

UN Women

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‘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’

Virtual Meeting

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**Report of the Expert Group**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## Introduction

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in preparation for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) considered the priority theme of “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.” The theme is of critical significance and timeliness given the entrenchment of gender inequalities as consequence of intensifying and interlinked crises – climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, disasters and zoonotic pandemics such as COVID-19 – and the concomitant marginalization of the voice, agency, participation and leadership of women, girls and gender diverse people and their movements from policy, governance, and decision-making processes and responses to these global challenges.

The Expert Group discussed the evolving normative frameworks and bodies of international, regional, national and local laws, policies, research, and practices related to the priority theme, and examined the extent to which gender has been integrated into key approaches to climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction. The Expert Group highlighted that the plethora of new and emerging terms and approaches in this broad arena – [nature-based solutions](#), [green economy](#), [blue economy](#), [green jobs](#), [climate-smart agriculture](#), [co-benefits](#), among others – merit further discussion. They may mask business-as-usual unsustainable practices or, without adherence to human rights-based, gender-responsive and socially inclusive standards and safeguards, may sidestep or ignore the knowledge and practices of women and marginalized groups across generations for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The EGM called for careful analysis of such approaches and practices and affirmed human rights-based and gender-transformative strategies. These strategies should seek to target the intertwined root causes of climate and environmental crises and gender inequalities, while ensuring those most affected are involved in the design and implementation of responses and solutions and equal sharing of benefits.

### *Gender-differentiated climate, environmental and disaster impacts*

The twenty-first century constellation of economic, environmental and climate crises is largely attributable to the historic patterns of unsustainable production, consumption and land use, exploitation of marine, coastal and terrestrial resources, wealth accumulation and the destructive dependency on fossil fuels. These patterns were initiated by industrialized countries, whereas the impacts are more acutely felt by the less affluent nations. These unsustainable patterns are at the root of many inequalities, including gender inequalities. Scientific projections on rising average global temperatures mean that ecosystems and people’s interaction with them will suffer permanent changes even if global emission reduction targets are met.<sup>1</sup> Those least responsible for climate change are most adversely affected by it and women and girls in poor countries disproportionately so. While the impacts of COVID-19 were expected to lead to 150 million more extreme poor, climate change and climate related disasters are expected to push an additional 132 million people into extreme poverty by 2030 – unless profound and targeted climate action is taken and folded into pandemic response and recovery measures.<sup>2</sup>

Human actions are resulting in a disastrous loss of biodiversity and endangering the earth’s interconnected ecosystems, human life, settlements, sources of food, clean water and air, and demolishing natural defences against extreme weather and disasters. Globally, indigenous peoples, local communities, the rural and urban poor, and women and girls – who are the most affected by

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC (2021). [Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis: Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#).

<sup>2</sup> Stéphane Hallegatte and Brian Walsh, [“COVID, climate change and poverty: Avoiding the worst impacts,”](#) World Bank Blogs, 7 October 2020.

land and resource tenure insecurity and environmental degradation – disproportionately suffer the effects of biodiversity loss.

Climate and environmental impacts on the earth's oceans are equally or more acute. Oceans have absorbed more than 90 percent of excess heat from global warming and absorb around 30 percent of human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, leading to species extinction and disruptions of marine ecosystems as well as people's livelihoods that depend on them.<sup>3</sup> An ecosystem approach to mitigation and adaptation initiatives involves the conservation and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems, including mangroves, salt marshes and seagrasses. In addition to restoring ocean biodiversity, the protection of marine areas is motivated by the fact that oceans serve as major carbon sinks; marine ecosystems provide protection against storm surges and sea level rise as well as the resources that sustain communities in coastal and marine areas, particularly women from different marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Therefore, all environmental efforts must take into account the commercialization of oceans, plundering of natural resources, pollution, global wealth inequalities, and the striking gaps in ocean governance, with different legal instruments governing different uses of the ocean (shipping, fisheries, deep sea mining, etc.), in addition to the impacts of neoliberal economic policies, binding free trade and investment agreements, and corporate capture of the blue economy.

### *Structural gender inequalities and gendered risks*

Despite decades of research, advocacy and awareness-raising, scientists, researchers and policymakers still neglect the critical links between gender equality, human rights, social equity and justice and climate change and environmental issues. In overlooking these linkages, interventions fail to address the differentiated needs, experiences and outcomes among developing and developed regions, classes, genders, races, ethnicities and geographical spaces. Nor do they apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and consider historical responsibility for climate change and environmental damage. Those who are least responsible for climate change and have caused the least environmental damage globally, are those most affected by loss and damage. When examining the impacts of climate change and disasters, a feminist intersectional approach and analysis are necessary to understand and make visible the ways in which gender intersects with other identities such as class, race, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity and geographical location, among other factors; climate change is a symptom of deeper socio-economic and ecological realities that must be synergistically and simultaneously addressed.

At the same time, while women are disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, their risks are not innate, but rather produced and mediated by existing gender inequalities and discriminatory gender norms across societies. Situations of vulnerability and risk are therefore not simply created from exposure to climate or environment stressors, hazards or disasters, but include a whole set of economically and socially created drivers that shape the resilience of women and girls, their prospects for recovery and perpetuate their marginalization or exclusion from policy processes and decision-making spaces.

Examples of linked drivers of risk in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters that are rooted in structural gender inequalities include:

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<sup>3</sup> IPCC (2016). [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#).

- Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work and the associated time constraints that intensify in climate and environment disaster contexts, making recovery more difficult
- High prevalence of violence against women and girls and lack of access to justice, which worsen in climate and environmental crises and disasters
- Women's lack of rights, access, and control of resources, particularly land, forests, waterways, ocean and marine resources, which weaken their adaptive capacities, increase their insecurity, limit their livelihood opportunities and limit their decision-making power on the use of such resources
- Women's dependence on the informal economy for employment, characterized by lack of labour rights and social protection as well as myriad occupational hazards, leading to increased risks of economic insecurity and ill health
- Poor and hazardous housing and lack of sustainable water, sanitation and energy infrastructure and services, particularly in informal settlements, can create vulnerable situations for home-based workers and stay-at-home residents, often predominantly women
- Marginalization or exclusion of women and gender non-conforming peoples in national and local governance and decision making

Key challenges and recommendations for accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

#### Challenging dominant economic and development models

A huge challenge is the framing of climate and environmental crises only as scientific problems requiring technical solutions, thereby ignoring the political economies of coloniality, heteronormativity, racism, exploitation and extractivism. The concepts of the "green and blue economies" and their application, for example, often overlook the human rights and interests of those least responsible but most affected by climate change, disasters and ecosystem decline. Efforts to mainstream gender in mitigation and adaptation approaches continue to be silent on the gender-specific loss and damage caused by extractive corporate interests and activities. Many green or blue economy programmes are retrofitted into dominant development trajectories that maintain the neoliberal model of economic growth without addressing structural inequalities, including gender inequalities, thus failing to be genuinely transformative.

The global capitalist economy and market fundamentalism are premised on exploiting people and nature for the purposes of accumulation and profit and as such are major drivers of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, leaving people and nature behind. Interrogating and dismantling patriarchal structures remains critical for addressing the root causes and differential outcomes of climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and disasters. New feminist social contracts that are defined along climate, environment, labour rights and gender justice principles are therefore needed, as are principles that recognize the rights and interests of women and marginalized peoples, ensuring their meaningful and equitable participation, particularly in decision-making on the care of this living planet and the production, distribution and consumption of natural and economic resources.

#### Recommendations:

- Promote feminist environmental and climate justice as the most socio-economically and ecologically viable strategy

- Build consensus and alliances amongst feminist development and environmental groups to hold States and corporations accountable to existing binding agreements that ensure the right to development, the right to decent work and livelihoods and the right to a healthy environment
- Advocate for an end to undue, under-regulated and misguided corporate influence in policymaking
- Apply the principle of free, prior and informed consent to protect the rights and territories of colonized and indigenous peoples and local communities, acknowledging historical responsibility of imperial expansion for exploitation of people and the planet

### Intensification of women's unpaid care, domestic and communal work

Clear links have been made between the exploitation of nature and the appropriation of women's undervalued, underpaid or unpaid labour, particularly their reproductive labour or unpaid care and domestic work, that has been used historically to sustain economies and perpetuate capitalist and neoliberal market-driven economic growth. Women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work, rooted in the highly unequal gender division of labour and distribution of this work within the household, and between the household and the State, intensifies in climate and environmental crises and disasters. Significant increases in women's and girls' time and labour spent on fetching water during prolonged droughts, provisioning and processing food when resources are scarce and harvests fail, and collecting biomass for fuel in contexts of environmental and land degradation are stark examples from developing countries with critical gaps in water, sanitation and energy infrastructure, services and social protection.

The economic and social fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that in all contexts women have experienced the increased burden of paid and unpaid care, domestic and communal work and concomitant loss of jobs and livelihoods, jeopardizing women's resilience and prospects for recovery. Care work – and the rights to care and of those who care – must be at the centre of both comprehending the gendered impacts of climate change, the environment, and disasters and proposing solutions, bringing together care for people and the planet as a collective responsibility. A feminist analysis of the care crisis inherent in climate change, environmental degradation and disasters entails caution about the risks of increasing rather than reducing women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work: Moreover, they should include better terms and conditions for paid care and domestic work and recognise, reduce, redistribute and reconfigure societies for equitable work, rest and leisure for all women, girls and gender non-conforming people.

### Recommendations:

- Analyse and incorporate considerations of women's and girls' time poverty, mental and physical exhaustion and poor health outcomes and the unequal distribution of unpaid care, domestic and communal work in the household and community when developing, implementing and evaluating climate, environment and disaster risk reduction policies and actions, to ensure these burdens are reduced and redistributed, not exacerbated
- Recognize and prioritize the gendered care economy and its core role in production, reproduction and well-being of State and non-State systems, necessitating supportive progressive policies to advance women's human rights to decent work, labour participation and just sustainable development
- Increase investments in gender-just labour-saving sustainable infrastructure (such as energy, water and sanitation, transport), public quality services (such as health, education, care), the creation of decent jobs in the care and health sectors, and social protection to reduce

women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work and increase their resilience to and recovery from climate and environmental crises and disasters

- Promote the participation, voice and agency of women and girls to advocate for and monitor the implementation of the 5Rs to **recognize, redistribute and reduce** unpaid care and domestic work and **reward** care workers and ensure their **representation** in social dialogue with employers and the State

### Increased gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an egregious human rights violation that increases, particularly against women and girls, in contexts of climate and environmental crises and disasters, often leading to the breakdown of economic systems, social services, community and family ties as well as displacement and migration. Restrictions in the capacity of women, men and gender non-conforming people to generate incomes and livelihoods can lead to an increase in tensions and violence, both in the domestic and public spheres. This is evident in the “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence that has accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic coping strategies such as child, early and forced marriage, school withdrawal and survival sex are also prevalent in response to environmental disasters and resulting conflicts. Furthermore, people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are at increased risk of gender-based violence and discrimination when trying to access protection and aid after disasters and their needs are often neglected in disaster risk reduction policies and practices. Women and girls also experience higher rates of violence and harassment in emergency shelters after disasters owing to a lack of privacy, overcrowded conditions and a lack of safe gender-responsive sanitation facilities and security services.

Women environmental human rights defenders, including indigenous women, are particularly vulnerable to rising threats and acts of gender-based violence as they seek to protect precious land and ocean resources from unsustainable exploitation by State and corporate interests. In the years 2020 and 2021 a record number of environmental human rights defenders working to protect the environment and marginalized people's rights were murdered—losing their lives while trying to preserve the planet, other species and human rights. While little data exists, violence and intimidation of women participants in climate negotiations have also been reported.

