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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”

Interactive expert panel on 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

Chair’s summary

1. On 22 March 2022, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive expert panel discussion on “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”. Participants exchanged views, experiences and insights on the topic, with an emphasis on presenting the interlinkages between the sciences, climate change, gender equality and human rights. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Māris Burbergs (Latvia), chaired the discussion.

2. The members of the expert panel were the Executive Director of Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Noelene Nabulivou; the former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, Lorena Aguilar; the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, David R. Boyd; and the Founder and President of the Green Hope Foundation, Kehkashan Basu. Representatives of eight Member States and eight civil society organizations engaged in the discussion with the panel members.

Context

3. The effects of climate change are disproportionately borne by women and girls globally, and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement are in jeopardy because climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate existing inequalities. Climate change, along with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, is increasing women’s unpaid care burden, gender-based violence and insecurity in public life. This is coupled with



women's decreased job protections, loss of land and increased poverty, all of which have an impact on the full enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights.

4. Closing the gender gap requires breaking up knowledge silos while recognizing and supporting the shift in the climate change discourse towards cross-cutting and intersectional dialogues, which challenge the conventional ways of addressing climate change and the systematic perspectives driven by traditional gender stereotypes and social norms. Advancing gender equality in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction also requires strengthening interdisciplinary research, science and evidence-based policymaking and programming.

Bridging the knowledge and gender gap to advance gender equality in the context of climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction

5. Working collaboratively across the social and physical sciences is necessary to broaden horizons and address the pressing climate crisis. A human rights-based approach to addressing climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction should be taken across all climate-related disciplines, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics, women's economic empowerment within the green economy, the energy transition and environmental studies.

6. The use of science to deliver key metrics for evidence-based policy decisions driven by and for women would bolster efforts against climate change. Research that combines both statistics on and narratives of the impact on people through storytelling can be useful to galvanize action. Research demonstrates that the participation of women in science and research is critical to building a resilient future and that women's roles in finding solutions to climate-related challenges must be supported. It is vital to recognize women as agents of change, given that they are at the forefront of climate adaptation and mitigation. Women in rural areas, for example, are innovating by engaging in climate-smart agricultural practices.

7. Prioritizing the full, effective and meaningful participation of women is required to address the climate crisis through a gender lens. Women in all their diversity must be included in decision-making and policy dialogues so that their specific expertise, experiences and needs are taken into account. It is only when women's voices and capacities are harnessed that innovation and transformational change can occur. Therefore, putting women in leadership positions is necessary to fulfil human rights commitments and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to climate change and across the entire spectrum of the 2030 Agenda.

8. Women in vulnerable situations, especially women in rural areas, women with disabilities and indigenous women, are often excluded from decision-making bodies, relief responses and recovery efforts. Women with disabilities, for example, are less able to gain access to emergency support during crises, but are often neglected in responses to climate change. Without the full realization of their human rights, women and girls, in particular those subjected to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, lack the tools to actively engage in climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives. Furthermore, the financial resources necessary to build climate resilience do not adequately target or reach groups in vulnerable situations.

9. The use of enforcement mechanisms within existing frameworks and initiatives is necessary to meaningfully combat the climate crisis, namely through the production and use of gender-disaggregated data, to hold actors accountable for their responsibilities and commitment to achieving gender equality and combating climate change. Notably, national, regional and international human rights processes, institutions and mechanisms provide appropriate accountability mechanisms. Prioritizing access by women and girls to justice and human rights has proven to be

a catalyst for transformative change. Lacking access to human rights exacerbates existing inequalities, which contradicts the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The way forward

10. Addressing climate change requires an intersectional approach. It is necessary to leverage knowledge from women in all their diversity – including women in rural areas, such as farmers, and indigenous women – in policy dialogues. Developing women’s leadership would enable the systemic integration of more diverse viewpoints into policy and programmes. It is similarly important to value intersectional feminist research and analysis, such as the integration of the considerations of women in rural areas and women with disabilities into climate research.

11. To leverage women’s capacities, Governments and other actors can adopt legislation that requires all research to include gender equality plans and increase appointments of women in scientific research. Furthermore, Governments and non-governmental organizations should collect disaggregated data to uncover gaps and biases in policy and scientific dialogues, policies and programmes, collaborating in both the collection and use of such data.

12. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution [48/13](#), adopted in 2021, recognized the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. To realize that right, climate action needs to receive the required financial resources, similar to the COVID-19 emergency response supported globally in the past two years.
