ZONTA INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 23
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

ZONTA SAYS NOW

To gender equality and climate action

Zonta Says NOW News - DECEMBER 2021



The Future of Life on Earth

Like this lemur in Madagascar, the future of many of the world's critically endangered species is in our hands. Why is it that we exploit nature to feed our consumerism and then wonder why there is a biodiversity crisis? Up to half of all species are facing extinction by the end of the century.

While COP 26 provided many disappointments for Australians, one good thing to come out of it was recognising nature as our greatest protector from the worst impacts of climate change. Today, 141 countries (including Australia) have signed the Declaration on Forests and Land Use to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation. This is good news as safeguarding carbon stores in nature is essential to keeping temperature rises below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In this final newsletter of 2021, we reflect on COP26 and introduce two more COPs, both called COP15. We also describe why protecting biodiversity is essential to women and girls and show what we can do to turn things around to create a more sustainable world.

With a federal election just around the corner, now is the time for us to encourage our politicians to act on climate and biodiversity - as they are inextricably linked.

Many politicians are hesitant to speak on these issues in case they lose votes. Please reassure them they will only get your vote if they speak up and make it clear where they stand on climate and biodiversity.

Enjoy the summer break!

Carole
Carole Theobald
District 23 Futurist/Leadership Coordinator



Observations from COP26

During November our news feeds were full of the discussions and debates held throughout COP26.

A couple of highlights were:

- watching the two-hour event on Advancing Gender Equality and Climate Action introduced by Little Amal (a giant puppet) with a panel of speakers who all made commitments to put gender equality at the forefront of climate action;
- learning that Sweden has declared itself a feminist government;
- understanding more about the UN-Women led initiative called the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition;
- reading the Glasgow Women's Leadership Statement that calls on the role of women and girls to be advanced in addressing climate change. Countries, including Australia, have until the next CSW meeting in March 2022 to sign on; and
- hearing about the finance guides and funds supporting female-led start-ups aligned with the sustainable development goals.

However, the overall outcomes of COP26 were based on decisions of the mostly male, national leaders, shown in the photo above. There were 530 fossil fuel lobbyists in attendance in Glasgow and some pushback by leaders on proposals.

She Changes Climate is calling for at least 50 per cent representation of women at the top levels of all future climate delegations and there have been calls for fewer lobbyists at future COPs.

COP26's Glasgow Climate Pact showed progress in some areas – but only enough to limit global warming to 2.4 degrees Celsius. Therefore, countries agreed to meet again next year (COP27 in Egypt) and submit stronger emissions reduction targets for 2030.

Greta Thunberg described the Glasgow event as more blah, blah, blah, the Climate Council's report card gave the Federal Government's actions at COP 26 a 'fail' and Australia received the Colossal Fossil award for its lack of climate action.

Action: With Australia's credibility in tatters internationally, and a federal election only months away, now is the time to engage with your politicians. Let them know how you feel about climate issues and ask them where they stand on gender equality and climate action.



Meet the COP Family

Meet more members of the COP family:

- COP26 in Glasgow was the 26th meeting of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
- COP15 is the 15th meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is currently underway in Kunming, China. The CBD aims to protect the diversity of plant and animal species and ensure the fair, sustainable and equitable use of natural resources. China is hosting COP15 in two phases. Phase 1 met in October 2021, and Phase 2 will meet in April/May next year. Phase 1 committed to negotiating a Global Biodiversity Framework. The draft gender-responsive Framework includes 21 action-oriented targets and aims to "bend the curve of biodiversity loss". The CBD calls on countries to protect at least 30 per cent of their land and sea areas by 2030 (30 x 30), eliminate plastic waste in oceans, and slash chemical use in agriculture. At the Phase 2 meeting, delegates will vote whether or not to adopt the Framework.
- Another COP15 will be the 15th meeting of the Convention on Desertification (UNCDD), programmed for 2022. It aims to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and mitigate the effects of drought.

