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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
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High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Summary of the panel discussion on women's rights and climate change: climate action, good practices and lessons learned

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 38/4, in which the Human Rights Council decided to hold a panel discussion on the theme of women's rights and climate change: climate action, best practices and lessons learned, during its forty-first session. The Council also requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit a summary report of the panel discussion to the Human Rights Council at its forty-second session. The present report summarizes the panel discussion on human rights and climate change that was held on 28 June 2019.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 38/4, the Human Rights Council held a panel discussion on women's rights and climate change: climate action, best practices and lessons learned on 28 June 2019.¹
2. The panel discussion was chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council. It opened with a statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which was followed by a video statement from the President of the Marshall Islands.
3. The panel provided an opportunity for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the adverse impacts of climate change on the effective enjoyment of the rights of women and girls and the promotion and protection of their rights through gender-responsive climate action.
4. The panellists included the former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson; the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Nazhat Shameem Khan; Senior Specialist on Equality and Non-Discrimination at the International Labour Organization (ILO), Martin Oelz; and member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Nahla Haidar.

II. Opening session

5. Opening the discussion, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that the climate crisis was stripping people of their rights and identity and in some cases their homes, countries and lives. Climate change had specific adverse impacts on women and girls. During extreme weather events, women were more likely to die than men, owing to differences in socioeconomic status and access to information. Pregnant and breastfeeding women were subject to food insecurity. Saltier drinking water, because of rising sea-levels, might cause premature births and maternal and new-born deaths. The economic stress induced by disasters and climate change could lead to child, early and forced marriages as a coping strategy. Intensified threats to land, water, species and livelihoods profoundly affected women, particularly those who worked the land or relied on ecosystems for their families' subsistence.
6. The High Commissioner noted that in the report submitted pursuant to Council Resolution 38/4, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had found that entrenched discrimination intensified the impacts of climate change on women, particularly when they were also subject to discrimination as members of marginalized communities (see A/HRC/41/26). Women's rights to health, food and livelihoods were among the rights affected. In 2018, more than 17 million people were internally displaced in 144 countries as a result of natural disasters and climate change, which was 60 per cent more than the number of people forced to leave their homes by conflict. Among persons displaced by climate change, women and girls were and would be especially exposed to threats of gender-based violence, including human trafficking.
7. The High Commissioner noted that in its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had pointed out that urgent action was needed to mitigate and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change on women and girls. At the same time, women also had much to contribute to climate action. Women from marginalized communities in precarious at-risk areas had intimate knowledge of the land and nature-based ecological strategies that could help minimize climate harm,

¹ The full video of the panel discussion is available from: <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-council/regular-sessions/41st-session/watch/panel-discussion-on-women's-rights-and-climate-change-15th-meeting-41st-regular-session-human-rights-council-/6054231221001>.

improve early warning and build resilience. She referred to an example from Chad, where Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, a young woman from the Mbororo Fulani community, had set up community management of natural resources with other indigenous women, mapping water and increasing women's participation in community decisions.

8. She stressed that the exclusion of half of society from shaping policies, including those responding to climate harms, made those policies likely to be less responsive to the specific harms caused and therefore less effective and potentially even counterproductive. Women and girls of diverse backgrounds should be empowered to participate as agents of change in preventing and responding to climate harms in their community.

9. The High Commissioner called on States to address the discrimination which limited women's choices and freedom, access to services and participation in society. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, if women had equal access to finance and resources, their farm yields would rise by 20 to 30 per cent, between 100 and 150 million people would no longer go hungry and carbon dioxide emissions would also be substantially reduced.

10. In closing, the High Commissioner referred to Human Rights Council resolution 40/11, in which the Council declared that "promoting respect, support and protection for the activities of human rights defenders, including women and indigenous human rights defenders," was essential to both human rights and environmental protection. She urged States to reduce the impacts of climate change on women, increase women's participation in policymaking and commit to action.

