African Union

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UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW) 66
AFRICA PRE-CSW66 CONSULTATIONS
Ministerial Segment, Monday 28th February 2022.

BACKGROUND

The sixty-sixth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) will be held in New York from **14th to 25th March 2022**. The **CSW 66** is being organized under 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**, and the Review theme: **women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.** In addition to the primary and review themes, CSW 66 will also focus on **one emerging issue, namely 'harnessing COVID-19 recovery for gender equality and a sustainable future'**.

The CSW remains instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission takes a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), among others.

The BDPfA identifies 12 critical areas to unlock gender equality and women's empowerment, including "women and the environment". In 2015, Member States also adopted the Sustainable Development Goal 13: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts", cross-cutting with all other SDGs, including SDG5 on gender equality.

The empowerment of women can only occur when women have opportunities to participate in all aspects of development. The notion of participation is located within the overarching framework of democracy, human rights, and gender equality. Central to participation is the notion of '*active* and *meaningful inclusion*' of women as full citizens and as decision makers in public and private sector institutions and in political, economic and peace processes. Larger number of women in office can influence gender-responsive public policies and institutional practices and greater de facto equality in access to the benefits of development. Women have a right to be equally represented and consulted in decision-making, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As well as, but not limited to, the right to own, control and access natural resources, to equal share of economic opportunities and to fair and just land rights, and related. The quality, relevance and effectiveness of policymaking and policy implementation increases when power is shared. Women's representation in parliament in Eastern and Southern Africa region is 32%, higher than other regions, but still below the parity line for equitable participation in decision making. Women's organizations are at the forefront of community responses in many countries but struggle because of diminishing funding, increased demands for services, restricted movement and shrinking civic space, women's rights organizations only receive 0.13% of the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) and 0.4% of all gender related aid[1]. Gender inequalities persist at several levels. Resources and factors of production are unequally distributed. Women are far from being fairly treated in public services, and their limited access to landownership, and other productive resources, combined with the pervasive levels of threats and experiences of violence reduce their ability to undertake economic and/or political activities, including decision making, and enjoy their rights to the fullest.

[1] AWID, 2021. p 16 https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/AWID_Research_WITM_Brief_ENG.pdf)

Challenges and Opportunities for Addressing Gender Inequality Through Climate Action and Disasters Risk Reduction

Although **Africa** contributes the least to global warming globally, it **remains the most vulnerable continent suffering severe consequences of climate change.** The whole of Africa produces approximately 920,000t each year, less than 4% of the global production. The 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change in the world are all in sub-Saharan Africa and African countries make up 70% of the 50 most vulnerable countries[2]. Climate change is increasing the occurrence of extreme weather events and its related disasters, increasingly affecting rainfall patterns, accelerating desertification and land degradation, and affecting productivity, peoples' physical security and overall well-being, livelihoods, increasing food insecurity, poverty, conflict over natural resources, as well as migration and forced displacement. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 63% of the global poor population in 2017 and 83% of the poor lived in rural areas[3]. The poor in Sub-Saharan Africa also suffer from greater exposure (and vulnerability) to climate change risks such as flooding, droughts and higher temperatures[4]. In certain areas of the region such as the Sahel, average temperatures have increased by 1°C in the last 50 years, twice as much as the global average. Recent estimates suggest that as much as 40-60% of land in the Sahel is seriously degraded. Similarly, the East and Horn of Africa have been severely impacted by droughts and floods, which have been further complicated by desert locust outbreaks. Somalia and Ethiopia faced the worst locust outbreak in 25 years, while Kenya experienced the worst outbreak in 75 years[5]. Extreme poverty and food insecurity create internal displacement and 60%[6] of all internal displacements in the East and Horn of Africa region during 2019 were due to climate-induced disasters[7]. The Southern African region is likewise prone to drought, floods and cyclones. These climate and environmentally induced emergencies lead to significant displacement[8]. In this context, women and girls face heightened vulnerability to violence, with over 70% of women and girls in humanitarian settings experiencing gender-based violence[9].

