

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
10 May 2017

Response to the UNFCCC Secretariat request for submissions on: possible elements of the gender action plan under the Lima Work Programme on Gender – views on possible elements of the gender action plan, Decision 21/CP.22, FCCC/CP/2016/10/Add.2, paragraph 30.

CALL FOR POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF A GENDER ACTION PLAN ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The 22nd Conference of Parties (COP22) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) invited observer organizations to provide their views on the development of a gender action plan at the UNFCCC. Specifically, recommendations on “*priority areas, key activities and indicators, timelines for implementation, the responsible and key actors and indicative resource requirements for each activity*”¹ are requested.

In response to this call for submissions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (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.

BACKGROUND

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).² The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees women equal rights as laid out in the Covenant (Article 3).³ 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 COP to the 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 to bodies established under the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol.⁴ 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*

¹ UNFCCC, “Decision 21/CP.22 Gender and climate change”, FCCC/CP/2016/10/Add.2, (2016), available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2016/cop22/eng/10a02.pdf#page=17>, paragraphs 27, 29 and 30.

² United Nations General Assembly, “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”, A/RES/2200(XXI)A-C, available at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2200\(XXI\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2200(XXI)).

³ United Nations General Assembly, “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, A/RES/2200(XXI)A-C, available at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2200\(XXI\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2200(XXI)).

⁴ 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), available at https://unfccc.int/files/bodies/election_and_membership/application/pdf/decision_36_cp7.pdf.

*and implementing climate policy, and achieve gender-responsive climate policy in all relevant activities under the Convention.”*⁵

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 and the empowerment of women. Further, Article 7 emphasizes that climate adaptation should follow a “*country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems.*”⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

⁵ 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), available at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/cop20/eng/10a03.pdf>.

⁶ UNFCCC, “Adoption of the Paris Agreement”, *21st Conference of the Parties, Paris: United Nations*, (2015), available at:

http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

⁷ OHCHR, “Transforming Our World: Human Rights in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/MDGs/Post2015/TransformingOurWorld.pdf>.

⁸ UN General Assembly, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” *A/70/L.1*, (2015), available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1.

⁹ CEDAW, “Statement of the CEDAW Committee on Gender and Climate Change,” New York, 44th Session, 20 July - August 2009, available at:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/Gender_and_climate_change.pdf.

¹⁰ Commission of the Status of Women, “Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men,” *E/CN.6/2009/CRP.7*, (2008), available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw53/crps/E-CN.6-2009-CRP.7%20En.pdf>.

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 a disproportionate amount of the world's poor meaning they often face greater 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.¹¹ 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 credit.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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.

Gender equality and women's rights must be integrated throughout climate action. OHCHR welcomes the recent decision at COP22 to extend and strengthen the Lima Work Programme on gender and in particular the call for recommendations on priority areas, key activities and indicators, timelines for implementation, responsible and key actors and indicative resource requirements for a gender action plan. In OHCHR's view, the UNFCCC's gender action plan can be instrumental to the mainstreaming of women's rights throughout climate action. The below priority areas and recommendations reflect a non-exhaustive list of potential elements for a gender action plan that would promote inclusive climate action that upholds women's rights and gender equality.

¹¹ See, for example: CEDAW, "General Recommendation no. 27 on Older Women and the Protection of their Human Rights", *CEDAW/C/GC/27*, (2010), available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW-C-2010-47-GC1.pdf>, para. 25.

¹² FAO, "The State of Food and Agriculture, Women in Agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development," Sales and Marketing Group, Rome, (2011), available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>.

¹³ UNDP, "Overview of linkages between gender and climate change," Global Gender and Climate Alliance, (2013), available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1-AP-Overview-Gender-and-climate-change.pdf>.

¹⁴ United Nations, Fact Sheet: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change," UN Women Watch, (2009), available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf.

KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- **Priority Area 1: Mainstreaming women's¹⁵ rights and gender equality at the UNFCCC and in all climate action**

The Gender Action Plan should aim to mainstream women's rights and gender equality at the UNFCCC and in all climate action. It should integrate gender perspectives throughout climate action with particular recognition of the existing knowledge, skills, and experience of women and girls. The action plan should reflect the difference experiences and views of women, men, girls, boys and others, and in particular 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 adversely affected by climate change and, in particular, to address and remedy climate impacts on women exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Key actions could include, to:

- **Mainstream women's rights and gender equality at the UNFCCC** through identification of specific entry points in UNFCCC processes;
 - **Hold regular in-session workshops to promote dialogue on the integration of women's rights and gender equality in climate actions**, including good practices;
 - **Identify strategies to address and remedy climate harms experienced by women**, particularly women exposed to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination including by examining practices already being employed by women in their communities; and
 - **Conduct capacity-building and leadership trainings** intended to promote gender balance within delegations to the UNFCCC.
- **Priority Area 2: Increase awareness of the gendered impacts of climate change and climate action through the collection and publication of disaggregated and gender-sensitive data**

