***Topic 1: Women and Sustainability***

Women are more vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change compared to men. Globally, women experience a range of environmental challenges, such as access to resources, control over land, and disposal of menstrual waste. Unequal distribution of resources and land to females limit their potential agricultural yields and inhibit the production of relatively high earning subsistence crops. If women farmers were given the same access to resources as men, women’s agricultural yields could increase by 20 to 30% and national agricultural production would rise by 2.5 to 4%. Moreover, improper disposal of menstrual waste poses severe repercussions, including the risk of Hepatitis B and C transmission through water contamination. Women also play an integral role in sustainable development and are essential to tackling the global environmental challenges that are prevalent in today’s society. Females have been proven to make more environmentally conscious decisions compared to men, but are extremely underrepresented in political and executive positions that are targeted at sustainable development. Women must become involved in environmental decision making so that we can advance in our sustainable development.

The relationship of women’s rights and sustainability has already been addressed at an international level. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called for governments to integrate gender concerns into policies and programs for sustainable development. Three objectives of government action included: involving women actively in environmental decision making, integrating women’s concerns into policies, and establishing means of assessing the impact of development and environmental policies on women. China values the contribution of women to the production, distribution, and utilization of food, along with recognizes their role in helping to overcome the environmental challenges associated with climate change. Thus far, China has committed to taking measures to integrate gender perspective in environmental policy and reduce the risks of women to certain environmental hazards. Our country understands the relationship between women and sustainability and aims to minimize gender inequalities in order to help address these global environmental challenges.

The main issue that needs to be addressed is the severe underrepresentation of women in leadership positions involved in environmental decision making. As of 2012 women consisted of merely 21.3% of China’s parliament. Without integrating female perspective into environmental decision making, the environmental challenges that predominately burden women will never be tackled. Moreover, environmental actions will lack the sustainable consciousness that is found in women, therefore limiting the potential impact of environmental solutions. In order to overcome this issue China intends on publicly encouraging a female political and executive presence to fuel the involvement of women in decision making. Our country will also fund local female sustainability committees and focus groups that gather the concerns of community members pertaining to sustainability and relays them to the government. In addition, the government will continue to openly support professional female networks, such as Women in Sustainability Action, which empowers females to pursue careers involved in sustainable decision making. Finally, China will urge businesses to diversify their executive team with female employees and educate females emerging in the workforce on the post-secondary education opportunities available for sustainable planning careers (i.e. an environmental lawyer).

***Topic 2: Elimination of Gender-Based Violence***

Gender-based violence is an increasingly pressing issue that effects approximately 1 in every 3 women worldwide. It causes extreme physical, physiological, mental, and emotional damage to the female in the relationship. Gender-based violence creates a climate of fear, which can discourage daily activities and undermine a sense of equality and power. Prevalent forms of specific gender-based violence include: forced marriage and dowry-related violence, marital assault and consent, and female infanticide. Forced marriage and marital assault are traditional practices that often lead to poor familial relationships and in many cases lead to domestic violence. Female infanticide contributes to child abuse and sex-selective abortions, as it creates an unwanted gender dynamic that places priority on the male. It is important to recognize women’s reproductive rights and role in the family in order to prevent gender-based violence and empower females so they can flourish in their environment.

The issue of gender-based violence has be frequently addressed at multiple international forums. At the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in India, members devised multiple strategies on how to tackle gender-based violence, which included promoting family planning among women. Gender-based violence is an extremely relevant issue in China, as it is estimated that at least 1 in 4 Chinese women are beaten. This issue has manifested itself in a culture of silence that has perpetuated the traditional power dynamic between female and male, which stems from historical gender roles and marriage agreements. Although, historically, Chinese citizens participated in arranged marriage, our country has implemented many laws that attempt to protect the female against gender-based violence. The Marriage Law of 1950 was China’s first advancement that gave women the right to make their own decisions involving marriage. It banned arranged and forced marriage in an attempt to reduce the inherent male dominance in a relationship, and later granted women the right to divorces. This law was later amended in 2001 with the introduction of Article 46 that ensured fair division during a divorce. China’s most recent actions against gender-based violence included the criminalization of domestic violence in 2005 and the abolishment of the one-child policy in 2015. The one-child policy cultivated an environment of female infanticide, as reflected by the uneven male to female gender ratios. Phasing out this policy from society demonstrates China’s commitment to protect the female from gender-based violence and implement strategies that will help mitigate this issue.

