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Agenda item 3

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”

Ministerial round table on “Climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes: advancing gender equality through holistic and integrated actions from global to local”

Chair’s summary

1. On 14 and 15 March 2022, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on “Climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes: advancing gender equality through holistic and integrated actions from global to local”, in the context of the 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”. Participants exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on measures taken to advance gender-responsive policies and programmes at the national and local levels as guided by global frameworks and instruments on climate change, the environment and disaster risk reduction.
2. The Minister for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities of South Africa, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, chaired the round table on day one and made introductory remarks. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Achim Steiner, summarized the key messages. Ministers and high-level officials from 22 Member States participated. The Minister for Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea, Chung Young-ai, chaired the round table on day two and made opening remarks. Ministers and high-level officials from 20 Member States participated. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mami Mizutori, summarized the key messages and made closing remarks.



Differential impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on women and girls

3. Ministers underscored the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, emphasizing the centrality of women in the conservation, use and management of natural resources and in sustainable agriculture and livelihoods. Women and girls, in particular rural, indigenous, grass-roots and elderly women and those with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. Women and girls lack access to productive resources, such as secure rights to land and property, finance and financial services, clean water and sustainable energy, sustainable infrastructure and climate-resilient agricultural technologies. In addition, women perform disproportionately more unpaid care and domestic work than men and are relegated to precarious livelihoods in the informal economy, compromising their capacity to cope and respond to climate and environmental crises.

4. Ministers recognized that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and other crises, including conflicts and terrorism, have compounded the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The pandemic has exacerbated the incidence of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and has affected the availability of critical services because Governments have reallocated resources towards strengthening economic and health-care systems.

5. Ministers also discussed the need to address climate-, environment- and disaster-induced migration and displacement, which disproportionately drive women and girls into poverty and heighten their vulnerability to gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Mainstreaming gender equality into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

6. Ministers called for the ratification and adoption of global environmental instruments that recognize women's rights and the need to integrate gender considerations into national and local plans and budgets. In addition to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Lima work programme on gender and the Glasgow Declaration all support gender mainstreaming and the capacity development of workers in gender and the environment at the national level.

7. Ministers provided positive examples of designing and implementing policies and programmes that accelerate the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Speakers identified integrating gender equality perspectives and positive masculinities into national sustainable development and environmental plans, strategies and nationally determined contributions, conducting gender analysis, and identifying gender gaps as key to formulating nationally and locally driven solutions at the intersection between gender and the environment. Some speakers said that their Governments are integrating women's sexual and reproductive health and rights into climate policies, given the strong connection between the two issues, in particular during humanitarian crises.

Enhancing women's leadership and participation in the design and implementation of policies and programmes

8. Ministers highlighted how women and girls have been on the front lines of climate action as agents of change and critical leaders in climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction, and said that they should not be perceived merely as victims of the climate and environmental emergency. The importance of strengthening the leadership and economic empowerment of women, in particular marginalized women, was emphasized. Empowering women and girls, including by closing gender gaps in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, supports the balance of power vis-à-vis men and promotes the equal participation of women in decision-making. Furthermore, economic empowerment, by boosting women's entrepreneurship and enhancing their income security, strengthens women's control over resources and enables them to make decisions on biodiversity protection and uptake of climate-resilient technologies, while increasing their opportunities to participate in the transition to green and blue economies.

9. Speakers also underscored the importance of women's equal representation in decision-making mechanisms for the design and implementation of national and local policies and programmes. The engagement of women in all areas and at all levels, in both the public and private sectors, including in enterprises and cooperatives, civil society and non-governmental organizations, is necessary for achieving sustainable development and leveraging the talents and expertise of women in the roll-out of national and global strategies for green transitions.

Approaches for integrating gender equality into climate financing

10. Ministers emphasized the importance of increased global climate financing for the most vulnerable countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States. Financing should also target grass-roots and rural women and women's organizations to strengthen their capacities to implement gender-responsive policies and programmes for addressing climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risks.

11. Ministers also acknowledged the role that improved international and local financing plays in enhancing capacity-building. Participants shared positive examples of how climate financing has supported the establishment of green schools, research centres, green energy zones, smart villages and cities, helplines, shelters, emergency funds, agricultural grants, and specialized training courses to help women to prepare for disasters.

12. Speakers also acknowledged the role of national and local financing in the effective implementation of nationally determined contributions with a gender perspective. In some instances, this relies on tailored revenue collection instruments such as carbon taxes, which can help to ensure that national allocations for climate change, the environment and disaster risk reduction benefit women and girls.

Gender-disaggregated data and statistics for climate and environmental action and disaster risk reduction

13. Ministers raised the importance of collecting, disseminating and using disaggregated data on the gender and environment nexus to understand the gendered impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, inform policies and programmes, raise awareness and foster the exchange of knowledge. They noted that women and girls need better access to education and capacity-building, particularly in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, and, as practitioners, apply this knowledge in conservation, adaptation and mitigation efforts.

14. Ministers also stressed the importance of tailoring environmental, climate change and disaster response to the specific needs and circumstances of women and girls. Policies and programmes that are informed by data and evidence about the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that women, girls and gender-diverse people face better address the different dimensions of inequality and marginalization in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

15. Ministers shared strategies for the collection, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics related to climate change and the environment and for conducting gender-responsive disaster assessments at the national and local levels. Speakers also highlighted the utility of compiling gender statistics at the sectoral level, for example, on gender and energy, and of deploying online tools to improve access to data.
