

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
29 August 2016

Response to the UNFCCC Secretariat request for submissions on: Lima Work Programme on Gender – views on possible elements and guiding principles for continuing and enhancing the work programme (SBI), FCCC/SBI/2016/L.16, paragraph 5.

In response to the call of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) for submissions on “possible elements and guiding principles for continuing and enhancing the Lima Work Programme on gender”, OHCHR would like to emphasize the importance of promoting and protecting women’s human rights and gender equality in all climate action, including at the UNFCCC.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) calls for equal rights of men and women in the enjoyment of all human rights (Article 3) and specifically through equality in work pay and conditions (Article 7).¹ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees women equal rights as laid out in the Covenant (Article 3).² The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and other instruments further affirm that Parties and other relevant actors must prioritize gender equality in all their actions. Gender equality and non-discrimination are fundamental human rights principles that require State action to ensure their fulfilment including in the context of climate change. This is highlighted in relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

For example, in decision 36/CP.7, the UNFCCC noted the importance of improving the participation of women in decision making processes related to climate change and called for the nomination of women for bodies established under the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol.³ The UNFCCC expanded on this with decision 23/CP.18, calling for greater gender balance in bodies established by and related to the Convention and in Party delegations. Decision 18/CP.20 followed, establishing the Lima work programme on gender and emphasizing “the need for gender mainstreaming through all relevant targets and goals in activities under the Convention as an important contribution to increase their effectiveness”. It urges Parties to “advance gender balance, promote gender sensitivity in developing and implementing climate policy, and achieve gender-responsive climate policy in all relevant activities under the Convention.”⁴

The Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC continues to build toward greater gender inclusiveness and equality in climate actions and policies. The preamble states that climate actions should promote and consider human rights obligations, including gender equality, the empowerment of women, and intergenerational equity. Further, Article 7 emphasizes that climate adaptation should follow a

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cescr.pdf>

² <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ccpr.pdf>

³ UNFCCC, *Improving the participation of women in the representation of Parties in bodies established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the Kyoto Protocol*. FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.4. (2001).

⁴ UNFCCC, *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twentieth session, held in Lima from 1 to 14 December 2014. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twentieth session*. FCCC/CP/2014/10/Add.3. (2015).

“country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems.”⁵

Gender equality has also been increasingly incorporated as a priority in other climate related policies. The Programme of Action from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) provides an explicit link between sustainable development and the rights of all people and communities which has implications for climate change-related risks and paves the way for women’s full participation in all aspects of action to tackle them. The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are anchored in human rights and include strong goals and targets for combating inequality and discrimination of all kinds, including gender inequality, in accordance with existing international human rights law and other instruments.⁶ The SDGs aim by 2030 to achieve gender equality specifically with Goal 5 and through other goals that encourage women’s equality, empowerment, and active participation at all levels of, among others, climate action, education, peace and security, and ending poverty and hunger.⁷ Human Rights Council resolution 32/33 on human rights and climate change “calls upon States to integrate a gender perspective in pursuing mitigation and adaptation responses to the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of every boy and girl”.

The CEDAW Committee also recognizes the obligations of parties to address gendered aspects of climate change and disaster response. In its 44th session, the Committee emphasized that all Parties and other relevant actors should work to ensure that climate change and disaster risk reduction efforts are gender responsive and protect human rights.⁸ Similarly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction states that “a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted”. At the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a gender perspective was stressed as critical in all aspects of climate change, owing to the often disproportionate impacts of climate change on women combined with often unequal access to resources and relevant decision-making processes.⁹

In the context of climate change, these actions are critically needed to address the often disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls and the frequent exclusion of women from decision-making processes. Multiple causes can contribute to increased vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change but perhaps none more than poverty. The impacts of climate change will most affect those in poverty and women and girls comprise 70 per cent of the world’s poor meaning they often face disproportionate risks from climate change. Extreme weather events can exacerbate existing inequalities and discrimination thereby further limiting women’s full and equal access to education, resources, property, civil and political rights, and health care.¹⁰ In many contexts, the burden of securing food, water, and fuel disproportionately falls on women and girls, yet they have limited mobility and access to resources, particularly in rural areas. For instance, women constitute 80% of farm workers worldwide, but own less than 2% of land and 1% of farm-worker

⁵ UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement*. (2015).

⁶ <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/MDGs/Post2015/TransformingOurWorld.pdf>

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/70/L.1. (2015).

