

Decision 23/CP.18
Submission of Iceland

Parties to the UNFCCC took a significant step in Doha towards strengthened gender equality in the UNFCCC regime, by adopting the COP18 decision entitled “Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol” ([Decision 23/CP.18](#)). Operative para 11 of the decision requests Parties and observer organizations to submit to the secretariat, their views on options and ways to advance the goal set out in para 2: “... (E)nhance decision 36/CP.7 by adopting a 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”.

It is important to note that by decision 23/CP.18 not only a goal on gender balance in bodies was adopted, but also explicitly connected to “informing more effective climate change policy that addresses the needs of women and men equally”, which for simplification will be referred to hereafter as gender-sensitive climate policy.

Gender balance in bodies and gender-sensitive climate policies contribute to the broader UN goal of gender equality and should be referred to as such. In order to reach the goal set out in the decision, it is necessary to look into both national and collective policies and strategies of parties to the UNFCCC. Three keywords have been identified for guidance in this submission:

1. **PRACTICE**
2. **CHALLENGES**
3. **NEEDS**

<p>1. <u>PRACTICE</u> – Actions currently taken to implement gender equality in climate change policy and practice, including to reach gender balance</p>
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- *Gender balance and gender expertise in national delegations and UNFCCC bodies*
- *Formal mechanisms and practices to promote gender balance within decision-making bodies and in the composition of national delegations*
- *Involvement of domestic bodies on gender equality and gender equality experts in formulating climate change policy*
- *Integration of gender equality issues in National Communications and documents on national climate change plans and programmes*

The reason that decision 23/CP.18 was adopted is that mainstreaming of gender equality in the UNFCCC regime is still work in progress, and that gender ratios within UNFCCC bodies as well as among Party delegates are unsatisfactory. Gender balance in decision-making bodies is

fundamental for successfully designing and implementing gender-sensitive policies. It is, however, not sufficient as gender expertise and awareness has to follow suit for female and male representatives alike.

Probably every Party to the UNFCCC is challenged from the gender equality perspective. Despite having been ranked the number one country for gender equality by the World Economic Forum for four consecutive years, Iceland is no exception. As regards national practice, Icelandic gender equality legislation entails that in public committees, councils and boards there has to be a 40% minimum female or male representation when the total number is above three people. Furthermore, upon nominating individuals for a seat in such bodies, public authorities are obliged to nominate both a female and a male in order for the appointing authority to meet the 40% requirement. Even though the legal provision does not extend to delegations of Iceland abroad, this practice has normalized gender balance to some extent. In UNFCCC delegations, males have been in majority but the ratio was 4/3 at COP18 in Doha and 2/1 at COP19 in Durban. The numbers are small as Iceland is a small state and are a good reminder that percentages not always tell the whole story. Regarding gender expertise and awareness, Iceland has for a number of years had gender equality at the heart of its climate policy and consequently it has been ensured that Iceland's UNFCCC delegations are reinforced with gender expertise. Consultative meetings are held regularly with participation from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources, the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA), the United Nations University Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GEST) and the Centre for Gender Equality, a national bureau in charge of administering the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men.

Iceland is an Annex I Party and does not have a NAPA or NAMA, but a National Action Plan on Climate Change from October 2010. The original plan features participation as one of its guiding principles with a specific reference to participation of both women and men and a notion that gender considerations should apply to work on climate change in developing and developed countries alike. In 2012 the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources launched work on a gender analysis of the National Action Plan. A first phase report has been published and a final report on the project, which is based on gender budgeting methodologies, is due for publication in 2014.

Parties are the driving force of UNFCCC and it is the hope of Iceland that domestic experiences of different parties keep informing gender-sensitive climate policy-making on the intergovernmental level. An interesting dialogue on how best to ensure gender balance in UNFCCC bodies is also ahead, as methodology for reaching the set goal has not been agreed upon yet. Domestic experiences can help inform that dialogue. One important venue for parties to cooperate to promote gender equality within the UNFCCC is the upcoming workshop on gender in the UNFCCC process at COP19 in Warsaw later this year.