11. In her opening statement by video message, the President of the Marshall Islands emphasized that women and girls were often worst affected by climate change, while also being agents of change in the fight against climate threats. Women's central role in ensuring the well-being of their families often meant that their own well-being was sacrificed. In 2015 and 2016, the Marshall Islands had suffered a severe drought. Malnutrition had risen among children and women in the outer islands and great efforts had been needed to secure adequate supplies of food and water for families. Women had had little time to produce local handicrafts, reducing an important source of income. Short on funds and supporting their families through crises, women were often those worst off.

12. The President stressed that sound data and analysis were needed to design effective policies. A gender-responsive and human rights-based approach was integrated throughout the mitigation and adaptation policies, planning and implementation of the Marshall Islands, including the 2050 strategy, the nationally determined contribution and the electricity road map, and the forthcoming national adaptation plan. The Marshall Islands chaired the Climate Vulnerable Forum, which had an all-women group of "summit champions". Women were strongly involved in policy consultations, climate-related planning committees and in the work of key implementing agencies in the Marshall Islands.

13. In concluding, the President stressed that raising the level of ambition in climate action could lessen the future consequences for people everywhere, including women and girls. At the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the participants reaffirmed the need for enhanced national contributions by 2020, which were needed to keep the goal of 1.5°C of global warming within reach and strengthen resilience, safeguarding fundamental human rights.

III. Summary of the panel discussion

14. The President of the Human Rights Council opened the panel discussion and invited the panellists to make their statements.

A. Contributions of panellists

15. The former President of Ireland and High Commissioner for Human Rights noted how working on economic and social rights in African countries had made her aware of the gender dimensions of climate change. Women often bore the responsibility for putting food

on the table and had to go further for water or firewood in cases of aggravated drought or floods.

16. Ms. Robinson referred to the formation of the Troika+ of Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change during the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is a coalition of 40 members, including ministers and female heads of agencies, such as the President of the 16th Conference of the Parties, Patricia Espinosa; the President of the 15th Conference of the Parties, Connie Hedegaard; the President of the 17th Conference of the Parties, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane; and the former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres. The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice served as its secretariat. The work of the Troika+ of Women Leaders included ensuring that a strong decision on gender balance was adopted at the 18th Conference of the Parties. It also worked with the women’s constituency at the 18th Conference of the Parties to achieve the Lima work programme on gender and the inclusion of gender in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Another of its commitments was to bring the voices of grassroots, indigenous and young women to the table. A significant impact was made at both the 21st Conference of the Parties and at subsequent Conferences, where delegates heard directly from women coping with the effects of climate change and working to make their communities resilient.

17. The policy brief entitled “Women’s participation – an enabler of climate justice”, issued by the Mary Robinson Foundation, demonstrated the positive impacts of women’s participation in the design, planning and implementation of climate policy. The benefits of supporting women’s participation in the development of gender-responsive climate action were highlighted and it was pointed out that climate change exacerbated existing social inequalities, leaving women disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts. For example, women were more dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources threatened by climate change; they were often constrained in their response to sudden onset disasters; during natural disasters, women and children were 14 times more likely to die than men; women farmers had limited access to natural resources, information and services; and women faced additional social, economic and political barriers that limited their participation and coping capacity.

18. Ms. Robinson noted that evidence showed that the inclusion of women in leadership positions resulted in improved outcomes. Their greater participation in the governance structure of an institution protecting a community resource, such as a forest, led to better resource conservation and regeneration. The presence of women on executive committees of community forest management groups helped to improve forest quality owing to more acceptable rules of extraction and protection. However, participation alone did not guarantee gender equality. The presence of women at the decision-making table on its own was not enough to change cultural or institutional biases. To effect such change, women’s participation needed to be meaningful. That required the agency and voice of women to affect change in all areas of decision-making, capacity-building, networking and access to resources to strengthen their knowledge and confidence. In general, a conducive environment for gender equality in which men were allies and partners was needed.

