

SOLAR COOKERS INTERNATIONAL Oral statement to CSW 60

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. This statement is on behalf of Solar Cookers International (SCI) and supported by Soroptimist International.

Ensuring household energy access precedes gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. Affordable, reliable, sustainable access to modern energy for all is critical to ensure the relevance of the Commission for the post-2015 development agenda, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The capacity to capture sustainable, free solar energy for cooking food and making water safe to drink, without spending time either to gather fuel or earn money to buy fuel, frees women from hours of labor daily. The benefits of solar energy, particularly for solar cooking, are an important key to achieving Goal 7, and contribute to achieving the remaining sixteen Sustainable Development Goals.

Nearly three billion people, mainly women and girls, still cook and pasteurize water with wood, animal dung, crop waste, charcoal, or fossil fuels. These non-renewable energy sources place the highest economic burden on the world's poorest households. Fuel is most expensive as a proportion of household budget for women living in less-developed nations, who are more likely to earn less than \$2 per day. Trapped in dependence on scarce or expensive energy, women cannot break free from the energy poverty cycle.

Women and children suffer disproportionately from the health effects of high-emitting fuels, too. Women are still primarily the ones who breathe the pollutants produced by cooking fires. Their infants and young children are also exposed to household air pollution because they stay close to mother while she cooks. The World Health Organization states that up to seven million premature deaths annually result from respiratory diseases caused by breathing air polluted by the burning of biomass, and other fuels that produce emissions.

Finally, lacking access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, women are forced to select energy options regardless of personal or environmental cost. Biomass fuels, such as wood, animal dung, crop waste, and charcoal, emit carbon and black soot which damage human lungs and contribute to climate change.

When the burdens of disease, the high cost of energy, and time expense are considered together, women face more obstacles to education, economic independence, and health than their male counterparts due to limited household energy options. This is a solvable problem.

Solar thermal technologies, which convert solar energy into heat energy, remains the most appropriate solar technology for many women who cannot anticipate access to centralized energy infrastructure in this century.

Therefore, because solar thermal energy contributes to gender equality, women's empowerment, and human rights, we call on member states and the international community to ensure support for policies that will provide access to appropriate solar energy technologies. Such policy support can promote gender equality, women's empowerment, improved respiratory health, and support civil society's climate change goals as articulated in the Paris Agreement of December 2015.