



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

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 Sonke Gender Justice Network, 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**

We, Sonke Gender Justice, working alongside MenEngage Alliance, come together on this occasion of the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), as the priority theme of “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs”, is being centered for global debate.

We welcome this discussion being held for the first time at CSW, noting that climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing the world today, with immediate impacts already being felt around the globe. We stand firmly behind the leadership of feminist climate activists, including youth climate movements, such as Fridays for Future, in sounding the call for mass intersectional social movements that challenge the dominant economic, political and social systems perpetuating climate change. We stand by their calls for a fundamental reorganization of the ways in which we consume, work, and live our lives.

We urge governments today to demonstrably increase their commitment to the goals of the Paris Agreement, and to end all gender injustice once and for all, everywhere. We urge governments today to demonstrably increase their commitment to systemic transformation, and to center the voices, the leadership and the agendas of feminist, climate and human rights defenders and movements, everywhere.

### **Gender and climate**

The gender dimensions of the climate crisis are well documented. Analyses from eco-feminist theories on climate change have long drawn links to the roots of this crisis in histories of colonial resource extraction and capitalist industrial production, which themselves are shaped and legitimated by patriarchal logics of domination and exploitation.

They have also pointed to how the impacts have been and will be most devastating on the most marginalized. A feminist understanding of the climate catastrophe highlights the intersectional nature of the gender inequalities unleashed as a result, including increased violence against women, girls and gender non-conforming individuals.

The degradation of livelihoods and biospheres produced by climate change is also fueling an unprecedented displacement and movement of people, both within and between countries and across continents. As many studies have shown, women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people face many forms of sexual violence and exploitation at all stages of their journeys as migrants and refugees, from state officials, military personnel and criminal gangs alike.

As well, women and girls from affected communities, on the margins of the margins, have been in the forefront of struggles to defend their rights in the face of threats posed by corporate and state elites. Many such activists and human rights defenders continue to experience intimidation and reprisals, some which has resulted in physical harm, injury and or loss of life.

### **The Link Between Patriarchy and Climate Change**

Patriarchy is harmful to our climate and our livelihoods. Indeed, experts have highlighted the need to better understand how harmful ideals of masculinity that include the need to have power over others – ‘others’ being understood as women, other men, children and nature – perpetuate environmental degradation. Focusing on the deconstruction and transformation of masculinities and other gender identities

will strengthen future and existing solutions for climate change adaptation and resilience.

As well, by working together, men, women and gender diverse people can challenge the patriarchal systems that perpetuate climate change to leave behind a more gender just and ecologically sustainable society for future generations. Such solutions are not the only answer, but an important opportunity to strengthen the call for social, economic and environmental justice for all.

A gender transformative response to climate change must not only be sensitive to gender differences in roles and needs but must also address social and economic power imbalances between and among women and men. It is not the only key piece to shift action on climate change. A major challenge of climate change is, in fact, that there are no easy single-step solutions.

Working with men and women through gender transformative approaches to respond to climate change is, therefore, not presented here as the only answer, but a valuable opportunity to synchronize different voices towards the shared concern of addressing harmful climate change. It is part of the bigger system change needed. There is also a great need for policymakers to take into account and address gender injustice in understanding the causes and impacts of climate change, and in responding to it.

### **A call for accountability in work with men and boys on climate and gender justice**

Accountability to feminist, women's rights, LGBTQIA+, youth, climate and other social justice movements and Most Affected People and Areas (MAPAs), must be placed firmly at the center of all efforts to engage men and boys and to transform masculinities to ensure they make a real contribution to gender equality. A strong commitment is needed to ensure that these efforts do not detract from vital women-led initiatives, or compete for resources, such as funding or spaces, that are increasingly shrinking particularly for women's rights and feminist groups. We therefore advocate for efforts to engage men and boys that:

- Seek to critically reflect on and transform social norms and institutional practices that create and reinforce gender inequalities.
- Embrace a women's rights perspective and intersectional feminist analysis, including by placing inequalities in privilege and power that result from patriarchy and other forms of oppression – at their center.
- Promote and respect the fundamental human rights and bodily autonomy of all women, men and people of diverse gender identities.
- Are carried out in consultation, partnership with and fully accountable to women's rights and other social justice movements and the most marginalized groups in society.
- Work towards the realization of feminist systems transformation

### **Call to Action**

We stand firmly behind the principles and advocacy asks laid out by Friday's for Future for "No More Empty Promises" including for:

- A moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects. End all investments in the industry
- Annual and binding carbon budgets
- Economic, racial and gender justice in climate policy

- Protect and safeguard democracy. Citizen participation in climate decision making

- Making ecocide an international crime

At this critical moment we also urge all leaders around the world to:

- Advocate to amplify the voices of youth, women, girls, gender-non conforming persons and other marginalized groups on the climate change agenda;
- Promote the inclusion of marginalized groups including all women, girls and gender diverse individuals in decision-making processes around climate change decisions, and initiatives aimed to alleviate the effects of climate change especially for women and girls from the MAPAs.
- Strengthen the participation of girls and women, including indigenous women, grassroots groups, and humanitarian responders, in climate change policymaking at all levels and in all capacities – adaptation, mitigation, and resource management.
- Call to analyse the existing rationale and put together key areas for further exploration in understanding boys’ and men’s multiple roles in climate change by conducting an analysis of masculinities in patriarchal systems that play a contributing role in perpetuating climate change and by presenting key areas for further exploration.
- Hold those in power to account, most of whom continue to be white men, including those in power over the most polluting industries and sectors.
- Highlight, through advocacy and research, the gender gaps in science and technological innovation for climate change mitigation
- Clarify that the climate crisis is not only a matter of CO2 emissions that can be solved by green technical innovations, but it is rooted in patriarchy and therefore to a large extent a social issue that requires that we change how we view the world and ourselves and our roles as humans in general and as men in particular.
- Promote gender-transformative approaches in agriculture, aquaculture and climate change resilience programs;
- Develop key messages on what patriarchy, gender norms, masculinities and/or engaging men and boys have to do with climate change and strategize how to unite this approach with existing work with men and boys as allies for gender justice;
- Serve as allies and promote allyship and cross-movement building, with the men, masculinities and gender justice field with other economic justice movements that also work on climate justice.
- Stand against hate speech and violence towards climate activists.
- Promote gender-responsive approaches to climate financing. Fulfil enough climate finance investments empowering women & girls to address the climate emergency and unlock economic and social benefits for whole communities. Invest in girls’ and women’s sexual reproductive health and rights, especially family planning and contraception.