The predominant cause of gender-based violence is cultural patterns that lead the male to assert dominance over the female in the relationship. In order to overcome this issue China intends on publicising family planning, by offering free family planning clinics or brief consultations with doctors. This restores female control over her reproductive decisions and fosters a healthy family environment that values the consent of both parental parties. In addition, China will attempt to prompt a discussion surrounding violence against females through secondary education, to transform what is perceived as socially acceptable and provide victims with a support system of fellow women for the recovery stages. China will openly disprove of domestic violence and female discrimination and continue to enforce the protection of females through the implementation of domestic abuse laws. Moreover, our country will empower women in the work force by allocating our resources to reduce gender wage gap and fund domestic violence support centres that act as a form of empowerment for females. Finally, China will introduce state mandated parental leaves to emphasize the joint responsibilities of each parent, along with offer tax incentives to new families.

***Topic 3: Women in Education and Employment***

Education and employment are two vital factors involved in individual, social, and economic growth. According to UNESCO, two thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female. Female education, and subsequently employment, is essential in advancing all areas of society. If all women had secondary education child deaths would be cut in half, saving over 3 million children, there would be two-thirds less child marriages, and it would reduce the pay gap between men and women. Female education is fundamental in tackling the global issues that are being addressed, including poverty, infant mortality, malnutrition, sexual violence, gender gap, and over-population. With regards to women in employment, the gender wage gap must be minimized in order to encourage females to reach their full economic potential to improve the quality of life of all members of society. As predicted by the World Economic Forum, the gender pay gap could take 170 to close at the current pace, making this an extremely pressing and urgent issue.

Women in education and employment is a prevalent topic that has been addressed by the UN Committee on the Status of Women on multiple past occasions. Participating governments have already committed to improving their efforts to reduce the burden of poverty on women and recognize gender bias and roles as two significant factors affecting the wellbeing of a woman. China acknowledges women in education and employment as a tremendously important and relevant issue to our country. Compared to 23.9% of males, 38.3% of females are currently unemployed in China and 40.5% of women are occupied as full-time house workers. Moreover, men have lower illiteracy rates in relation to women consistently in rural and urban areas, along with stay in school longer than their female counterpart. Our country’s obligation to provide quality education to all of its people is reflected by our implementation of nine-year compulsory education, which directly targeted the issue of unequal access to education. China has also committed to eliminating gender discrimination, ensuring women have equal access to career opportunities, and provide programs that help build essential career skills among women. This is demonstrated through: the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980, the ratification of the Equal Remuneration Convention, and ratifying ILO Convention No. 111 in 2006 by incorporating the equality principle in labour legislation. In addition, China has implemented Women, Work and the Will to Lead, a group of female professionals in Beijing who “organize seminars and networking events to help other women in the workforce learn new skills and encourage self-growth.” China aims to completely eliminate gender-specific education and employment discrepancies through the continued empowerment and support of women.

The main factor contributing to female education and employment in China is social and cultural barriers, such as gender roles and bias that are rooted in the history of the global community. In order to tackle this issue the government will allocate funds to providing need-based and merit post-secondary scholarships to women as a method to encourage them to pursue enriching educational opportunities. Building off of current female professional networking organizations (i.e. Women, Work, and the Will to Lead) the Chinese government will also introduce career liaison programs, in which students have an opportunity to gain insight on a particular highly skilled career from a fellow female. This program also consists of educating young women on the career opportunities available, with a focus on promoting STEM-based and sustainability careers, as women require strong support networks in order to advance. We will also continue to enforce anti-discrimination laws in the workforce and implement gender quotas in order to diversify the basic business labour structure. Furthermore, the government will publicly express their contempt towards discrimination in order to establish a safe and empowering educational environment.