

Bonn, Germany (May 2016)

Opening Meeting of the May Sessions

Ms. Prachi Rao, Women's Environment and Development Organization

Thank you Madam President,

I am speaking today on behalf of the Women and Gender Constituency.

On Earth Day in New York, as hundreds of world leaders gathered to sign the historic Paris agreement, women, civil society leaders, indigenous women, and community leaders, gathered outside the UN, to demand that as Governments commit in words to achieve the goal of keeping warming under 1.5 degrees, so must they commit to real, just action. We must all recognize that the heart of this agreement is not the words on paper, but the people and planet we are trying to protect.

While the agreement in Paris may represent a starting point for collective action– the terms are still unclear, the ambition is too low, and the rights of people and the planet have not been secured. People, namely indigenous peoples and local communities, and women in particular are both “at the frontlines of crisis and the frontlines of change.”

In the short months since Paris when the agreement was adopted, too many environmental defenders have lost their lives fighting to keep the promise of a sustainable world.

As we start this meeting, and the process for implementing the Paris Agreement, let us not fall into a complacency of process. Our planetary crisis grows every day, and even in the context of global collective agreements for climate action, those who dare to challenge, those who dare to imagine a world where energy is locally-owned, renewable and safe, a world with food security, clean and accessible water, sustainable transport, a world where lands and forests are protected-- those who dare, are still met with complacency in business as usual.

We have a window to create a better more sustainable future. We need to use this process to raise ambition, make just commitments for action, and promote a peaceful and healthy planet for all.