19. Ms. Robinson concluded that the G20 Charter for Engagement was good news in that regard.² Women’s rights were under increasing threat and the treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, were being starved of the funding needed to enable them to fulfil their vital role. The adoption of the resolution by the Human Rights Council that had led to the panel discussion was therefore all the more important.

20. The Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva highlighted recent developments in the area of climate change and human rights. She noted a continuing reluctance to translate what was happening in international climate policy work into national policies and to accept that the

² Women’s Forum for the Economy and Society, “G20 Charter for Engagement. Taking the lead for inclusion: women leading climate action” (June 2019).

best way to approach climate policy was with the involvement and leadership of people. That reluctance was holding progress back and from the point of view of a small island State in the Pacific Ocean, not enough was being done.

21. The Permanent Representative of Fiji asked the States that believed in gender-responsive climate policy to consider whether they had acknowledged that women were disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters in their development programmes, national plans and climate policies, and were less likely to be consulted in the drawing up of climate policies. She also asked if women were consulted and whether cultural practices in those countries prevented effective consultation. Effectively consulting women could be challenging and it was important to avoid it becoming a tick-box exercise. Effective consultation and inclusive policymaking were crucial to avoiding the perpetuation of the cultural inequalities of the past. That could be used to change the way in which democratic processes were approached. The close connection between the drawing up of climate policy and democracy involved consultation, participation and gender-responsiveness.

22. The Permanent Representative of Fiji asked member States whether women were at the table in the implementation of their climate policies and development programmes. In relation to climate financing, she asked to what extent women were included in the drawing up and delivery of the projects under the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. She noted that while both funds required gender-specific action plans, not all institutions demanded this. The joint publication by the Green Climate Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) entitled “Mainstreaming gender in Green Climate Fund projects” included specific recommendations for gender mainstreaming in project development, monitoring and evaluation.

23. In closing, the Permanent Representative of Fiji asked whether women were prepared for negotiations and how many women negotiators there were in the processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The efforts of Australia in training women negotiators in the Pacific were highlighted in that regard. The Permanent Representative warned against complacency based on the existence of a gender action plan, a general recommendation and an annual resolution on climate change and human rights. The effective translation of such initiatives from the Human Rights Council to other entities remained to be seen. Work was needed on policy coherence between Geneva, New York and Bonn, and specifically by Governments, to translate gender-responsiveness in climate change to national situations.

24. In his remarks, Mr. Oelz emphasized that the risks to decent work related to climate change included economic and welfare losses, damage to health and productivity, forced labour migration and the interrelation between such risks. In sectors characterized by informality and decent work deficits, for example agriculture, the vulnerability of workers was magnified by climate impacts, such as heat stress or loss of access to resources. Such risks had particular implications for women, with over 60 per cent of working women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa engaged in agriculture, whose livelihoods depended on a stable environment.

25. Mr. Oelz noted that the shifts in employment associated with the 2°C scenario would probably create jobs in male-dominated industries. Climate change mitigation policies could decrease the share of women in total employment, unless occupational segregation was reduced. In domestic work, climate change-related impacts could heighten women’s workload and expose them to health and safety risks and productivity loss. Rights-based approaches were needed to ensure that climate action was gender-responsive. Gender equality had to be established as a specific goal and focus for climate action through a just transition. A just transition could minimize the negative effects of the transition to a low-carbon economy, advancing gender equality and decent work. Decisive climate action rooted in a just transition must be a pathway to empowerment, ensure that sectoral and occupational segregation was not perpetuated and that pay and skills gaps were eradicated. It must ensure inclusive social dialogue, improved working conditions and enhanced social protection.

26. Mr. Oelz stated that a redefinition of jobs and workplaces in the transition could improve skills and reduce health and safety risks, which were often worse for women. New labour market opportunities could facilitate the formalization of the jobs in the informal economy held by women in rural and urban areas and green sector development could address gender inequalities. In the rural economy, grassroots women, including indigenous and tribal women, played an important role in the management of natural resources, agriculture and forestry – critical sectors for both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Ensuring respect for women’s rights as part of a just transition increased the resilience of communities and economies more broadly. A just transition also strengthened climate action by women workers, entrepreneurs, care providers and custodians of traditional knowledge.