With the newly established [right to a safe, clean healthy and sustainable environment](#) and new regional frameworks and policies that address both human rights and the environment, opportunities to promote and protect the rights of and access to justice for women environmental human rights defenders may emerge. Some progress has also been made to integrate GBV issues in a number of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and WHRD protection measures as acknowledged in the landmark UN resolution in 2013 (UNGA resolution 68/181), on the serious violations faced by women human rights defenders. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 further clarifies gender and human rights obligations in the context of climate change and environment, including those arising from domestic and extraterritorial action of corporations and States parties.

Policies to mitigate and respond to GBV are in place in humanitarian and disaster risk response, including referral pathway systems, but implementation remains insufficient, often hindered by discriminatory gender norms and local patriarchal values. While the revised environmental and social policy of the Green Climate Fund now integrates protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and



harassment as part of its environmental and social assessment requirements, operational and investment policies of existing climate funds in general do not sufficiently integrate GBV concerns.

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure rights-based, gender-responsive policy coherence between climate, environment and disaster risk reduction frameworks and those on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, by taking a cross-sectoral approach and involving civil society organizations
- Share promising practices from humanitarian and disaster interventions for the reduction and prevention of gender-based violence for inclusion in climate and environment policies and programmes
- Take urgent action to eliminate violence against and protect the rights and lives of women environmental human rights defenders, including indigenous women, protecting ancestral lands, territories and knowledge
- Advocate for the replication and enhancement of regional frameworks, such as the Escazú Agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean, that include provisions on human rights defenders in environmental matters, and their gender-responsive adoption and implementation

**Curtailed of sexual and reproductive health and rights**

The climate and environmental emergency is also one of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Structural and systemic discrimination in access to health services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, is exacerbated during times of crisis and emergency, as exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly for women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services is disrupted by climate and environmental disasters damaging critical infrastructure, such as clinics and roads, leading to increased maternal mortality, morbidity and other adverse health outcomes. Rising sea levels can increase saline contamination in water with the potential for negative impacts on community, maternal, infant and child health. Decreased access to clean and safe water and sanitation in climate and environmental crises and disasters compromises provision of safe and quality sexual and reproductive health services, including during pregnancy and childbirth, affecting menstrual health and the safe access to and administration of contraceptive methods.

Coercive population control and contraception are never solutions for climate change and environmental degradation – conceived of in this long-disproved Malthusian discourse as the result of overpopulation or too many people on the planet and its finite resources, rather than of the structural and systemic root causes inherent in capitalist patriarchy. This narrative only serves to instrumentalize women's and girls' bodies, which may lead to violations of their sexual and reproductive rights and bodily autonomy and places unfair responsibility for tackling the climate and environmental crises on those least responsible and most severely affected. Protecting human rights related to gender equality, SRHR, SOGIESC, bodily autonomy and integrity and ensuring fair and equal access to sexual and reproductive health services strengthens the capacity of people most affected by systemic discrimination to participate in the development and implementation of solutions for their own wellbeing and that of the planet.

**Recommendations:**

- Apply a feminist lifecycle and intersectional approach to realize the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls in all their diversity, building on the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the climate and environmental crises

- Ensure that services, commodities and equipment for sexual and reproductive health delivery remain accessible even when infrastructure may be lost or damaged, including through humanitarian action and in remote locations to ensure equal access for marginalized and underserved populations
- Combat the narrative of contraception as a solution for climate change, focusing instead on addressing inequalities within and between countries, particularly between developing countries least responsible for climate change and high-income, high-emitting countries with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production

### Migration and displacement

Many overlapping factors can serve as drivers of human mobility/migration or displacement, particularly in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. Interlinkages among environmental degradation, economic injustice and poverty, violence, food and water insecurity, loss of livelihoods, inequalities and unequal power relations and the absence of political action can all lead people to migrate temporarily or in some cases permanently. However, not everyone has equal access to the resources necessary to migrate with dignity and with their human rights protected. For instance, men's access to, control and ownership of land and other productive resources provides them with the necessary capital to help facilitate international migration, while many women, particularly in rural areas, do not have such access to resources or enjoyment of these rights and may have no choice but to stay in environmentally degraded areas. Women's options to adapt to and survive climate and environmental threats and disasters, including migration, are strongly dependent on existing socio-cultural gender norms and practices and contextual realities, including recognition of their human rights, war and conflict, militarism and geopolitics, neoliberal capitalist systems, masculinist and patriarchal traditional governance structures and processes and the reach of the State.

The lack of reliable sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics to inform strategies and policies to protect the rights of migrants, particularly migrant women, in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, is a persistent problem that has contributed to their political and legal invisibility. The specific needs and rights of women in all their diversity must be brought to the fore, including those that migrate and those that stay behind. Sustainable development strategies, including community adaptation, conservation and sustainable use of resources, and resilience building, to prevent internal displacement or lessen people's need to migrate due to climate and environment threats and disasters are often neglected by both government and development agencies, but instead should be placed at the centre of programmes and policies. Community managed relocation allows communities to make their own assessments, and initiatives should listen and work not *for* but *with* the community through free, prior and informed consent. For many SIDS, the option for community relocation is even more dire, as islands in particular are at risk of being completely submerged with rising sea levels; migration then becomes not a choice but a necessity.