Elizabeth Mrema, the Executive Secretary of the CBD, explains:

Our interference, through deforestation, agricultural expansion, livestock intensification and habitat fragmentation, has exposed wild animals and brought them into closer contact with people, which has resulted in the spillover of pathogens and zoonotic diseases, human-to-human transmission through trade and tourism, and the explosive pandemic we currently find ourselves in.

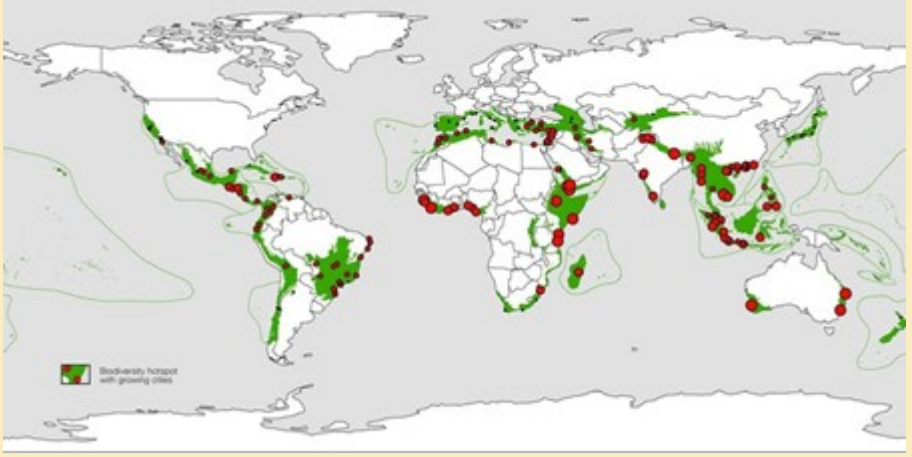
In short, restoring biodiversity may also help to reduce the risk of another pandemic.

These three COPs all have a different focus. However, Nature Day at COP26 saw the convergence of climate and biodiversity goals with commitments made to protect nature, shift to more sustainable farming, and increase global food security.

This podcast discusses the links between climate change, biodiversity loss and rising inequalities and calls for more nature-based solutions in climate actions.

Is it time to bring all three Conventions together to integrate actions relating to climate, biodiversity and desertification?

Action: Check out the first draft of the CBD framework to see how gender and indigenous issues are addressed in targets 20 and 21.



Why is biodiversity important to women and girls?

Today, half the CO2 emissions produced by humans are removed, for free, by the ocean and land ecosystems. The 36 biodiversity hotspots on this map support half the world's plant species and over 40 per cent of bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species. These hotspots are at high risk of species loss as they have already lost 70 per cent of their original natural vegetation. The Living Planet Index has shown that the average global population sizes of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles have dropped 68 per cent since 1970. The Global Forest Watch website has interactive maps showing where forests are changing around the world.

Nature plays an important role in protecting us from the worst of climate change and in women's livelihoods. For example,

- mangroves and coral reefs protect coastal areas against storms and sea surges, while providing the breeding grounds for fish and livelihoods in fishing communities. In the last three decades, the world has lost half of its reefs and mangrove areas are decreasing. This impacts women more as they tend to fish in coastal mangroves and near the coast where they can combine fishing with family responsibilities, whereas men generally fish in the open sea.
- forests are vast storehouses of carbon and provide habitat for animals and livelihoods for humans. They also protect watersheds, prevent soil erosion, and reduce landslides during floods. Women are generally more involved in obtaining food, water, and income from forests, whereas men are more involved in cash crops. When cash crops fail, women rely on the forests to feed their families.

Climate-induced, drought, bushfires, and floods can cause women and girls to travel further to collect wood, water and food - and place them at higher risk of injury, rape and attack by wild animals. Ultimately, extreme weather events can displace people, with the poorest (usually women) being most vulnerable to modern slavery, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The CBD's paper on Addressing Gender Issues and Actions in Biodiversity Objectives points out that

- women make up 40 per cent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries, 47 per cent of the total global fisheries workforce (formal and informal) and a quarter of forestry workers
- without equal rights to land, inheritance and natural resources, women typically control less land than men making it difficult for them to promote sustainable agricultural and land management practices
- With the added burden of family caring, women are not able to attend meetings or training where they can be part of the decision-making process or learn to make their land more productive.

