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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by United Children of Nigeria, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

The United Children of Nigeria, is dedicated to empowering the youth of Nigeria through education and technical assistance. This statement will explore the gendered impact of climate change on displacement, food security, access to clean water, and health. It will also discuss how economic empowerment, particularly through green technologies and sustainable practices, can provide climate-resilient solutions for women in Nigeria and other developing countries. These solutions not only address the climate crisis but also enhance the economic standing of women, ensuring that they are key drivers in the global movement toward sustainability and the eradication of poverty.

### **Displacement and Migration**

Let's begin with one of the most visible consequences of climate change: displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), climate-related displacement disproportionately affects women and girls, particularly in developing regions. In Nigeria, desertification, flooding, and droughts have forced communities, especially in the northern regions, to migrate. These migrations disrupt lives, uproot families, and often put women and girls at heightened risk of violence and exploitation.

In rural communities, where traditional gender roles prevail, women are typically responsible for securing food and water for their families. When climate change disrupts their environment – when droughts dry up the land or floods destroy crops – women are left to shoulder the heaviest burdens. As they migrate, seeking safety and resources, they face greater exposure to violence, trafficking, and exploitation, particularly in camps or informal settlements. Girls are often forced to drop out of school to help their families or become child brides to alleviate financial pressure.

In Nigeria, over 2 million people are displaced due to climate-related events, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). The Nigerian government has worked to address internal displacement, but gender-sensitive approaches are needed to protect women during such crises. We must prioritize investments in safe, climate-resilient housing and infrastructure, especially for women and children who are more vulnerable during migration. Additionally, there is a need for legal frameworks that protect displaced women and ensure their access to education, healthcare, and employment.

### **Food Security and Women in Agriculture**

Nigeria, like many developing countries, relies heavily on agriculture, with women accounting for nearly 70% of the agricultural labor force in rural areas. These women are key players in ensuring food security, yet they are also disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change. Droughts, erratic rainfall, and land degradation have led to reduced crop yields, which in turn affects household nutrition and income. For women farmers, the stakes are higher – they are not only providing for their families but also contributing to the economic stability of their communities.

In the northern region of Nigeria, desertification is advancing at an alarming rate. This environmental change has a direct impact on women farmers, who are often unable to access financial resources, irrigation systems, or sustainable farming techniques. Without these tools, their ability to adapt to changing climate conditions is severely limited.

We must promote gender-inclusive agricultural policies that provide women with access to climate-smart technologies, such as drought-resistant seeds, solar-powered irrigation systems, and sustainable farming methods. These innovations can significantly increase resilience in the face of climate change. We should also advocate for programs that provide women with access to microfinance and grants, enabling them to invest in sustainable farming practices. Empowering women in agriculture is essential for achieving both gender equality and food security in Nigeria and beyond.

### **Access to Clean Water and Sanitation**

Water scarcity is another critical issue exacerbated by climate change, and in many developing countries, the responsibility of collecting water falls primarily on women and girls. In Nigeria, women in rural areas often walk long distances to collect water, a task that has become even more grueling due to prolonged droughts and diminishing water sources. This not only affects their physical health but also their time – time that could otherwise be spent on education, income-generating activities, or childcare.

The lack of access to clean water also has serious health implications. Women and girls are more susceptible to waterborne diseases, particularly in regions where sanitation infrastructure is inadequate. In times of crisis, such as floods, the risk of contamination increases, further jeopardizing the health of women, children, and other vulnerable populations.

To address this, we need to prioritize investments in sustainable water management systems. Solar-powered water pumps, rainwater harvesting techniques, and community water-sharing models can be implemented to alleviate the burden on women. Governments and international organizations must collaborate to ensure that water infrastructure projects are designed with gender sensitivity in mind, reducing the distance women must travel to access clean water and improving overall community health.

### **Health and Climate Change**

Climate change also has direct and indirect impacts on women's health. For example, as extreme weather events become more frequent, we see increases in malnutrition, waterborne diseases, and respiratory illnesses, all of which disproportionately affect women. In Nigeria, where healthcare systems are often under-resourced, women in rural and low-income communities face even greater barriers to accessing necessary medical services.

Malnutrition is particularly concerning, as food scarcity caused by climate change directly impacts the nutritional status of women and children. Pregnant and lactating women are at higher risk of malnutrition, which can lead to poor maternal and child health outcomes. Additionally, as women are the primary caregivers, they are more likely to be exposed to illness and disease when their children or family members become sick.

We must work to make healthcare systems more climate-resilient, ensuring that women have access to essential services even in times of environmental stress. Strengthening maternal health programs, expanding access to vaccinations, and providing education on climate-related health risks are critical steps toward achieving gender equality in health.

### **Economic Empowerment Through Green Technologies**

Now that we have explored some of the critical challenges facing women due to climate change, let us shift our focus to solutions – specifically, the role of economic empowerment in building climate resilience. Women’s entrepreneurship in green technologies and sustainable practices can offer a powerful pathway to both climate solutions and economic empowerment.

In Nigeria, there are promising examples of women leading climate-resilient businesses, particularly in renewable energy. Solar-powered businesses, for instance, provide reliable, affordable energy to off-grid communities, allowing women to run small enterprises even in areas with limited access to electricity. Programs like Solar Sister, which trains and equips women to become clean energy entrepreneurs, have shown the potential for scaling such initiatives. These businesses not only provide a source of income for women but also help reduce reliance on fossil fuels, contributing to both economic and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, supporting women’s access to green jobs and sustainable markets can have a transformative effect on communities. By promoting policies that encourage women’s participation in industries like renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture, we can create a more equitable, resilient future.

Governments, development organizations, and the private sector must work together to provide women with access to the capital, training, and resources needed to succeed in these fields. Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in scaling up women-led businesses in green sectors, and international organizations can provide the technical support necessary for implementation.

### **Culturally Relevant Solutions**

Lastly, any solution we propose must be culturally relevant and context specific. In Nigeria, as in many developing countries, community-based solutions are often the most effective. Local knowledge, combined with modern technology, can create sustainable solutions that are embraced by the community.

For example, indigenous farming practices in Nigeria, such as intercropping and agroforestry, have long been used to mitigate the effects of drought. By integrating these traditional methods with modern climate-smart technologies, we can create farming systems that are more resilient and productive. Similarly, involving local women in the design and implementation of climate solutions ensures that these initiatives are both culturally appropriate and sustainable.

Climate change is not a distant threat – it is a present reality that disproportionately affects women and girls, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. However, with the right policies, investments, and community-based solutions, we can not only mitigate these impacts but also empower women to lead the charge in creating a more sustainable future.

It is our responsibility, as leaders, and policy advocates, to ensure that gender equality and climate justice go hand in hand. By investing in women’s economic empowerment, providing access to green technologies, and ensuring that our solutions are culturally relevant, we can accelerate progress toward a more equitable and resilient world.