### Recommendations:

- Raise awareness of the realities of women on the move due to climate and environmental crises (sudden and slow onset), including through the promotion of dialogue among organizations, local communities and Member States working on these issues
- Promote safe migration as a strategy for women – as an adaptation measure in response to climate and environmental crises and loss and damage – while recognizing that it is not a solution in and of itself

- Finance loss and damage and adaptation and mitigation strategies that reduce risks and increase resilience and sustainability of territories and communities, ensuring that the responsibility for withstanding the crisis is not transferred to community members
- Invest in collecting, analysing and disseminating sex-disaggregated data on the intersection of gender equality, human rights, climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and species extinction, disasters and migration, with attention given to the lived experiences of women themselves

### Transforming global and national normative and policy frameworks

International agreements on climate, environment and disaster risk reduction are key to establishing a coherent international policy framework for sustainable development that integrates gender equality and women's empowerment as laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), particularly CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. Principally, among them, are the Rio Conventions (Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the ILO Just Transition Guidelines and the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs make an integral link between sustainable development, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment with a comprehensive agenda to address climate and environmental challenges. Similarly, the ILO Just Transition Guidelines bring together the different dimensions of sustainability and emphasize "the strong gender dimension of environmental challenges" as well as the need to consider "specific gender policies ... to ensure equitable outcomes." Most other international normative frameworks on climate, environment and disaster risk reduction, however, are not sufficiently human-rights centred and therefore do not focus on and address structural gender inequalities as drivers of risk, nor do they acknowledge women's meaningful participation and access as a human right, although some progress has been made in the Gender Action Plans of the Rio Conventions.

National laws, policies and strategic frameworks for climate, environment, and disaster risk governance are often gender blind. Some of the same gender challenges in climate, environmental and disaster risk governance at the international level are found at the national and local levels such as: under-representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles within national and local institutions; frequent lack of gender equality commitments in, and gender-responsive implementation of, national laws and policies on climate, environment and disaster risk management; and institutional barriers that prevent cross-sectoral integration between gender equality, disaster risk reduction, climate change and environmental management and development planning.

Gender-responsive, intersectional and transformative approaches and related commitments need to be integrated into national strategic planning and programming efforts, such as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Very few disaster risk management laws include gender equality principles; neither do they advance women's empowerment nor ensure their full and meaningful participation in decision-making. NDCs and NAPs, on the other hand, are more advanced in including substantive provisions on gender equality and women's empowerment. Some NDCs have incorporated an intersectional and gender-responsive approach, including measures to institutionalize the participation of women and other marginalized groups and increase their leadership and negotiation capacities to ensure more meaningful and effective participation.

While some progress has been made in gender-mainstreaming national laws and policies on climate change, the environment and disaster risk reduction, greater policy coherence and coordinated implementation efforts are needed to reduce the silos among them. Moreover, the risk of ‘tokenism’ remains, including in climate finance; even when gender inclusive language is in place, it often seems more like a “tick the box” exercise with implementation failing to be truly gender transformative.

**Recommendations:**

- Strengthen normative and policy coherence among international agreements on climate, the environment and disaster risk reduction as well as their operational rules, implementation procedures and gender action plans
- Strengthen and harmonize national legal, policy and regulatory frameworks, breaking down siloes and connecting climate, environment, and disaster risk reduction with gender equality plans and strategies
- Where gender equality is not already a fundamental principle, include gender equality, human rights and non-discrimination as principal objectives in global normative frameworks on climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction and national laws, policies, and programmes
- Prioritize the meaningful participation, rights and interests of those who suffer the most from climate change, environmental degradation and disasters but are the least responsible for causing them in global and national normative, legal, policy frameworks. This includes SIDS, women and girls in all their diversity, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendent peoples and other marginalized gender and ethnic groups

**Valuing and supporting women’s voice, agency, participation, and leadership**

Ample evidence confirms that the participation and leadership of women in natural resource management and climate interventions lead to better governance, conservation and sustainable use and a more equitable distribution of benefits. Yet discriminatory gender norms and practices and cultural and institutional barriers continue to impede women’s participation in decision-making in these areas and inhibit building on their wealth of skills, knowledge and experience to support the development of effective, equitable and gender-responsive climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction frameworks and initiatives. Women’s participation in local government is particularly important considering its role in spatial planning, land use, social services and infrastructure projects, all of which influence the climate, environmental and disaster resilience of urban and rural communities. Women’s greater representation in local and national government has been shown to introduce consideration of diverse interests for the benefit of all. Measures such as gender quotas can support efforts towards gender parity in local government.

Grassroots feminist organizations and emerging collective voices on gender, environmental and climate justice, including women human rights defenders, play an integral role in advocating for the rights of all women and girls in climate and environment action and for the transformation of exploitative patriarchal and capitalist structures and practices. In addition to possessing a diverse wealth of knowledge and practical solutions to climate, environmental and disaster risks, women’s organizations help to monitor the implementation of governmental commitments and call for accountability, including on climate and ecological justice and intersectional and intergenerational equity. Yet these groups face multiple barriers: shrinking democratic space, exclusion from multilateral negotiations, lack of capacity, diminishing and restrictive funding, and threats to their physical security as they defend land, as well as the rights of women, indigenous peoples and the environment.

Capacity-building and awareness-raising is therefore needed for government officials, practitioners and other relevant actors to increase their understanding of the gender and climate/environment/disaster nexus and to be more inclusive and responsive to other forms of knowledge and experience. Capacity development of parliamentarians to advocate for gender perspectives on climate, environment and disasters is essential given their legislative, budgetary, oversight and governance functions. Measures are also needed to increase the capacities, roles and participation of national gender equality mechanisms in climate, environment and disaster risk governance and implementation of response measures.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Recognise the roles of small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fishers and coastal communities in integrated governance, climate and ecological sustainability
- Ensure the access rights of women-led, small-scale and artisanal fisheries, and recognise indigenous peoples and local community tenure and governance models
- Develop comparable national baselines, based on qualitative and quantitative analyses, of the involvement of women, women's organizations and gender equality mechanisms in climate, environment and disaster institutions for monitoring over time
- Strengthen inter-governmental coordination mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of gender equality mechanisms and women's organizations in all key national policy processes for sustainable development, climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction management
- Aim for gender parity in climate, environmental and disaster institutions and governance; in the meantime, follow a shorter-term "[two-thirds gender rule](#)"
- Ensure education, training and skills of women and girls, particularly in STEM fields, as the foundation for knowledge and participation in climate, environmental and disaster risk governance and practice
- Invest in capacity-building of women, indigenous people, LGBTIQ+ and other marginalized groups and their organizations to increase their leadership and negotiation skills to ensure more meaningful participation in decision-making spaces and institutions on climate change, environment and disaster risk governance
- Equally invest in capacity-building of government officials (i.e., parliamentarians, gender equality mechanisms, line ministries, local authorities) for gender mainstreaming and awareness-raising on the gender and climate/environment/disaster nexus
- Forge common spaces for interaction, dialogue and building alliances for feminist collective action, in addition to global meetings and negotiations where their participation is often tokenistic