27. In closing, Mr. Oelz highlighted the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, in which the International Labour Conference had called for a transformative agenda for gender equality that ensured respect for women’s rights at work. In the Declaration, the Conference had pointed to the transformative change in the world of work driven by environmental and climate change, globalization, persistent inequalities, technological innovations and demographic shifts.

28. In her remarks, Ms. Haidar referred to general recommendation No. 37 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the first general recommendation by a human rights treaty body on the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, adopted by the Committee in March 2018. In general recommendation No. 37, the Committee had set out to give States parties guidance on how to implement disaster risk reduction measures, in particular in addressing climate change-induced disasters, which were gender-responsive, sensitive to the knowledge of indigenous peoples and respectful of human rights. Situations of crisis exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and compounded intersecting forms of discrimination that affected disadvantaged groups of women, particularly women with disabilities. Gender-based violence against women and girls was more common in humanitarian crises and could become more acute in the wake of disasters and conflicts when there was heightened physical and food insecurity, as well as impunity for perpetrators of violence.

29. Ms. Haidar said that in general recommendation No. 37, the Committee had sought to ensure that women’s human rights as enshrined in the Convention were respected, protected and fulfilled at all stages of climate action, particularly in disaster risk reduction, response, recovery and adaptation. It had also sought to contribute to coherence, accountability and the mutual reinforcement of different international agendas on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by focusing on the impact of climate disruption and disasters on women’s human rights. In general recommendation No. 37, the importance of reading the provisions of the Convention together with specific international frameworks that governed disaster risk reduction, climate change, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development had been recognized. They included the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

30. In general recommendation No. 37, the Committee had addressed a number of substantive rights covered under the Convention, including substantive equality and non-discrimination and the obligations of States parties to guarantee equality between men and women. That also included adopting participatory and gender-responsive policies related to disaster risk reduction and climate change. Other substantive rights covered included participation and empowerment, accountability and access to justice, health and social services and throughout this, the need to address gender-based violence against women and girls. In closing, Ms. Haidar stated that through general recommendation No. 37 the Committee had been able to assist States parties in measuring the steps taken in implementing gender-responsive actions to address climate change and identifying the constraints on implementation. It had also allowed for the sharing of best practices to fully respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

B. Interactive discussion

31. During the plenary discussion, interventions were made by the representatives of Angola (on behalf of the African Group), Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Canada (on behalf of the International Organization of la Francophonie), Costa Rica (on behalf of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), Croatia (on behalf of Austria and Slovenia), Denmark (youth delegate), Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia (on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), the European Union, Fiji (one statement on behalf of the Geneva Pledge Group and one on behalf of 12 Pacific small island developing States, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), Ireland, Madagascar, Marshall Islands (on behalf of a group of small island States, Fiji, Haiti, Marshall Islands and Singapore), Nauru (on behalf of the 15 beneficiary States of the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council, Bahamas, Comoros, Dominica, Djibouti, Fiji, the Gambia, Kiribati, Madagascar, Nauru, Nepal, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Somalia and Vanuatu), Trinidad and Tobago (on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community), Thailand (on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Viet Nam.

32. Representatives of the following international and non-governmental organizations also spoke: the Australian Human Rights Commission, Conectas – Direitos Humanos, Franciscans International (in a joint statement with Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers) and the Lutheran World Federation), the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in a joint statement with Franciscans International, FIAN International, International Movement ATD Fourth World and International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific), Institut International de L'Écologie Industrielle et de L'Économie Verte, the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations and UN-Women.

