



Soroptimists advocate!

Statement on Climate Change and Human Rights

*In response to the Declaration made by the Standing Committee on behalf of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe for the 11-22 November 2013 Climate Change Conference in Warsaw, Soroptimist International of Europe firmly state their support for the plea addressed to international decision-makers concerning the **need to give primary consideration to the interdependence between the current climate-changing environment and human rights.***

The main issue of the Declaration is the urgent call on the world's heads of states and governments to integrate human rights into the Treaty that will be adopted in Paris in 2015. This action shall lead to the official recognition of the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right.

Climate changes can cause a substantial reduction in the planet's food and water supplies. They also affect human health and produce damage and losses. Climate changes do increase risks and stresses to human environments and ecosystems. Climate changes can dramatically jeopardize basic human rights such as the right to life, well-being and security. If human societies tolerate poverty, lack of education, discrimination and disregard of fundamental human rights, they will be unable to respond efficiently to a changing climate, not now, and not in the future.

Since 2007 to the present, Soroptimist International of Europe, through its active membership in 126 countries in Europe and Africa, has committed itself to projects and programmes related to raising awareness worldwide of the importance of adopting an active stand on the issues of water conservation, safe water for safe life, sanitation, food and water security. This reflects SIE's philosophy according to which *where basic necessities are lacking, it is women and children that are disproportionately affected*. This is a breach of basic human rights. Immediate help has been and will continue to be offered to women in distress, during and after natural disasters, through Soroptimist Disaster Grants because *we aren't all equals when facing natural disasters*. In line with its traditional goals of Advocacy, Awareness and Action, SIE will insist on the development of projects and programmes that offer long term assistance for community revitalization.

Today, one of Soroptimist International of Europe's main topics for Advocacy and Awareness over 2013-2015 is 'Climate Change and Human Rights', as part of the Biennium's 'Let's Go Green – Working for a Healthy Environment' theme, which continues the work done so far.

Soroptimist International of Europe upholds and actively supports, through the concerted action of its 35,000 members, the principles invoked in the Declaration from the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe regarding:

- The priority for action in response to climate change to safeguard the future of humanity
- The need to involve civil society at all levels of commitment and decision making in finding adequate solutions to current challenges
- The imperative for international negotiations to transcend the strict framework of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and integrate the protection of human rights as a top item on their agenda, due to the fact that all phenomena triggered by climate change have an impact on the
- enjoyment of these rights

Ulla Madsen

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