#### [Gender-responsive climate and environment finance](#)

The quantity and quality of climate, environment and disaster risk finance remains insufficient and lacks meaningful integration of human rights and gender equality considerations, including of the particular rights, needs and priorities as well as capacities and contributions of women and girls. The provision of gender-responsive climate, environment and disaster risk finance is not only the *right* thing to do, but a matter of equity, effectiveness and efficiency. Yet despite commitments and obligations by developed countries to provide adequate financing in a gender-responsive way under the UNFCCC, CBD and CEDAW, the highest polluting and emitting industrialized nations continue to fall short on funding promises. Meanwhile, the use of loans in place of grants for climate funding is on the rise, which further indebts the least polluting and emitting countries, namely, the least developed countries (LDCs) and SIDs, leaving them more vulnerable to the impacts and less resilient and prepared to respond to climate, environment and disaster crises. The resulting under-funding and under-

provision of basic social services and infrastructure disproportionately disadvantages women and girls as their unpaid care and domestic work increases and intensifies. It is therefore a matter of gender justice and climate justice to ensure that public financing to address adaptation and loss and damage is scaled up and predominantly provided in the form of grants.

Due to structural barriers and discriminatory social norms, women in all their diversity and women's grassroots and indigenous organizations have limited and unequal access to finance and resources to support and expand their work to protect people and the planet. Existing climate and environmental funds rarely provide financing in the form of smaller grants or highly concessional and patient loans, which are needed for gender-responsive locally led and community-focused interventions. One approach to increasing access for women's, indigenous and grassroots organizations would be to mandate that climate and environment funds apply the principle of subsidiarity and devolve climate finance decision-making and fund provision to the local level, including through nationally/sub-nationally implemented small grants facilities that reduce the administrative barriers and transaction costs that are prohibitive for women and women's organizations. Promoting women's decision-making roles and increasing gender expertise in financial institutions, such as in the determination of investment criteria and funding allocations, may also help address these barriers.

Public and private sector climate funding should also be increased for women-owned and women-led micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including women's informal micro-businesses, that are advancing gender-responsive climate and environment action. Financial instruments should provide targeted, accessible and affordable funding to women-led and women-owned MSMEs, including through the use of gender bonds, highly concessional loans, guarantees and grants. Meaningful safeguards, accountability and transparency procedures must be put in place, including for public funding used to leverage private sector engagement and to address the proliferation of private financing mechanisms with no attention to gender equality, human and labour rights, benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Targeted capacity-building for marginalized groups that may have limited education or access to information and technologies is another way to increase diversity among applicants and recipients of climate, environment and disaster risk finance.

Accountability and tracking of gender-responsive finance provisions remain inconsistent and unharmonized for effective monitoring as many developed countries self-report and can overestimate the degree to which their development finance contributes to gender equality. Regulations, oversight, legal instruments and access to justice must be established to ensure the transparency and accountability of finance actors and to ensure full disclosure, address gender and equity concerns and ensure human rights protections. Risk assessments and evaluations of the impacts on women, indigenous peoples and other affected communities must also be conducted to ensure financing solutions are just, sustainable and avoid "[green-washing](#), [pink-washing](#) or [brown-washing](#)."

**Recommendations:**

- Fulfil international commitments by expanding public finance for gender-responsive climate, environment and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes, especially in the form of grants, and debt forgiveness for LDCs and SDS
- Increase the share of climate, environment and disaster risk finance that also supports gender equality outcomes, including dedicated budgets that focus on gender equality as a specific outcome of climate and environment investments

- Apply the principle of subsidiarity for locally-led, gender-responsive climate and environment action and establish national or sub-national small-grant facilities
- Protect and expand the eligibility and direct access to climate and environment finance mechanisms, including through grants with preferential access for women's, grassroots and indigenous organizations
- Prioritize investment in women-owned or women-led MSMEs, particularly in sectors that promote agroecology, decentralized sustainable energy, or other sustainability enterprises
- Strengthen and harmonize accountability and transparency mechanisms to monitor, track and evaluate public and private financing and investments

### Women at the centre of climate change action

The degree to which [climate change mitigation and adaptation](#) strategies and programmes integrate gender perspectives and analyse different gender roles, responsibilities and resource constraints shapes their differential impacts on households and livelihoods. [Mitigation and adaptation measures](#) that fail to conduct proper gender analyses may in fact create or worsen situations of gendered vulnerability and risk and reinforce gender stereotypes through maladaptation or exclusion; for example, adaptation projects that increase women's work on and off the farm, including their unpaid productive (in agricultural work) and reproductive (unpaid care, domestic and communal work) labour, without a corresponding increase in efforts to formalize this work and make it decent. Women's meaningful participation in and contributions to environmental and social impact assessments, for example, which often serve as precursors to the approval of development and infrastructure projects, can help to ensure that the potential gendered livelihood, social, health and other impacts of programmes are considered in the design and planning stages.