33. Statements by the following member States were not delivered, owing to lack of time: Australia, China, France, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Maldives, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain and Timor-Leste.³

34. For the same reason, statements by the following organizations were not delivered: Aid Organization, the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (in a joint statement with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, the Beyond Beijing Committee, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), SERAC-Bangladesh, Marie Stopes International and Rutgers), Association of World Citizens, International Lesbian and Gay Federation-Europe (in a joint statement with the International Lesbian and Gay Association and the Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights), the International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, International-Lawyers.Org, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, Kayan - Feminist Organization, Maat Foundation for Peace, Development and Human Rights, Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Cooperation Economique Internationale, Partners For Transparency, Plan International Inc., Sikh Human Rights Group and Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik.⁴

35. Speakers agreed that the negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affected the enjoyment of a broad range of human rights by women and girls. Those rights included the right to life, health, decent work, food, water and sanitation, education, housing, development and culture. Sea-level rise, droughts, flooding, more frequent

³ Statements received by the Secretariat are available on the Human Rights Council extranet.

⁴ Ibid.

extreme weather events and desertification were identified as particular threats which impacted women and girls more severely.

36. Climate change had particularly negative implications for the livelihoods of women. Through less frequent rainfall and steadily increasing temperatures, it adversely affected the agricultural sector, in which women played a key role, inter alia by planting, gathering and selling food. That in turn threatened food production and nutrition, with particular impacts on rural women and children.

37. Several speakers underlined the role of women as agents of change due to their experience and knowledge of the environment. Their skills could be used in climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and reduction, and post-disaster management strategies. Women's knowledge related to natural resources management was, in fact, demonstrated to be indispensable in combating climate change. Increased efforts were needed to include and amplify the voices of indigenous women and their participation in decision-making about, planning for and implementation of climate action.

38. Special attention should be paid to how disasters exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities. Enhanced efforts were needed to prevent gender-based violence, including in the context of disasters, especially for women and girls subject to multiple discrimination. The need for gender-responsive strategies to respond to the climate change crisis and for gender-mainstreaming in disaster management plans and policies was therefore underscored. Collection of disaggregated data related to gender and gender-based assessments of programmes and projects that could inform climate policy-making was essential.

39. Small island States were particularly vulnerable to the social, cultural and economic impacts of climate change. A gender-responsive approach was called for in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national environmental policies. That was considered essential for addressing the negative effects of climate change on those communities, in particular its disproportionate effect on women and girls.

40. Speakers called for women's empowerment through, inter alia, resource mobilization, education and awareness-raising, as well as enhanced public policies. Capacity-building and the integration of gender perspectives into climate-smart agriculture initiatives, climate-smart urban development and disaster preparedness were some of the measures mentioned in that regard. Increased empowerment could also be attained by improving women's access to modern technology. Climate change threatened natural resources, including access to potable water. Technology could help to address such challenges, which would ease the burden on women and girls, inter alia in relation to procuring potable water.

41. To ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, some speakers called for increased international cooperation and assistance to build the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls. Climate change projects that included gender-responsive components should be prioritized. Speakers were committed to supporting and promoting the human rights of women and girls, including by developing their resilience and capacity for adaptation to the challenges imposed by climate change. The Security Council could take a systemic approach in considering climate change as a cause of and a multiplier in conflict situations.

42. In its special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted that climate-resilient development pathways must promote equity and participation in decision-making to enable the transformational adaptation needed for a 1.5°C warmer world.⁵ A rights-based approach was needed, inter alia, to integrate gender equality considerations into the nationally determined contributions of States and to implement the gender action plan of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Equal participation of women in decision-making was essential for effective climate action.

⁵ Available from www.ipcc.ch/sr15/.

43. Illustrative practices shared included the “Solar Mamas” project, whereby women in the Pacific had been given the opportunity to study solar engineering, resulting in women and communities being in charge of their own development. The role of Pacific women in ocean governance, in particular in marine protected areas and community-based marine resource management systems, addressed both food security issues and ocean health issues. In southern Bangladesh, women had helped their communities to purify saline water. Dominica had prioritized violence prevention in disaster response and early recovery, including strengthened referral systems, capacity-building of community leaders and disaster committees and continued awareness-raising efforts.

