

**Decision 23/CP.18: 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.**

**Submission of the United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) welcomes the Decision 23/CP.18, which the UAE strongly supported at the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP18). Women's empowerment is a key priority for the UAE policy, and an area in which the country has had important successes. The UAE is pleased to share its initiatives in the recent years and some ideas in realizing greater gender balance and empowering women within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process.

**Background**

The UAE is taking various measures to empower women, with particular emphasis on education and capacity building. The Government has adopted numerous policies to ensure the advancement of women and enable women to exercise their constitutional and legal rights and participate in decision-making and in representing the country in the international arena (e.g., the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates). Between 2008 and 2012, the UAE has increased women's participation in the society which is demonstrated in a few key figures:

- The number of Cabinets seats held by women was raised two to four in February 2008, the highest proportion in the Arab world;
- In the 2011 parliamentary elections, women national gained 7 seats out of the 40 in the Federal National Council, representing 17 per cent of members. This is also the highest level of women's representation in a legislative body;
- Women hold 66 per cent of public sector posts and 30 per cent of senior decision-making positions in the sector; and
- 95 percent of girls who complete their secondary education enroll in higher education. Women account for 70 per cent of university graduates in the UAE, one of the highest proportions worldwide.

In 2013, the Cabinet of Federal Minister's Resolution No.319 was passed which requires at least one woman to be on every board of directors of companies and government entities.

In addition:

- Many of governmental organizations in the Emirate of Dubai have taken relevant initiatives such as the formation of women's committees to advance education for women and actively promote their roles within the workplace, society and the preservation of the environment. One

example is the “Dubai Women Establishment” which has developed certain programs dealing with issues related to sustainability and women for sustainable growth including the “Women Leadership Exchange Program” (UAE – Sweden). Other ongoing development programs address issues such as organizational structure, gender and diversity issues, and workplace group dynamics in order to build leadership skills.

- “Sustainable Labour Practices”, a program of the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (comprised of over 40 leading government, private and non-profit organizations in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi) includes identifying and addressing barriers (cultural, vocational etc.) that prevent a greater uptake of Emirati women in the workplace.

### Initiatives to Date

The UAE has been an active voice in the UNFCCC process to promote gender equality, particularly in the run-up to, during and following COP18. It has contributed to a number of initiatives both internationally and domestically to address women’s education and empowerment in the context of clean energy and climate change. The UAE has:

- Sponsored an online discussion platform on **women in diplomacy and the climate change negotiations** (Autumn 2012), in cooperation with Global Gender and Climate Alliance, UN Institute for Training and Research, UN Women and Women’s Environment & Development Organization. Over 100 participants from 43 countries participated in the online discussion platform on enhancing awareness of women’s role in diplomacy, particularly in relation to energy and climate change issues.
- Hosted an event, **“Women’s Majlis: Arab Women Leading the Way in Energy and Climate Change”** (November 2012), organized by the Directorate of Energy and Climate Change (DECC, in the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs) along with the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRFCJ), and Masdar. Over 100 participants from the UAE attended the event. It was intended to bring COP18 to the attention of high-ranking women from diverse range of sectors across the Gulf Cooperation Countries to share priorities and perspectives on how to enhance women’s engagement in the negotiations, as well as what gender-climate outcomes from COP18 they would like to see. The event helped initiating a transparent and open dialogue on the importance of women’s role in the climate change negotiations, and helped to set the stage for important deliberations at COP18.
- Held an event, **“Ministerial Breakfast Meeting: Promoting Gender Equality in the UNFCCC”** during COP18 (December 2012), organized by the DECC in collaboration with MRFCJ and Masdar. Attended by about a dozen Ministers, it was held to gain ministerial level support for a new decision to promote gender equality within the UNFCCC, which was subsequently adopted during COP18.
- Organized a panel session, **“The Role of Women in Future Energy: Breaking Down the Barriers”** during the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (January 2013), in cooperation with Masdar and Masdar Institute of Science and Technology. In addition to women leaders from a range of

academic and professional backgrounds who highlighted challenges and success factors in the field of clean energy and sustainability, a few Emirati students shared their personal experiences. The event was well received as an inspiring outreach event for young professionals and students.

During COP18, as at other recent COPs, the UAE delegation had balanced gender representation.

There are many UAE women engaged in various national and local climate change related work at both management and technical levels, including on the national communications, clean development mechanisms and international negotiations (e.g., participation in Executive Committee on National Communication).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a pilot program in 2013 which assigns attachés at UAE Embassies in selected countries on energy and climate change. One of their tasks is to increase the UAE's capacity in international climate change negotiations. Two of the three attachés currently posted are women.

### **Ideas for the Way Forward**

The UAE reiterates its keen interests in further exploring how women's full and active participation can be encouraged and supported in the UNFCCC process, and how women delegates might cooperate to ensure the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities that climate change presents for women globally are adequately reflected in the negotiations. The UAE calls on Parties under the UNFCCC process to address this important issue.

The UAE welcomes the planned workshop on gender, to be held during the upcoming nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP19) in November 2013 as well as the UNFCCC's initiative to convene a COP19 Gender Day on 19 November 2013. Based on the outcomes of these events, further in-session workshops and events may be useful.

Further work is needed to fully understand the challenges that limit women's participation in the UNFCCC in some cases. The UAE suggests that the UNFCCC Secretariat conduct **an in-session survey** targeted at women delegates to better understand these challenges and elicit suggestions on ways to address them.

Furthermore, the UAE calls on the UNFCCC Secretariat to explore **a series of training opportunities** to empower women in the climate change negotiations as well as on awareness raising, with a special focus on engaging those from non-Annex I Parties. This should include online training and other remote tools, as these may allow participation by those who do not regularly attend UNFCCC sessions.