2. CHALLENGES – Hurdles faced by Parties in pursuing gender balance in the UNFCCC regime and in implementing gender-sensitive climate policy

- *Challenges that prevent the realization of gender balance and the inclusion of gender expertise in delegations, and on expert committees and boards of the UNFCCC*
- *Formal and informal structural barriers that exacerbate gender inequalities and prevent women's participation in decision-making*

Combatting climate change will not be possible without the efforts of all.

Gender equality challenges that Parties need to overcome, both on a national and intergovernmental level, have to do with deep-rooted structural barriers in society on the one hand and on changing the culture and rules of the UNFCCC regime on the other hand.

Structural barriers in society, Icelandic as elsewhere, are widespread and include i.e. unpaid care-work burdens that women shoulder. From the climate change perspective specifically, gender stereotypes and gender-based career choices may add to the problem. The latter at least is one of the first findings of the ongoing work on gender analyzing the Icelandic National Action Plan on climate change. As regards Iceland, it is also a challenge having a small delegation as mentioned earlier. One more challenge is that since negative impacts of climate change can as of yet not be significantly felt in the daily life of Icelanders, it may prove harder to get the general public to relate to climate change activities, including their gender mainstreaming.

3. NEEDS - Tools, resources, or training most valuable to better support and facilitate progress towards gender balance and gender-sensitive climate policy

- *Government-led capacity building activities on gender equality and climate change*
- *Ensuring the sustainability of efforts to mainstream gender into national climate action*
- *Resources, financial and / or expertise, dedicated to gender-sensitive climate policy*
- *Tools found valuable and effective in assessing gender impacts of climate policies, measures and programs*
- *Organizational culture and rules of the UNFCCC regarding gender equality*

Consistency and sustainability are keywords for efforts towards ensuring gender balance and gender-sensitive climate policies. As regards Iceland, it will have to be kept in mind that temporary projects or measures currently being undertaken are certainly of help, but will not be enough without such efforts leading to permanent mainstreaming of gender equality into all policy documents and implementation activities. Importantly, though, Icelandic gender equality legislation has a gender mainstreaming requirement which forms a general basis and has to be followed in all public decision making. That also goes for all development cooperation activities

as outlined in the Strategy for Iceland's Development Co-operation, adopted by the Parliament in March 2013.

Apart from specific activities by Icelandic authorities already mentioned, it can be noted that gender and climate issues have been presented and debated through public events, stakeholder consultations and newspaper articles organized by the authorities. Financial resources and gender expertise are necessary to contribute to the realization of gender-sensitive climate policy. For the small administration of Iceland, the need for sufficient time for strained experts to do their work on gender mainstreaming is a real challenge.

Methodology has to be chosen, followed and regularly revised, for which purpose it should be useful to keep close ties between authorities and the academia which has been the case in Iceland. Some examples of tools currently used in Iceland are the aforementioned application of gender budgeting methods. Also, one of the development cooperation projects directly related to gender and climate change that Iceland participates in, is fundamentally about assessing the gender impacts of climate change in Uganda and training relevant leaders to take these into account in policy making and implementation.¹

At the intergovernmental level, as financial contributions to assist developing countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change rise, there is a dire need for both an increased number of women in decision making positions as well as for the implementation of gender-sensitive policies such as within the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Women should benefit from climate finance on equal terms with men. Furthermore, at the intergovernmental level, the organizational culture of the UNFCCC regime still has to develop further towards more systematic inclusion of women in its decision-making and expert bodies. The UNFCCC has had the fortune of lately seeing more women in leading positions. That important achievement should not divert attention from the fact that women are overall significantly underrepresented within UNFCCC bodies. A critical mass of women in senior positions has not yet materialized. The secretariat will play a significant role, i.e. by tracking progress and making information on it publicly available as well as reminding of the goal of gender balance when representatives to bodies are appointed. Parties should seriously discuss whether there is a need for adopting more systematic measures to ensure that the goal of gender balance will be reached. Meanwhile specific rules are not necessary for parties or regional groups to take the initiative of deciding to make sure that women and men are equally represented in UNFCCC bodies and that gender-sensitive climate policies are applied.

¹ See i.e. **External Evaluation: Development of a Short Training Course on Gender and Climate Change.** Uganda 2011-2013. Erla Hlín Hjálmarsdóttir and Elizabeth Kharono. June 2013.