44. In India, meaningful representation of women in forest governance was targeted through compulsory representation in joint forest management committees, eco-development committees and Panchayati Raj institutions. Women’s expertise in forest management and conservation was leveraged as a measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the Forest Carbon Partnership facility project in Guyana. In Botswana, adaptation and distribution of drought-resistant seeds supported smart and sustainable agriculture. The course run by the University of the West Indies entitled “Introduction to climate change and gender mainstreaming” provided an introduction to the impacts of climate change on small island developing States, in addition to its gendered impacts.

45. Speakers raised a number of specific questions for the panellists. These included: (a) What would be the first steps in promoting the full participation of women and girls in public life and how could the participation of young people representing diverse perspectives in decision-making processes related to climate change at all levels be increased? (b) How could the international community ensure that women were able to get access to funds, such as the Green Climate Fund and other resources, to enhance their leadership and meaningful participation in climate action? (c) What were the priority recommendations to strengthen cooperation between regions to promote and protect the rights of women and girls within the climate change framework? (d) How could States encourage and support the inclusion of women’s grassroots organizations in climate action? and (e) What proactive measures could small island developing States introduce to strengthen women’s resilience and protect their rights in a disaster context?

C. Responses and concluding remarks

46. After the interactive discussion, the President of the Human Rights Council gave panellists the opportunity to make concluding remarks.

47. Ms. Robinson first responded to the question about practical steps to promote the full participation of women and girls in public life in the context of climate change. She noted that either individual small island developing States or the Climate Vulnerability Forum could draw up funding proposals to focus on capacity-building and training for women and girls. She also noted the need for more opportunities and courses, such as the climate change and gender mainstreaming course offered by the University of the West Indies.

48. Ms. Robinson stressed that in order to accentuate the voices of young people in practical ways, concerted efforts were needed to ensure that the coalitions preparing for the Climate Action Summit taking place in New York in September 2019 were intergenerational and gender-responsive in their approach to climate action. Gender-responsive climate action had to be a horizontal issue throughout the various coalitions. In order to be reflected at the Climate Summit, this would also have to be done at the preparatory meeting for the Climate Action Summit to be held in Abu Dhabi from 30 June to 1 July 2019.

49. In concluding, Ms. Robinson responded to the question concerning recommendations for regions to cooperate better, particularly in relation to financing. She referred to goal 5 of the G20 Charter for Engagement which related to the financing and development of gender-responsive and scalable social, economic and technological climate solutions. It called for systemic change towards sustainable and inclusive production and consumption models, especially in the financial and energy sectors, to channel resources

and opportunities and scale up gender-conscious climate actions to achieve the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

50. The Permanent Representative of Fiji stressed that in building gender-responsive climate policies nationally, understanding the lived experiences of women should not lead down the path of stereotyping. Not every woman was affected in the same way. Climate policies must be built around understanding the barriers to the equal participation of women. Understanding this was a challenge for Governments, including local governments. The Permanent Representative referred to the experiences presented at the Human Rights Council, including the good practices shared by Botswana, Dominica and Vanuatu during the panel discussion, noting however that one size did not fit all.

51. Listening to and amplifying the voices of women at a public level and making women visible in decision-making, allowed them to serve as role models and thereby enhanced the participation of women in public life, including in relation to climate change. That was why the empowerment of young women was so important. In concluding, the Permanent Representative of Fiji noted the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, in which effective consultations with indigenous women and women from local communities were called for. By empowering such women, the Framework had made a real difference to the way in which countries responded to disasters.

52. Mr. Oelz noted that the panel discussion would enhance the coherence and collaboration in the United Nations system on these issues. The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) had a specific focus on gender equality, participation and consultation, and there was a need for further ratification of this instrument. Building effective consultation and participation mechanisms was a challenge. The next challenge was how to make those mechanisms accessible for women. That required resources and exchange of experiences. In July 2019, ILO would be holding a Global Forum on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, to which the United Nations mechanisms on the rights of indigenous peoples were invited. The question was how to build mechanisms for consultation and participation that were inclusive and had a real impact on decision-making, including with regard to climate change action.

