

Commission on the Status of Women - 66th Session

Summary & Main Points - The Report of the Secretary General

The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place from March 14-25, 2022. Due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, CSW66 took place in a hybrid format. All side events and parallel events that I attended were virtual. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world were invited to contribute to the session.

The theme of CSW 2022 **Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.**

Introduction

Gender inequality coupled with climate and environment crises is the greatest sustainable development challenge of the present time. Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters affect the entire planet and all peoples, although not in the same way or to the same degree, while gender inequality results in the denial of full human rights to half of humanity. Climate change and environmental crises and disasters disproportionately affect women and girls, in particular those in vulnerable and marginalized situations. In turn, gender inequality and the unequal access of women to land and natural resources, finance, technology, knowledge, mobility and other assets constrain the ability of women to respond and cope in contexts of climate and environmental crises and disasters. The economic and social fallout of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded the impacts of the climate and environment crises and pushed people further behind, women and girls disproportionately so.

THE CURRENT STATUS of climate, environment and disaster trends and gendered impacts:

- Land degradation, caused mainly by rapid expansion and unsustainable management of industrial agriculture, grazing and forestry, affects 3.2 billion people, in particular rural communities and smallholder farmers, many of whom are women.
- Globally, a quarter of employed women work in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and agriculture remains the most important employment sector for women in low income and lower-middle-income countries. However, less than 13% of agricultural landholders are women, although with regional variations
- Human pressures will push 1 million species to extinction in the coming years, with the catastrophic risk of losing 30–50% of all species by 2050. Globally, indigenous peoples,

local communities, the urban poor and women and girls disproportionately suffer the effects of biodiversity loss.

HOW CAN WE integrate gender perspectives into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs:

- National legal and policy frameworks on climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction do not yet provide a cohesive basis for gender-responsive governance that fulfills the rights and needs of women and girls, nor do they ensure women's participation in decision-making. Those laws and policies that do incorporate gender equality considerations tend to describe women as **vulnerable groups rather than as agents of change**. This needs to change.
- The relative absence of gender considerations in laws and policies is paralleled by the use of GDP as a measure of progress. GDP fails to capture the costs of environmental destruction and the value of the unpaid care and domestic work, principally carried out by women and girls, that subsidizes economic growth and development.

Why promoting the participation and leadership of women is critical:

- It has been proven that the equal participation and leadership of women make climate, environment and disaster risk governance more effective. The representation of women in national parliaments leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies, resulting in lower emissions. At the local level, the participation of women in natural resource management is associated with better resource governance and conservation outcomes.

Key areas to build the resilience of women:

- Despite the critical importance of forests to livelihoods and food security, women have less access to forests and forest resources and limited participation in decision-making with regard to forest management at all levels. However, the greater participation of women in governance leads to better resource conservation and regeneration. Including women in local forest committees improves information and communication on the need for conservation, including by conveying conservation ethics to children, increases community monitoring of forest use violations and enables the application by women of knowledge of forest plants and species.
- Support for gender-responsive sustainable fisheries in the blue economy would improve the management and conservation of fisheries in tandem with much-needed investment in small-scale fisheries, which are more efficient than industrial fishing in terms of catch efficiency, employment generation and environmental sustainability, with most of the fish caught for human consumption. While men tend to fish, women are responsible for

some 90% of informal and formal processing and much small-scale marketing. More broadly, women are key stewards of fisheries and marine ecosystems and are active in promoting conservation and sustainable fisheries, but are often left out of policies, programmes and decision-making. Only 1 of 71 major seafood companies is led by a woman, and 90 per cent of directors are men.

High-level summary of Conclusions from CSW66

- The Commission made a range of recommendations in the agreed conclusions. It called for creating space for youth, especially young women and girls, to participate in shaping the decisions on climate change, environmental degradation and disasters that will affect their future, and to this end, enhancing curricula at all levels of education. It also underlined the need for strengthening access to gender-responsive, safe, available, affordable, accessible, quality and inclusive health-care services and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services.
- The Commission urged Governments to take a range of concrete actions to: strengthen normative, legal and regulatory frameworks; integrate gender perspectives into climate change, environmental and disaster-risk-reduction policies and programmes; expand gender-responsive finance; enhance gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex; and foster a gender-responsive, just transition.

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