Since industrial agriculture is a significant contributor to climate change and biodiversity loss and with food insecurity rising due to increased weather variability, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent droughts, a renewed focus is emerging on sustainable agricultural and food systems and practices, such as agroecology. Aligned strategies promote gender-responsive sustainable energy infrastructure and technology to mitigate and to adapt to climate change, such as solar-powered irrigation pumps or decentralized renewable-energy micro-grids in areas that national electricity grids do not reach. [Gender-responsive climate-resilient agriculture](#) aims to address the different constraints faced by women and men farmers in a changing climate and to reduce gender inequalities while ensuring equal benefits from interventions and practices. However, under the guise of climate-smart agriculture, agribusiness conglomerates are promoting soil carbon storage and genetically modified or edited seeds, to the detriment of small-scale farmers, food security and the multiple benefits of agroecological soil and seed conservation and sustainable use practices – and even negating the stated objective of reducing the carbon footprint of the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, climate change responses that do attempt to mainstream gender often fail to break down unequal power structures or close gender gaps for gender-transformative outcomes. For example, some just transition approaches focus only on ensuring transition of (primarily male) coal workers to new industrial jobs. While essential to a just transition, this narrow focus is not enough as it continues to replicate existing gender gaps in decent work and employment. Many initiatives also neglect or downplay the role that women play in addressing the impacts of climate change at the community level. Women are often stereotyped as simply victims of climate crises or project beneficiaries rather than leaders and knowledge bearers in mitigation and adaptation efforts.

An additional complication in gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation programming lies in the lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics through which to measure impact and progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. At the same time, quantitative data alone

cannot be the sole indicator of success. Metrics based on commercial agricultural production, for example, make invisible women's contributions to household food security and nutrition through biodiverse home gardens, for example. Quantitative data also often fails to capture the diverse and intersectional experiences of different marginalized groups. The inclusion of qualitative data can cover narratives of women's experiences or engage communities in participatory research processes on building resilience in a changing climate, thereby revalorizing knowledge based in embodied experience rather than disembodied and context-free data.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure the collection of sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data and that climate change mitigation and adaptation programming is based on gender analysis and gender impact assessments
- Design climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes that reduce rather than increase women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work while promoting the formalization of informal work and the creation of decent work in the care economy
- Establish effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms for gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation programmes to ensure they effectively respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls and overcome multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and systemic power imbalances for gender-transformative outcomes
- Review procedures and criteria for environmental and social impact assessments to include gender analysis and gender-responsive consultation processes and governance arrangements that carry through design, implementation and monitoring of interventions to achieving equal benefits for all gender groups
- Use tools such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index to analyse and address gender gaps in the design, implementation and analysis of policies and programmes developed to address climate change, including finance mechanisms

#### **Women's roles in biodiversity conservation and sustainable food and agricultural systems**

Women in local, rural, indigenous contexts play a central role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable food and agricultural systems as farmers, producers and holders of gendered knowledge on storing, conserving, processing and preparing food as well as ancestral adaptation, conservation and sustainable use practices. However, the prevalence of industrial and commercial agriculture and the industrial food system has made women's contributions to household and community food security increasingly invisible. Women's work in (agro)biodiversity conservation and sustainable use continues to be largely unrecognized in the face of hegemonic forms of scientific and technological knowledge production and deployment of authoritative responses and solutions to climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

[Agroecology](#) is gaining recognition for its transformative potential to empower women, bolster their agency, build sustainable food systems, enhance biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation by incorporating sustainable energy and restoring ecosystems. Agroecology in different contexts around the world is practiced through bottom-up processes and collective action led by women and based on their interests, supporting food sovereignty and biodiversity conservation by rehabilitating landscapes and reducing the need for harmful pesticides and other damaging conventional agricultural inputs. As a holistic and integrated feminist practice, it contributes to women's leadership, income generation, knowledge-sharing, community-building, as well as to their health and that of their families. It is nevertheless dependent on women's full realization of their rights to land as well as access to resources and markets.



### Recommendations:

- Ensure a rights-based, gender-responsive approach to food sovereignty and agrobiodiversity with equitable access to land, resources, assets and institutions and fair and equitable sharing of benefits
- Develop policies and programmes that foster women's engagement in and control over agroecological food production that restores biodiversity, regenerates the agroecosystem, and provides resilience against climate change and other disaster risks
- Valorize and develop solutions based on women's indigenous, local and traditional knowledge, innovation and practices, particularly in the construction of sustainable food systems, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Integrate the roles, contributions and needs of women in other productive sectors apart from agriculture (i.e., livestock, forestry, fisheries, energy, and infrastructure) in the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as ensuring that informal or unpaid work by women in these sectors is not only recognized but becomes formal and decent
- Ensure that gender considerations and benefit sharing are comprehensively addressed throughout the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

### Ensuring gender-just transitions

Achieving collective goals on climate change and environmental sustainability requires a just transition to fully sustainable, low emissions, and socially just economies with care for people and the planet at the centre. The process must minimise impacts on affected workers and their families, create decent jobs, and make the economy more inclusive, while eradicating poverty and promoting social protection. While the transition to a de-carbonized future provides a significant opportunity to reduce gender and other social inequalities, 'going green and clean' does not necessarily translate to social justice if structural gender inequalities persist. Gender inequalities in the labour market, such as the existing patterns of occupational segregation, decent work and rights deficits in the care economy and other work traditionally performed by women and the unfair distribution of care responsibilities, must be addressed.

In specific areas, such as energy, construction and transportation, gender-responsive actions and the increased participation of women are essential for reversing decades of environmental degradation and gendered impacts of climate change and disasters. Gender-just transitions not only require shifting industries to low emitting approaches where women can equally participate in and benefit from these jobs, but also to ensure that low emitting jobs do not replicate existing gender inequalities. For example, efforts are needed by both the public and the private sector to increase women's quality employment in sustainable energy sectors, which means that while transitioning from high emissions industries, women and girls will need equal access to skills, information, education and the jobs created in renewable energy and energy efficient areas. Gender discrimination must be firmly addressed to remove barriers to women's participation and leadership in these areas. It is essential that gender-just transitions have social dialogue as an operating principle to challenge business-as-usual modalities. Further, addressing the rising inequalities between and within countries will be important, for example, as coal mine closures in the Global South will have particularly negative impacts on many women owing to a range of institutional, structural and cultural factors and may further increase economic and gender inequalities.