53. Ms. Haidar invited States to look back at the different international frameworks that had been discussed and described the need for developing further linkages. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development remained extremely relevant and addressed the issues of small island developing States. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was a comprehensive policy framework, under which plans of action could be elaborated and adapted to different national contexts. That also applied to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. There was also the possibility of increasing efforts across countries and regions and the Geneva Pledge Group was an example of this. She also recommended the compilation and recording of best practices of technical and non-technical solutions, as well as transformative solutions.

54. In concluding, Ms. Haidar called on States to continue reducing emissions, noting that emission reductions were crucial to any subsequent action, including the empowerment of women. The Sustainable Development Goals also provided a good opportunity to make linkages. The advocacy and commitment of groups, such as the Women and Gender Constituency, had tremendously influenced the work relating to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Such grassroots organizations were contributing to the development of international policy. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had learned a lot from civil society groups who brought information from rural areas and from impacted regions. Finally, giving women access to information, such as accessing weather forecasts through mobile phones, was critical to improved preparation and management.

55. Following the concluding remarks, the President of the Human Rights Council closed the discussion.

IV. Recommendations

56. During the discussion, speakers made a number of recommendations. Generally, they called for a gender-responsive, rights-based approach to climate action and emphasized the need to recognize the role of women as agents of change. They recommended that the full, equal and meaningful participation of all women in decision-making on climate change be made a priority. They recognized that women's environmental knowledge and skills were crucial to successful climate action and should inform and guide climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

57. Efforts should be made to implement fully the commitments of States to rights-based, gender-responsive climate action, including in existing international conventions, frameworks and agendas. Specific references were made to relevant commitments made in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, general recommendation No. 37 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the gender-responsive environmental action and training initiative of the Group of 7 and the G20 Charter for Engagement. Speakers recommended focusing on synergies between these instruments, in order to facilitate the elaboration of tools, including plans of action, for the implementation of gender-responsive, rights-based climate action at the national level, ultimately leading to more effective climate action that benefited both people and the planet.

58. Since small island States were particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, a gender-responsive approach should be applied in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national environmental policies to address the negative effects of climate change, both within those countries and elsewhere. Collection of disaggregated data and gender-based assessments of climate projects and programmes was recommended to inform and guide climate policymaking.

59. Speakers called for increased international cooperation and assistance in order to build the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls, including through strengthened cooperation on gender mainstreaming in disaster management plans and policies. International climate financing mechanisms were encouraged to prioritize funding climate change projects that were gender-responsive and would empower women.

60. Women's access to modern technology should be enhanced as part of the efforts to increase their empowerment. Speakers called for the integration of gender perspectives in climate-smart agriculture initiatives, climate-smart urban development and disaster preparedness. In the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, the International Labour Conference had called for a transformative agenda for gender equality, providing a basis for ensuring respect for women's rights as part of a just transition.

61. Practical steps to promote the full participation of women and girls in public life and decision-making in the context of climate change should include taking measures to provide awareness-raising and capacity-building training opportunities and courses. Illustrative practices included the course offered by the University of the West Indies and the efforts undertaken by Australia to train women negotiators in the Pacific; such initiatives should be multiplied.

62. States were called upon to intensify their efforts to translate international climate policies into national policies. Governments should adopt and implement gender-responsive domestic climate policies in order to achieve increased policy coherence. There was also a need to better link the work of the Human Rights Council on climate change with other relevant United Nations processes. The Security Council could take a systemic approach in considering climate change as a cause of and a multiplier in conflict situations.

63. Concerted efforts were needed to ensure that the coalitions preparing for the Climate Action Summit in September 2019 were intergenerational and gender-responsive in their approach to climate action. These issues needed to be addressed at the preparatory meeting for the Climate Action Summit to be held in Abu Dhabi from 30 June to 1 July, in order to ensure that they were adequately integrated at the Summit in September.
