



## **SUBMISSION BY COMESA ON GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

*This submission is made by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in response to Decision 23/CP.18 on options and ways to advance the goal of gender balance in bodies established pursuant to the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, in order to improve women's participation and inform more effective climate change policy that addresses the needs of women and men equally (Decision 23/CP.18)*

Gender relations have developed over time in different historical circumstances, creating unequal relationships between different groups of women and men, girls and boys and this is exacerbated by climate change. In the African context, gender and climate change has arisen by the unequal experiences of climate impacts on different women and men in different countries of the continent.

Given these differential impacts, it is crucially important that the perspectives of women and men are equally represented in decision-making processes, including in climate change. The international community including African countries has demonstrated political commitment to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment by adopting various policy instruments. Examples include, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA).

In the climate change discourse, through various decisions at the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, the international community has affirmed the recognition that gender is critical in dealing with the climate change challenge at various levels, including global, regional, national and local levels. Notwithstanding such acknowledgement, it is interesting to note that in the UNFCCC, women's participation in boards and bodies is a paltry 10%, while on national delegations, African women in particular make up on average only 21% of delegates and have the lowest representation across all the regions participating in the UNFCCC meetings.

In light of the foregoing, it is evident that pragmatic steps need to be given effect to the decisions relating to gender balance and on strengthening women's participation in the different organs of the UNFCCC (i.e., IPCC, Subsidiary Bodies and Conference of the Parties etc.) and associated meetings. These include:

- 1. Establish a Five Year Programme of Work on Gender and Climate Change:** Given that gender will be a permanent agenda item in the future Conferences of the Parties, it is imperative that a mechanism is put in place that sets out what should be done and achieved through the work of the standing SBs especially the SBI. This will ensure that SBI conclusions/report on gender and climate change will be regularly submitted to the COPs for consideration and further direction as may be deemed necessary. It is against this background that we recommend the establishment of a Five Year Programme of Work on Gender and Climate Change. Some of the aspects that could be addressed under the said PoW include, but not limited to:

- (a) *Define the goal and target to be achieved through the PoW:* Whereas it is acknowledged that the ultimate goal is to achieve gender balance, there is need to unpack what goal of gender balance means in terms of numbers or ratio. This will be important in informing the COP on the progress being made in the attainment of gender balance. Put in place measures for review and feedback to the COP.
- (b) *Integrate gender goal in the ADP Process:* Given that the international community under the Ad hoc Working Group on Durban Platform (ADP) is currently negotiating an International Climate Change Instrument (legally binding/with legal force) by 2015, the place of gender in such a regime is critical. Thus, through the work of the PoW, gender goal must be defined and integrated in the emerging 2015 international climate change regime. This will be critical in ensuring the gender is an integral component of the said regime.
- (c) *Funding to support women participation:* It is acknowledged from the current statistics that women are the disadvantaged gender in representation in the UNFCCC process and its organs. As a way of addressing this inequality, it imperative that resources be made available under the PoW to support the participation and representation of women from developing countries, in particular Africa, as part of national delegations at the UNFCCC meetings, such as SBs, COPs etc.
- (d) *Capacity building:* To overcome the prevalent challenge of capacity, the PoW could endeavor to put in place a comprehensive framework for capacity building that will ensure that the entire UNFCCC process is engendered. However, it is worth noting that some of the best negotiators and scientists in the UNFCCC process are women. Addition, further emphasis should be put on education, training and awareness especially at the regional and national levels.

2. ***Strengthen support for development and implementation of regional and national gender and climate change policies, strategies and action plans:*** International policy emanating from the UNFCCC processes is critical in shaping regional and national gender and climate change policies, strategies and actions. At the moment, the majority of developing countries are in the process of developing low carbon development policies/strategies (LEDS), national adaptation plans (NAPs) and nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs). It may be useful to consider providing financial support to developing countries, particularly Africa to develop gender and climate change policies, strategies and action plans as part of the low carbon development policy/strategy, NAPs and NAMAs. This will ensure engendering of national climate change processes.