A broader approach to just transition in high emitting regions is also necessary; initial approaches replicated existing inequalities and decent work deficits through a focus on new and quality industrial jobs only for workers in high emitting sectors – which are also male-dominated in most countries.

While this is essential, better practice requires gender-responsive investment in decent jobs, for example in care, education and climate and environment action.

**Recommendations:**

- Mainstream gender equality considerations in all just transition initiatives taking an intersectional approach that ensures the meaningful and equal participation of women in all their diversity and other marginalized groups at all stages of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to ensure equal outcomes and benefits
- Promote social dialogue, including with unions, employers, government and meaningful engagement with civil society
- Create pathways and opportunities for women to enter skilled trades and jobs in the sustainable energy sector, including through gender-responsive public and private procurement linked to decent work
- Enhance women's and girls' access to STEM education and training so that they equally benefit from the just transition
- Include gender-specific policies in the development of national and regional plans to address rights and decent work deficits in jobs typically performed by women
- Take into account inequalities between and within countries to ensure that just transition strategies reduce rather than increase economic, social, environmental and gender inequalities

## ANNEX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### EXPERTS

**Aleksandar Macura**

RES Foundation

**Angelique Pouponneau**

Seychelles Conservation and Climate  
Adaptation Trust (SeyCCat)

**Bernadette Resurrección**

Queen's University

**Catarina Sofia Carvalho / Natassha Kaur**

International Planned Parenthood Federation

**Cate Owren**

International Union for Conservation of  
Nature (IUCN)

**Christina Suprapti (Titi Soentoro)**

Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice

**Erika Pires Ramos**

South American Network of Environmental  
Migrations (RESAMA)

**Farah Kabir**

Action Aid Bangladesh

**Georgina Catacora-Vargas**

Bolivian Catholic University – Tiahuanacu  
Peasant Academic Unit

**Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim**

Association for Indigenous Women and  
Peoples of Chad

**Joanna Edghill**

MEGAPOWER

**Kizzann Sammy**

E.T. Jackson & Associates

**Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt**

Australian National University

**Liane Schalatek**

Heinrich Böll Foundation North America

**Lorena Aguilar**

Independent expert for Economic Commission  
for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

**Marta Guadeloupe Rivera Ferre**

Spanish National Research Council at INGENIO

**Mary Picard**

Humanitarian Consulting

**Mereoni Chung**

Development Alternatives with Women for a  
New Era (DAWN)

**Meriel Watts**

Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Asia Pacific

**Mrinalini Rai**

Women4Biodiversity

**Nalini Singh**

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

**Noelene Nabulivou**

Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA)

**Salina Sanou**

Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)

**Samantha Smith**

Just Transition Centre, International Trade  
Union Confederation

**Sarah El Battouty**

ECONsult

**Sarah Gammage**

The Nature Conservancy

**OBSERVERS**

**Tanya McGregor**  
CBD

**Tacko Ndiaye**  
FAO

**Ilaria Sisto**  
FAO

**Asako Hattori**  
OHCHR

**Monica Iyer**  
OHCHR

**Rockaya Aidara**  
UNCCD

**Verania Chao**  
UNDP

**Branwen Millar**  
UNDRR

**Raymond Brandes**  
UNEP

**Daphne Bukirwa**  
UNEP

**Janet Macharia**  
UNEP

**Laurens Thuy**  
UNESCO

**Fleur Newman**  
UNFCCC

**Elena Villalobos Prats**  
WHO

**UN WOMEN**

Aina Iiyambo

Athena Galao

Carla Kraft

Joann Lee

Laura Turquet

Leigh Tomppert

Maja Nihlmark

Michael Stewart-Evans

Priyanka Teeluck

Rahel Steinbach

Riina Haavisto

Sarah Selby

Seemin Qayum

Silke Staab

Sylvia Hordosch

Verona Collantes

Victoria Diaz-Garci

## ANNEX II: PROGRAMME OF WORK

### Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) Priority Theme

#### 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 Expert Group Meeting

11 – 14 October 2021 via Zoom

Group A: Monday 11 October and Tuesday 12 October from 8:00am – 12pm (New York)

Group B: Wednesday 13 October and Thursday 14 October from 8:00am – 12pm (Bangkok)

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Group A	
DAY 1: Monday, 11 October	
8:00 – 8:30	<p><b>Welcome and opening of the meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sarah Hendriks</b>, Director, Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division, UN Women</li></ul> <p>“The Commission on the Status of Women: A strategic vision”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Seemin Qayum</b>, Chief a.i., Economic Empowerment Section, UN Women</li></ul>
8:30 – 9:30	<p><b>Discussion of background papers:</b></p> <p><b>“Gender, climate change and disasters: vulnerabilities, responses and ways forward”</b></p> <p>Author presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Bernadette Resurrección</b>, Queen’s University</li></ul> <p><b>“Empowering women in climate, environment and disaster risk governance: From national policy to local action”</b></p> <p>Author presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mary Picard</b>, Humanitarian Consulting</li></ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>