The dependence of the African continent on natural resources and rain-fed agriculture has huge implications for climate action and disaster risk reduction. The agriculture sector, which is highly sensitive to climate change and variability, supports the livelihoods of 70% of Africans and contribute to about 30% of the continents GDP[10]. The high dependence on agriculture also means that women are highly exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disasters as women represent 90% of employment in the agriculture sector in many African countries[11].With women and men having differential access to

[2] *The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Vulnerability Index, 2019.* A country's ND-GAIN index score is composed of a Vulnerability score and a Readiness score. Vulnerability measures a country's exposure, sensitivity and ability to adapt to the negative impact of climate change. ND-GAIN measures the overall vulnerability by considering vulnerability in six life-supporting sectors – food, water, health, ecosystem service, human habitat and infrastructure.
[3] World Bank; https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/where-extreme-poor-live
[4] ibid
[5] Relief web
[6] Source: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and UNHCR
[7] State of the Climate in Africa 2019, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa
[8] Quantifying environmental migration poses methodological challenges given the multiple drivers. There is a lack of data collection standards. There is some quantitative data on population displacement caused by environmental changes within countries, and to a lesser degree across borders. Most existing data due on migration due to slow-onset environmental processes, such as drought or sea-level rise, are qualitative and based on case studies.
[9] OCHA. 2022. Global Humanitarian Overview.
[10] UNDP Overview of linkages between gender and climate change
[11] UN WOMEN, Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change

productive resources, other inequalities can follow, in access to improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tools and equipment, labour, credit, and other factors of production[12].

Women and girls in Africa play a critical role in climate change adaptation and mitigation through their role in key sectors such as agriculture or through sustainable management of natural resources and conservation of ecosystems - including those with important carbon sequestration functions (forests, mangroves, etc.). Women in rural, indigenous contexts play a central role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable food and agricultural systems as farmers, producers and knowledge holders[13].

Young women are the most vulnerably employed including in the agriculture sector. Africa's population is the youngest in the world with approximately 75% of the population under the age of 35 and approximately 50% of these being young women[14]. Young women are more likely than young men to be out of employment, education, or training. Young women with disabilities are even more likely to face barriers to accessing basic education and employment opportunities. Young women are also more likely to be looking for work, and more likely to be under-employed or in vulnerable employment and at risk of sexual exploitation to meet basic needs[15].

Projections suggest that the youth cohort in sub-Saharan Africa will continue to grow and will represent almost 30% of the world's youth by 2050, up from 18% in 2020 and almost 22% in 2030. But political instability, labor market challenges and limited space for political and civic participation have led to increasing isolation of youth in societies[16].

Young women need safe spaces to engage with each other and share ideas for their future, thereby effectively contributing to their own livelihoods, the development of a country as well as ensuring peace and social cohesion. Increasing job and income generating opportunities for the youth in climate change prone settings is a way to assure respect, self-worth, and self-confidence. Young women need more employment opportunities and the creation of safe spaces for their innovative ideas. The need for a support system for micro and small business activities in rural and semi urban areas that improve agricultural value chains and develop 'green' or climate smart' business is fundamental in a changing world.

At the same time, women are disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters. Women make up 80% of people displaced for environmental reasons in the world[17], and are 14% more likely to die in the event of natural disasters[18]. Similarly, women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work implies that they are commonly responsible for fetching water or collecting cooking fuel. With the increased climate incidences, women need to invest more time to meet the families' needs, for example, because of droughts women may need to walk further to fetch water exposing them to increased time poverty but also to further risks of gender-based violence. Africa's reliance on agriculture makes it extremely vulnerable to climate change and women's dependence on agriculture and natural resources for their productive and unpaid care activities, make them particularly impacted by climate fluctuations. Climate-change-triggered shocks overlap with political, economic, social and health shocks in some sub-regions such as the Sahel, the Lake Chad basin, or the Horn of Africa. This is straining the resilience of communities' resilience, in general, and of women

12 The cost of Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity
[13] ILOSTAT, accessed Feb 02, 2022
[14]African Union Commission, 2019. Status of African Youth Report. Accessed at https://au.int/en/documents/20191204/africas-future-youth-and-data-defining-their-lives

16 UN World Youth Report 2020
[17] UNDP Linkages Gender and CC Policy Brief 1-WEB (1).pdf
[18] In focus: Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 13: Climate action | UN Women

and girls in particular.

