

## **HLPF 2023**

### **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

On behalf of the Women's Major Group, here at the High Level Political Forum I'd like to address the pressing issue of SDG 6 - ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. I'd like to emphasize not only the urgency of addressing gender related challenges of water and sanitation access, but also to stress the vital role played by women in achieving this goal.

The lack of proper sanitation facilities disproportionately affects women, girls and gender diverse people in terms of their privacy, dignity, and overall health. All these are felt more acutely during climate related disasters, as a result of climate change and in conflict situations.

Women in rural communities are very much dependent on water and energy resources to sustain their livelihoods, families and food security. Limited access to clean water sources and proper sanitation facilities exacerbates their struggles, placing them at a higher risk of waterborne diseases and compromising their overall health.

Weak institutions, fragmentation of water management - with lack of coordination and inter agency planning, monitoring, and implementation; lack of stakeholder engagement and participation, at all levels for decision making and management - including transboundary aspects remain challenges.

The Women's Major Group advocates for adequate and equitable public financing of water, sanitation and hygiene services, through mechanisms that embody gender equality and social inclusion principles. We call for increased investment in gender-responsive water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as funding for capacity building and knowledge sharing. Additionally, we stress the importance of prioritizing the mobilization of fresh resources, such as climate finance, to address the water and sanitation challenges exacerbated by climate change.

We urge governments to invest in gender-sensitive infrastructure and services. Adequate funding for water and sanitation initiatives must prioritize the needs of women and girls in all their diversity, recognizing their specific challenges and vulnerabilities. This includes the provision of gender-segregated sanitation facilities, ensuring their safety, privacy, and dignity. Moreover, access to water must be integrated into broader development plans, such as those addressing health, education, and economic empowerment targets.

We emphasize the importance of data disaggregation by gender to effectively track progress and identify gaps in achieving SDG 6. Gender-sensitive data collection and analysis will provide evidence on the specific challenges faced by women and girls and enable targeted interventions. It will also enable us to monitor the impact of our actions and hold governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality.

We call for consistent application of the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework bearing in mind national circumstances and approaches and therefore reaffirm the urgency to address the challenge of financing, as a means to provide better and more sustainable water services, of ensuring quality, disaggregation and access of data, information and knowledge targeting resources and measuring progress.

We consider the use of legal instruments and guidelines that can offer inter alia frameworks for multi-sectoral cooperation, setting national targets and advancing agendas towards reaching SDG 6;

We uphold that the role of women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities and other recognized major groups in water governance and management at all levels is critical especially in a changing climate for ensuring universal access to water and sanitation for all;

We commit to apply broad and inclusive participatory approaches and technical solutions to ensure sustainable, equitable and non-discriminatory access to water and sanitation, with corresponding capacity development and knowledge-sharing activities and mechanisms;

We support the meaningful participation of women, other marginalized groups at all levels of decision-making in the water sector, which is essential for the development and sustainability of durable and equitable water governance and management.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Governments must ensure safely managed water and sanitation facilities as public goods with dedicated public funds. Rights-based approaches and gender responsive principles must guide the design, implementation and monitoring of the accelerated work to advance access to safely managed water and sanitation facilities for all.
2. Provide adequate and predictable financial resources, technology transfer, and capacity building support, on mutually agreed terms, to strengthen water-related resilience in all developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries, Land-Locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States;
3. Raise awareness and ensure menstrual health and hygiene activities. Development and humanitarian programmes across the world must improve access to menstrual materials and facilities. Education for adolescent girls, women, transgender and non-binary individuals on how to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically and with dignity is needed. Mobilize the funding required for the action required at the high scale needed to break the taboos and end the stigma surrounding menstruation.”

We appreciate the efforts made thus far to address water and sanitation challenges through SDG 6. However, we must go further to ensure that these efforts prioritize and reflect the needs, rights, and voices of women and girls, leaving no one behind.