9:30 – 10:30	<p><b>Discussion: Promising practices for biodiversity conservation and climate action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Georgina Catacora-Vargas</b>, Academic Peasant Unit Tiahuanacu, Bolivian Catholic University “Indigenous women’s rights in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use”</li> <li>• <b>Lorena Aguilar</b>, Independent Expert on Gender and Environment for Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Costa Rica “Promising Practices that Promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Response to Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean”</li> <li>• <b>Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim</b>, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad "Integrating indigenous women's and scientific knowledge for climate and environment solutions and action on the ground"</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
10:30 – 11:30	<p><b>Discussion: Sustainable energy transitions and regenerative food and agricultural systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Aleksandar Macura</b>, RES Foundation, Serbia “Gender responsiveness and energy poverty - an opportunity to promote women’s empowerment and active participation”</li> <li>• <b>Joanna Edghill</b>, MEGAPOWER, Barbados “Integrating gender equality and climate resilience into private sector policies and initiatives – a transport sector case study discussion”</li> <li>• <b>Marta Guadeloupe Rivera Ferre</b>, Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya, Spain “Sustainable food systems and gender equality in the context of climate change and biodiversity conservation”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
11:30 – 12:00pm	<b>Wrap up and close</b> (identification of key recommendations)
<p><b>Group A</b> <b>DAY 2: Tuesday, 12 October</b></p>	
8:00 – 8:30	<b>Summary of key points from Day 1 Lorena Aguilar and Sarah Gammage, Co-Chairs</b>

8:30 – 9:30	<p><b>Discussion: Natural resource management, gender-based violence, migration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sarah El Battouty</b>, EConsult, Egypt “Environmental policy and advocacy for sustainable resource management”</li> <li>• <b>Cate Owren</b>, International Union for Conservation of Nature “Understanding and addressing gender-based violence as part of the climate emergency”</li> <li>• <b>Erika Pires Ramos</b>, South American Network of Environmental Migrations (RESAMA), Brazil “Gender, migration, climate change and disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
9:30 – 10:30	<p><b>Discussion: Climate and environment finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Liane Schalatek</b>, Heinrich Böll Foundation “Core policy steps to increase quality and quantity of gender-responsive climate finance”</li> <li>• <b>Kizzann Sammy</b>, E.T. Jackson &amp; Associates, Trinidad and Tobago “Gender lens investing and green financing: The role of women-owned small and medium businesses in climate vulnerable communities”</li> <li>• <b>Sarah Gammage</b>, The Nature Conservancy “Gender and equity in policies and programs to foster climate mitigation and adaptation”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
10:30 – 11:30	<p><b>Discussion: Gender-responsive just transitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Salina Sanou</b>, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance “Feminist Just Recovery”</li> <li>• <b>Samantha Smith</b>, Just Transition Centre “Gender and just transition – A review”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
11:30 – 12:00pm	<p><b>Wrap up and close</b> (discussion of recommendations)</p>
<b>Group B</b>	
<b>DAY 1: Wednesday, 13 October</b>	

8:00 – 8:30	<p><b>Welcome and opening of the meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sarah Hendriks</b>, Director, Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division, UN Women “The Commission on the Status of Women: A strategic vision”</li> <li>• <b>Seemin Qayum</b>, Chief a.i., Economic Empowerment Section, UN Women</li> <li>• <b>Lorena Aguilar</b>, Co-Chair Group A “Reflections on discussions and recommendations from Group A”</li> </ul>
8:30 – 9:30	<p><b>Discussion of background papers:</b></p> <p><b>“Gender, climate change and disasters: vulnerabilities, responses and ways forward”</b></p> <p>Author presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bernadette Resurrección</b>, Queen’s University</li> </ul> <p><b>“Empowering women in climate, environment and disaster risk governance: From national policy to local action”</b></p> <p>Author presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mary Picard</b>, Humanitarian Consulting</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
9:30 – 10:30	<p><b>Discussion: Reversing biodiversity loss and environmental degradation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mrinalini Rai</b>, Women4Biodiversity, Thailand “Routes for change - Ensuring gender considerations in biodiversity governance”</li> <li>• <b>Meriel Watts</b>, Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Asia Pacific “Pesticides and farming: promoting gender equality and minimizing environmental degradation”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
10:30 – 11:30	<p><b>Discussion: Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nalini Singh</b>, Fiji Women's Rights Movement “Women's resilience to disasters and climate change”</li> <li>• <b>Farah Kabir</b>, Action Aid Bangladesh “Integrating gender equality into climate action and disaster risk reduction and recovery”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
11:30 – 12:00pm	<p><b>Wrap up and close</b> (discussion of recommendations)</p>
<p><b>Group B</b> <b>DAY 2: Thursday, 14 October</b></p>	



8:00 – 8:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Summary of key points from Day 1 Seemin Qayum</b>, Chief a.i., Economic Empowerment Section, UN Women</li> </ul>
8:30 – 9:30	<p><b>Discussion: Promoting the human rights of women in all their diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mata’afa Fa’atino Utumapu</b>, Nuanua O Le Alofa, Samoa “Climate, environment and disaster risk policies and programmes through a disability lens”</li> <li>• <b>Natasha Kaur</b>, International Planned Parenthood Federation “Impacts of the climate crisis on sexual and reproductive health and rights”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
9:30 – 10:30	<p><b>Discussion: Gender-responsive regenerative blue economies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Angelique Pouponneau</b>, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust “Ocean protection and conservation in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction”</li> <li>• <b>Noelene Nabulivou</b>, DIVA, Fiji “Advancing feminist discussions on Gender, Oceans, Climate and Ecological Justice”</li> <li>• <b>Mereoni Chung</b>, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) “Blue economy, oceans and the climate crisis: Keys for gender, economic and ecological justice”</li> </ul> <p><i>Plenary discussion</i></p>
10:30 – 11:30	<p><b>Discussion: Gender-responsive just energy and climate transitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Christina Suprapti (Titi)</b>, Aksi! for Gender, Social and Ecological Justice, Indonesia “Building women’s resilience through urban climate policies”</li> <li>• <b>Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt</b>, Australian National University “Gendering just energy transition” <i>Plenary discussion</i></li> </ul>
11:30 – 12:00pm	<p><b>Wrap up and close</b> (discussion of recommendations)</p>