporate decision-making. And you have all promised to provide that access.

So, those countries that haven't yet; make sure that women can own land, inherit, receive credit, start a business, be educated. Take action to change cultural practices that stand in the way of that.

And all countries everywhere, without exception, including mine; change your structures of political, corporate and academic power, make sure women have decision-making powers on equal footing with men.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As hard as it is to negotiate agreements globally, it's nothing to the hard work needed to fully implement them. And hard work is exactly what is expected from every single country around the world. Because Sushila, and Marielle, and every other woman, man and child deserves that.

Thank you