

Commission on the Status of Women

**Contribution to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2022
“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**

March 2022

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development confirms the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls to sustainable development and poverty eradication, and for progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. It envisaged a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.

At its sixty-sixth session which took place from 14-25 March 2022, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) considered “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” as its priority theme. The Commission also reviewed implementation of its agreed conclusions from the sixty-first session on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” and held an interactive expert panel on the priority theme “Building resilient futures: Bridging the gap between the physical science and social science communities to advance gender equality in the context of climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction”. The Commission also held an interactive dialogue on the emerging issue “Harnessing COVID-19 recovery for gender equality and a sustainable future”.

The contribution of CSW to the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development is based on the agreed conclusions on its priority theme for the sixty-sixth session (E/CN.6/2022/L.7), adopted by the Commission on 25 March 2022, as well as the Chair’s summary of the interactive dialogue on the emerging issue (E/CN.6/2022/L.15).

a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17

In its Agreed Conclusions, the Commission:

- Reaffirms the right to education for all women and girls, and stressed that equal access to inclusive, equitable and quality education provides them with opportunities, capacities and understanding that enables women’s full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and strengthens the voice, agency and leadership of women and girls in climate, environmental and disaster risk action.
- Expresses concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has widened inequalities and disproportionately impacted women and girls, including their access to essential health-care services and access to education, with girls at higher risk of dropping out of education.
- Further expresses deep concern over the increased demand for unpaid care and domestic work and the reported surge of all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, as well as harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

- Emphasizes the critical role that women play in disaster response and COVID-19 recovery efforts and recalls that women represent the vast majority of front-line health and social workers and that they are significantly engaged in the delivery of essential and public services.
- Recognizes that the disruption caused by climate change, environmental degradation and disasters to education systems across the world, often keeps girls, adolescent girls and young women out of school, and limits their access to education, including to the skills and knowledge needed to adapt and respond to these challenges .
- Recognizes the importance of gender equality and the crucial role of women and youth in the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Emphasizes the fundamental importance for women and girls of healthy oceans and sustainable ocean-based economy in climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience as well as the impact of pollution to ecosystem destruction and climate change.
- Expresses concern that climate change, pollution of air, land and water, biodiversity loss and decline in ecosystem functions and services threaten the full enjoyment of human rights of all women and girls and have acute impacts on women and girls, especially on rural, indigenous and migrant women and girls.
- Emphasizes the fundamental importance for women and girls of healthy oceans and sustainable ocean-based economy in climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience as well as the impact of pollution to ecosystem destruction and climate change, including the disproportionate impact of pollution on women and girls as well as consequences of plastic pollution.
- Recognizes that soils, forests, fisheries, water and biomass, among others, are principal sources of income, livelihood, food security, social protection and employment, particularly for women and girls living in poverty. Further recognizes that the unsustainable depletion or deterioration of natural resources can displace communities, especially women, from income-generating activities while greatly adding to unremunerated work, and that in both urban and rural areas, environmental degradation results in negative effects on the health, well-being and quality of life of the population at large, especially women and girls of all ages.
- Expressed deep concern that, despite international agreements, initiatives and general declarations, there is a lack of equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, especially for developing countries.

Participants in the interactive dialogue on the emerging issue theme acknowledged the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination, and exacerbated existing structural gender inequalities.

b) Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “leaving no one behind” against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The Commission recognizes that gender inequality coupled with climate change, environmental degradation and disasters pose a challenge for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda with disproportionate impacts on women and girls, especially those in vulnerable and marginalized situations and conflict settings and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

It acknowledges that multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization are obstacles to women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life as well as to the elimination of violence and recognizes that some women and girls face particular barriers to their empowerment.

While all women and girls have the same human rights, women and girls in different contexts have particular needs and priorities, requiring appropriate responses. These needs and priorities need to be addressed in order to ensure no one is left behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased barriers that women and girls face, including violence and higher rates of poverty, lack of access to quality and inclusive education and employment, health care, public services, economic resources, including land and natural resources.

Women's equal, full, effective and meaningful participation in the economy and in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas is essential in order to leave no one behind.

c) Actions and policy recommendations in areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the implementation of the SDGs under review

The Commission called for governments and other stakeholders to:

- Promote and invest in gender-responsive, quality and inclusive education, lifelong learning, reskilling and training including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for women and girls, including pregnant adolescents and young mothers as well as single mothers, to continue and complete their education and equip them with the knowledge and skills that can strengthen their resilience and adaptive capacities to attain high-quality jobs in the sustainable economy.
- Close gender gaps and removing existing structural barriers, negative social norms and gender stereotypes, and strengthening women's access to education in order to enhance women's and girls' capacities to take action and build resilience.
- Address negative social norms and gender stereotypes and persistent gender gaps in education at all levels, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology, and integrate the causes and consequences of climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction in educational curricula at all levels;
- Create 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.
- Close gender gaps, introduce gender-responsive policies, interventions and innovations, including in agriculture and fisheries, and ensuring women's equal access to agricultural and fisheries technologies, technical assistance, productive resources, land tenure security and access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance and natural resources, as well as access to and participation in local, regional and international markets.
- Identify and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, in relation to land tenure security and access to, ownership of, and control over land.

d) Policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The Commission recognizes that the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic requires a global response based on solidarity and renewed multilateral cooperation and that sustainable and inclusive recovery strategies are needed to reduce risks of future shocks, including through strengthening health systems and achieving universal health coverage, and that all responses are implemented with full respect for human rights.

Participants in the interactive dialogue on the emerging issue advocated for an intersectional approach that places women and girls at the center, ensures that all socio-economic and political institutions are responsive

to their rights and diverse needs, and amplifies the voices of the most marginalized. They advocated for policies that promote the participation of women and girls in male-dominated sectors, including energy, STEM and transportation, alongside greater engagement of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work.

The Commission recognizes that women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making are critical for making climate change and environmental actions and disaster risk reduction and recovery efforts more effective, and called on governments at all levels and stakeholders to take appropriate measures 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
- Foster a gender-responsive, just transition

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF

- Take action to fully implement existing commitments and obligations with respect to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full and equal enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind.
- Promote a gender-responsive approach and the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and leadership of women and, as appropriate, girls in water and sanitation and household energy management in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.
- Promote and protect the rights of all women and girls related to the enjoyment of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and adopt policies and programmes for the enjoyment of these rights, including by addressing the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.
- Protect and promote the right to work and rights at work of all women and ensure the equal access of women to decent work and quality jobs in all sectors, by eliminating occupational segregation, discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes and violence and sexual harassment, supporting the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors, ensuring their equal pay for work of equal value, protecting against discrimination and abuse and ensuring the safety of all women in the world of work, and promoting the right to organize and bargain collectively to advance, as well as access to sustainable livelihoods, including in the context of a just transition of the workforce.
- Take measures to reduce the time spent by women and girls on collecting household water and fuel and protect them from threats, assaults and sexual and gender-based violence while doing so and when accessing sanitation facilities outside of their home or practicing open defecation and urination, and ensure access to water and sanitation and hygiene for all women and girls, especially those in marginalized and vulnerable situations.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes, and recognizing that the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on all matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, as a contribution to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and the realization of their human rights.