⁸ CEDAW, 44th Session, August 2009, *Statement of the CEDAW Committee on Gender and Climate Change*.

⁹ CSW, *Interactive expert panel Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men*. (2008).

¹⁰ See, for example, General Recommendation no. 27 on Older Women and the Protection of their Human Rights, CEDAW/C/GC/27, 2010, para. 25.

credit.¹¹ These challenges will likely be worsened by the effects of climate change. Women often experience unequal access to decision-making processes and their participation in decision-making and climate action may be limited by such entrenched inequalities.¹² These existing social, economic, and political challenges and barriers, including harmful gender stereotypes, will have further adverse effects on women in relation to agriculture and food security, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, human health, migration, energy, transportation, and industry.¹³

While the impacts of climate change may disproportionately affect women, women are also important agents and leaders of change. In addition to representing half the population, they can also possess particular skills and knowledge useful for climate change adaptation. Often, their expertise and roles within their communities further positions them to manage effective climate action. Indigenous women, for example, are often stewards in knowledge and use of natural resources, and may already act as community leaders. Climate change mitigation and adaptation should, therefore, not only be gender responsive, but also inclusive of women's right to full and active participation at all levels of decision-making.

For these reasons, OHCHR fully supports and welcomes proposals to continue and strengthen the Lima Work Programme. OHCHR would like to make the following recommendations for the continuation and strengthening of the Lima Work Programme.

1. **Ensure effective, free, active, meaningful and informed participation:** The ICESCR, ICCPR, and other human rights instruments guarantee all persons the right to free, active, meaningful and informed participation in public affairs. OHCHR's Key Messages on Climate Change emphasize that decision-making processes on climate change mitigation and adaptation must be compliant with related human rights obligations, particularly to ensure equal participation.¹⁴

In this interest, the UNFCCC must continue to ensure that bodies pursuant to and related to the Convention prioritize, measure, and act to achieve and maintain gender-equality. Priority should be given to enhance capacity building on gender mainstreaming through provision of resources as well as meetings and trainings in relation to the COP.

2. **Compile gender and disaggregated climate data:** The UNFCCC should increase understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change through the collection of disaggregated data. This data should be kept to track climate change impacts across demographic groups, with particular attention paid to human rights indicators. The UNFCCC should further consider and invest in ways to more effectively integrate gender considerations in the collection, analysis and sharing of data and information in order to inform climate actions that protect human rights and ensure gender equality.

¹¹ FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture, Women in Agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development*. (2011).

¹² UNDP, *Overview of linkages between gender and climate change*. (2013).

¹³

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf

¹⁴ OHCHR, *Key Messages on Human Rights and Climate Change*.

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/KeyMessages_on_HR_CC.pdf.

3. **Support gender-responsive climate policy:** In compliance with the UNFCCC and other human rights obligations, and to ensure climate action that takes into account the differential experiences of women, men, girls and boys, measures should be taken to support gender-responsive policies at both the international and national levels. Platforms for sharing information and data, best practices, and technical training resources should be developed and implemented. The UNFCCC should model such policies and support parallel efforts for all Parties' national actions, including gender-mainstreaming in all climate mitigation and adaptation-related work.
4. **Allocate resources for immediate and long-term support:** Parties should provide necessary resources to the UNFCCC for the planning and implementation of decisions and other actions in the interest of supporting gender-responsive policies. Parties and the UNFCCC should make provisions and dedicate resources to the long-term continuation of such actions. A multi-year action plan should be established and implemented in order to sustain the work of the Lima Programme and realize gender equality in climate action.
5. **Build on existing knowledge and skills:** The UNFCCC should develop a plan for integrating gender and gender perspectives throughout climate action with particular recognition of the existing knowledge, skills, and experience of women and girls. The action plan should identify women's key points of contribution in areas and sectors impacted by climate change, and develop tools and frameworks for constructively and pro-actively engaging women and promoting their active participation in related climate actions. Particular efforts should be made to actively engage and empower women negatively impacted by climate change and, in particular, to address and remedy climate impacts on women exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
6. **Build national capacity:** In line with supporting gender-responsive climate policy, the UNFCCC should support efforts to improve gender-equality and the representation of and effective and meaningful participation of women in national level bodies on climate mitigation and adaptation. The UNFCCC should develop accessible tools and information sharing mechanisms for equitable, gender-responsive climate action, support local-level development of women leaders, provide support and resources for skills training and capacity building, and support opportunities for the development of women leadership networks in response to climate change impacts, especially in support of women delegates to the UNFCCC.