These disproportionate impacts and risks are the result of existing gender inequalities and discriminatory gender norms. Situations of vulnerability and risk are therefore not simply created from exposure to climate and environment hazards or disasters but include a whole set of economically and socially created drivers that shape the resilience of women and girls in the region, their prospects for recovery and contribute to their marginalization or exclusion from policy processes and decision-making spaces.

Gender inequalities that influence women's ability to cope with the effects of climate change in Africa include:

- Women's lack of rights, access, and control of resources, particularly land, forests, waterways, ocean and marine resources, which weaken their adaptive capacities, increase their insecurity, limit their livelihood opportunities and limit their decision-making power on the use of such resources. **It is proven that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to set aside protected land areas as well as addressing the adverse impacts of climate change[19].**
- Women's dependence on the informal economy for employment, characterized by lack of labour rights and social protection as well as myriad occupational hazards, leading to increased risks of economic insecurity and ill health. **The proportion of women with comprehensive social protection legal coverage is around 3.9%, compared to 10.8% of men in Africa[20].**
- Poor and hazardous housing and lack of sustainable water, sanitation and energy infrastructure and services, particularly in informal settlements, can create vulnerable situations for home-based workers and stay-at-home residents, often predominantly women. **In over 70 % of households where water must be fetched women and girls are the primary water carriers. Around 85.7% of households in sub-Saharan Africa rely on unclean fuels for cooking and heating, with devastating effects on the health of women and children, who usually spend more time in the home**[21].
- Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work and the associated time constraints that intensify in areas facing impacts of climate change, making recovery more difficult. **In Africa, women spend 3.4 times more in unpaid care work than their male counterparts**[22].
- High prevalence of violence against women and girls (with 33% of women aged 15-49 in Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime)[23] and lack of access to justice, which worsen in climate and environmental crises. **In many African countries, plural legal systems result in discriminatory practices including in control and utilization of land and other productive resources, despite the adoption of laws promoting equality between men and women**[24].

Transition to the green economy will create opportunities in the form of green jobs in new sectors. The extent of the climate emergency will force countries in Africa to transition towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption in the next decades. This can bring new opportunities for women

[19] UNDP Overview of linkages between gender and climate change
[20] UN WOMEN Putting gender equality at the center of social protection strategies in sub-Saharan Africa: how far have we come?
[21] UN WOMEN Turning processes into actions
[22] ILO calls for urgent action to prevent looming global crisis, 28 June 2018
[23] Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021
[24] UN Women, 2021. Multi-Country Study on Access to Justice for Women and Girls in East and Southern Africa.

and girls in the region. In sub-Saharan Africa, renewable energy, sustainable construction and infrastructure, and the circular economy will generate millions of new jobs in the coming years. While women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa are well positioned to access certain sectors that will create green jobs such as agriculture, waste management or tourism, they find large barriers to enter others such as renewable energy or sustainable construction where the bulk of the green jobs, or those with better conditions, will be created[25]. Whether women access those opportunities or are left out of the benefits associated with the green transition in the region will depend on the policies implemented by governments in the short term[26].

Agriculture deserves particular attention in the region in the context of the discussion of climate action and gender equality. It is a major sector in the region in terms of contribution to GDP, employment generation and in particular contribution to women's employment. Agriculture is also a significant contributor to climate change and biodiversity loss. A renewed focus is emerging on sustainable agricultural and food systems and practices. **Gender-responsive climate-resilient agriculture** aims to address the different constraints faced by women and men farmers in a changing climate and to reduce gender inequalities while ensuring equal benefits from interventions and practices. Aligned strategies promote gender-responsive **sustainable energy** infrastructure and technology to mitigate and to adapt to climate change, such as solar-powered irrigation pumps or decentralized renewable-energy micro-grids in areas that national electricity grids do not reach.