The CBD has been engaging with stakeholders to ensure its new framework provides opportunities to close gender gaps by applying a gender lens to differentiate problems and design solutions for them.

Action: Watch this presentation by Conservation International that clearly describes the key issues of climate change, biodiversity loss and gender inequality. (28 mins)



Women and Environmental Leadership

Globally, studies have shown that having more women in decision making leads to better environmental outcomes, and there are some impressive female leaders.

For example, Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in 1977.

Prof Maathai listened to rural Kenyan women who reported that their streams were drying up, their food supply was less secure, and they had to walk further to get firewood for fuel and fencing. GBM encouraged the women to work together to grow seedlings and plant trees to bind the soil, store rainwater, provide food and firewood, and receive a small monetary token for their work. So far, GBM has planted over 51 million trees in Kenya, advocated to preserve public land and forests, led campaigns against politically motivated ethnic violence, and put an end to land grabbing, deforestation, and corruption. An amazing organisation.

Time Magazine lists 15 incredible women shaping environmental issues from many perspectives, including diplomacy, indigenous activism, law, science, education and business. How many of these women have you heard of? Christiana Figueres; Rhiana Gunn-Wright; Hilda Heine, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Tessa Khan, Rachel Kyte, Kate Marvel, Sunita Narain, Ellen Paige, Anne Simpson, Greta Thunberg, Kotchakorn Voraakhom, Miranda Wang, Katharine Wilkinson and Wu Changhua.

Closer to home, Women's Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA) supports local female leaders through its education programs. WELA points out that: *there are many types of leaders– the strong person in charge, the neighbour collecting local food waste, the graduate running for the local council to protect nature, a First Nation scientist caring for Country through her research or a CEO pushing for a zero-emission future*.' They are all leaders because they positively influence their local communities, businesses and government in their own way.

Action: Check out WELA's programs and listen to the testimonials. WELA may have just the program you are looking for!



What can we do here in Australia?

Use the Zonta Says NOW framework to guide your actions:

1. *Get the facts:* Do you know the areas in your local neighbourhood that are most at risk of biodiversity loss? Are there any local conservation groups you can join to help conserve local bushland?
2. *Take personal action:* Did you know you can make every month Biodiversity month with some simple actions ranging from planting native bushes, learning more about weeds and being mindful of what goes down your drains. Or how about volunteering with Bush Heritage Australia? Use the 1 Million Women app to help you reduce emissions and make more sustainable choices.
3. *Add your voice:* Join the campaigns of the Australian Conservation Foundation or support the programs of the World Wildlife Fund – there are plenty of things to choose from. Before the federal election, ask your local candidates where they stand on environmental issues.
4. *Advocate:* Invite a guest speaker to your club from the local zoo, museum, WELA, or conservation group to find out more about biodiversity issues in your area. Learn how areas are recovering from bushfires and how you can help. Invite the local Council to talk about their Environment/Sustainability Advisory Group and local recycling programs.
5. *Collaborate*: Consider holding an event with another club, Z Club or Golden Z club showcasing women taking leadership roles in environmental conservation – or recognising their contribution with an award.



What is your Present for the Future?

Not sure what to get your friends and family for Christmas. How about a gift that keeps on giving?

Zonta's education and advocacy programs educate girls, support women to participate in decision-making processes and take on leadership roles in their communities.

Every dollar you contribute to the Zonta Foundation for Women's Endowment Fund will help us create a more gender-equal, sustainable world.

Action: *You can celebrate Christmas, a birthday or special event by giving a Present for the Future to support Zonta's Endowment Fund and send a colourful e-card to acknowledge the occasion.*

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