The collection and publication of disaggregated data is key to taking informed action to address climate change and its impacts on the enjoyment of women's rights. The Gender Action Plan should ensure that data is kept to track climate change impacts across demographic groups, with particular attention paid to human rights indicators. It should promote consideration of and investment 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. Data considered should be both qualitative and quantitative. Key actions could include, to:

- **Promote the collection of disaggregated data** on gendered impacts of climate change and climate action by all Parties including through the development of improved methodologies for data collection;

¹⁵ Please note that references in these recommendations to women and women's rights are meant to be inclusive of both women and girls.

- **Encourage sharing** of relevant data and experiences by Parties through a web platform and at relevant workshops and meetings at the UNFCCC; and
- **Commit to make relevant data, findings, and information on the gendered impacts of climate change publicly available** and easily accessible on the UNFCCC's webpage.
- **Priority Area 3: Promote gender balance and women's effective, free, active, meaningful and informed participation at the UNFCCC and in levels of decision-making**

The Gender Action Plan should promote the effective, free, active, meaningful and informed participation of all women without discrimination in climate decision-making at all levels including in the development of the Action Plan, and support efforts to improve gender-equality at the UNFCCC and in national level decision-making bodies on climate mitigation and adaptation. Key actions could include, to:

- **Gather and publish data** related to the gender composition of COP delegations and associated UNFCCC meetings;¹⁶
- **Develop accessible tools and information sharing mechanisms** to pro-actively engage women and promote their active participation in equitable, gender-responsive climate action;
- **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; and
- **Build capacity at the grassroots level for women** to meaningfully contribute and share their knowledge in climate related conferences by including a grassroots facilitation model in new initiatives on climate change and providing resources to support women's participation at the UNFCCC.
- **Priority Area 4: Promote women's rights policy coherence by supporting integration of women's rights and gender equality at all levels of climate action**

The Gender Action Plan should call for measures to support gender-responsive policies at all 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. Key activities could include, to:

- **Develop guidelines for and support efforts to ensure that nationally determined contributions, adaptation communications and all other relevant national communications to the UNFCCC highlight priorities, implementation, and support needs** for respecting and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through promotion of women's effective, free, active, meaningful, and informed participation in the development of these communications;

¹⁶ See for example: UNFCCC, "Gender composition", *FCCC/CP/2016/4*, (19 September 2016), available at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2016/cop22/eng/04.pdf>.

- **Develop guidelines for and support efforts to safeguard women’s rights** through human rights impact assessments of the gendered impacts of climate actions.
 - **Promote coherence and cooperation with respect to women’s rights and gender equality amongst all actors** including by strengthening cooperation on these issues between the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, the UNFCCC and other UN agencies, and relevant expert groups and committees, for example, the Least Developed Countries Expert Group and the Adaptation Committee; and
 - **Develop platforms for sharing tools, information, data, best practices and technical training** for equitable, gender-responsive climate action National Adaptation Plans and other relevant policies. Such policies should support parallel efforts for all Parties’ national actions, including gender-mainstreaming in all climate mitigation and adaptation-related work.
- **Priority Area 5: Establish a framework for monitoring, review, and discussion of the Gender Action Plan**

The Gender Action Plan should establish clear objectives, benchmarks and reporting time-frames. Key actions could include, to:

- **Establish a mechanism within the UNFCCC Secretariat** to monitor, advise and update Parties on progress toward implementation of the Gender Action Plan and relevant COP decisions; and
 - **Request that Parties report** on concrete actions undertaken to promote women’s rights and gender equality in climate action.
- **Priority Area 6: Effectively allocate resources for immediate and long-term support of the Gender Action Plan**

An effective Gender Action Plan will require the UNFCCC to have adequate human and financial resources to carry out increasingly ambitious efforts to mainstream women’s rights and gender equality in climate action. Parties that are able to should provide financial support for this work to ensure that all parties can enhance their efforts to respect, promote and consider gender equality and the empowerment of women when taking action to address climate change. Parties should ensure, with support from the UNFCCC, the efficient allocation of and adequate resources for the planning and implementation of the Gender Action Plan. Key actions to further this objective could include:

- **Establishment of partnerships** with observer organizations, regional NGOs, UN Women, OHCHR and other stakeholders;
- **Publication of a multi-year action plan with funding requirements** and establishment of a public donor database; and
- **Prioritization of resources for maximum effect** (e.g. employ gender-sensitive budgeting and focus immediate efforts on supporting women in poverty and those faced with multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination who are most at risk of harm from climate change).