National laws, policies and strategic frameworks for climate, environment, and disaster risk reduction continue to fail to recognize and integrate women's and girls' needs systematically. Frequent lack of gender equality commitments in, and gender-responsive implementation and financing of, national laws and policies on climate, environment and disaster risk management; and institutional barriers that prevent cross-sectoral integration between gender equality, disaster risk reduction, climate action and environmental management and development planning, all hinder gender equality and women's empowerment.

Against the above backdrop and building on past experiences in undertaking pre-CSW consultations, the Africa Union Commission (AUC), Women, Gender and Youth Directorate in partnership with United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment (UN Women) and the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) proposes to convene the Africa Pre-CSW66 virtual consultations **on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd of February, 2022** for technical experts which will then be followed by Africa Ministerial consultation on **28th of February 2022.**

The Africa Pre-CSW consultation will focus on the global 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."** In addition, the sessions will assess progress on the implementation of the review theme namely *''Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work''* and priorities agreed at the sixty-first session of the CSW (CSW61).

OBJECTIVES

The general purpose of the Africa pre-CSW 66th Technical Experts consultation is:

- To take stock of the progress made in Africa regarding **gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes**, reflecting on the institutional (formal- policy, norms and standards

[25] UN WOWEN Green Jobs Report EN-FR | UN Women Africa
[26] UN WOWEN Green Jobs Report EN-FR | UN Women Africa

levels), and societal levels (values/norms), the main challenges and obstacles and agree on the Africa regional key messages and key priority actions.

The specific objectives for the Technical Experts (**21 – 22 February 2022**) will be as follows:

- To analyze the links between climate change and DRR in terms of structural drivers and impacts including migration from a women's resilience-building perspective.
- To highlight good, scalable policy and programmatic practices on resilience-building to climate change, DRR and its impacts, especially migration for survival.
- Reach consensus on key messages and discuss to inform discussions prior to and during the CSW66 in New York.

The specific objectives for the Ministerial Meeting (**28th February 2022**) will be as follows:

- Review /deliberate on and adopt the Common Africa Position (CAP) for CSW66 as preparedand presented by the Technical Experts.
- Discuss and agree on modalities for CSW66 including reaching agreement on how Africa will be organized to speak with one voice at the Global CSW66 to be led by New York

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- AU Members states prepared to participate in CSW66 and contribute to negotiations towards a CSW66 Agreed Conclusions
- A common stand on progress made to address women's participation and empowerment in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction to feed into inform the ministerial meeting on the CSW66 theme
- An agreed upon Common Africa Position and Key Messages on CSW66

FORMAT OF THE EVENT

The Consultation will be in two segments as follows:

1. Technical Experts Consultation **21 – 22 February 2022: fully virtual**
2. Ministerial Consultation **28th February 2022: hybrid with in-person meetings to take place the AUC Head Quarters in Addis Ababa**

Technical Consultation Summary of Draft Programme of Work (21 – 22 February 2022)

The Technical Africa Pre-CSW66 e-Consultation will be two days, virtual participatory sessions of 5 hours per day focusing on the following:

- Opening
- A plenary on the priority theme which will provide the framework for discussions
- Moderated plenary discussions on the progress made in the implementation of the actions from CSW61 agreed conclusions
- Plenary discussion to review and agree on the common Africa position and key messages to inform the continental and global advocacy
- Closing

Ministerial Consultation Summary of Draft Programme of Work (28th February 2022)

The Ministerial Consultation will be one full day. This Ministerial Session will bring together all the 55 Africa Union Member States. Due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions the consultation will in hybrid form with in person meeting and virtually organized as follows:

- Opening Session
- Presentation of the Draft CAP – as prepared by the Experts

- Plenary discussions informed by the experts' consultation
- Presentation and discussion on the modalities for the CSW66
- Adoption of the CAP for CSW66
- Closing Session

PARTICIPANTS

- For the first segment of the **Technical Consultation**, participants will be technical experts from various gender machineries including Ministries of Gender and Women's Affairs in all AU Member States, Regional Economic communities (RECs), AUC and other AU Organs and specialized Agencies, UN System, CSOs, involved with CSW discussions and other relevant stakeholders.

- For the **Ministerial Session**, participants will be Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs in all AU Member States and their Experts, RECS, AUC and other AU organs and Specialized Agencies UN System, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.