



UN Commission on the Status of Women Faith in Beijing CSW66 Submitted Statement

E/CN.6/2022/NGO/36

Statement

As faith actors and networks of faith-based organizations, we call on Member States to address the climate emergency, which affects the full enjoyment of human rights. Climate induced disasters are increasing in frequency and magnitude. This global challenge threatens the existence and wellbeing of humanity and the entire planet. We cannot address the climate emergency in isolation and call for coordinated efforts to work for climate justice, as a matter of racial and gender justice.

Faith actors are present within some of the most marginalized communities in every corner of the world, including those on the frontlines of the climate emergency. Faith actors support from within communities in humanitarian responses, building resilience, and sustaining hope and strength. Faith values and spirituality also shape how people respond to the climate emergency.

Faith in Gender, Racial and Climate Justice

Many women are facing increased unpaid care and domestic work due to climate-related shortages of food, fuel, and water. There are strong links between environmental stress and sexual and gender-based violence, often leading to climate-induced and forced migration which disproportionately impacts women, and particularly women from marginalized, indigenous and caste communities. An estimated 8 in 10 people who have been displaced by the effects of climate change are women. Women and girls in all their diversity face increased risks, including restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services, sexual and gender-based violence, and trafficking and forced labor, especially during and after disasters.

Faith plays an important role in shaping public opinions, attitudes, and social norms. Faith actors have reach and voice in areas that are highly exposed to climate hazards (such as small island developing states), as well as high-income, and high-emitting countries. We urgently call on Member States to transform economies away from extractive, fossil-dependent, and neocolonial models. These models are compromising the already fragile climate system, widening inequalities, threatening biodiversity, and destroying ecosystems. There is a need for greater focus on carbon-neutral climate-resilient development with a particular focus on the differentiated impacts on women and girls. This also includes redistribution and reparations, provision of public goods, and equity between countries, within planetary boundaries.

Lifting up and centering women's leadership and lived experiences are critical for achieving gender, racial and climate justice. Patriarchal norms and structures of power (systemic, institutional, governmental, cultural) must be challenged. As faith-based networks and communities, we advocate for transformative change that shifts power and resources to women and marginalized communities, so that their agency and rights are recognized and fulfilled.

Preventive Action and Disaster Risk Reduction

While climate change is a universal phenomenon, the impacts of it are not equally experienced. For example, deeply entrenched social norms and socioeconomic conditions shape lived realities. Women are more likely to die in disasters, experience health vulnerabilities, and often have less access to information and resources to mitigate risks. We advocate for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction that considers the needs, opportunities, roles and relationships, which are shaped by social norms, within cultures and societies. While women are often heavily involved in adaptation activities for resilience, their knowledge, traditional practices, and capabilities are often side-lined in formal responses and considered inferior to those of men. If disaster risk reduction measures are not gender-responsive, led by women, or informed by their concerns, they will continue to lead to reinforcing existing inequalities and increasing gendered vulnerabilities.

Gender-responsive and transformative climate finance, disaster risk measures, and adaptation and mitigation actions, are not mainstreamed in most programming and practice. Climate financing continues to be directed towards large scale businesses, particularly in the renewable energy sector, overlooking household needs and the needs of female dominated work sectors, such as those of informal small-scale farmers, which are heavily dependent on weather conditions. Most climate-related interventions are still designed top-down without community (especially women's) input, even though in rural areas it is the women's small holdings and farms that keep families alive and children in school. Women, young women and girls' participation, capacities, and leadership in locally led adaptation and disaster risk reduction actions must be strengthened through new strategies. An increased share of climate finance must be accessible to communities for adaptation activities for resilience, including disaster risk reduction.

Responsive Action to the Climate Emergency in Communities

Faith actors are present in communities before, during and after disasters. They play an especially vital role in communities beyond immediate reach or in which the formal structures have limited capacity. Often, we are first responders to disasters, providing humanitarian assistance, and physical and psychosocial support. Women, and especially women of faith, are often providing informal social protection systems for communities, especially in those most impacted by climate change and disasters.

Women are also leading responsive action that builds resilience. Some examples include women's groups influencing priorities in disaster risk reduction or response; community credit/savings and food bank schemes, which provide buffers against climate uncertainty; and women-led farmer field schools developing climate resilient agricultural techniques. In the face of climate change, it is vital to support women's collective action to shift power, rebuild and sustain lives. We advocate to Member States for environmentally sustainable, people-based solutions, which center women, indigenous people, and traditional knowledge, to shape the protection and restoration of ecosystems.

In addition to climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, faith actors also work strategically with men and boys to deconstruct toxic masculinities and unjust social norms that contribute to gender, racial and climate inequalities. Breaking down these barriers to women's full and equal participation in society is critical for a gender just response to climate change. Women and girls in all their diversity can then increase their voice and influence, improve and share their access to knowledge and resources, and reduce risks. For these reasons, efforts to transform the realities of climate-vulnerable communities must include close multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with faith actors.

Recommendations

As faith actors committed to gender, racial, and climate justice, we call on Member States, United Nations agencies, and civil society to include the following in all responses to the climate emergency:

- Address structural inequalities and women's needs, ensure women and girls in all their diversity are at the forefront of decision-making, support collective actions, and address social norms, policies and laws that constrain women's access to and control over resources.
- Challenge negative social norms, systems, structures, and processes, which consider Earth as a place of endless resources to exploit and dominate.
- Increase international climate financing to address loss and damage and adaptation, provided as grants not loans. Enhance climate financing flows to communities through decentralized, flexible mechanisms to support locally appropriate solutions championed by women and marginalized communities.
- Enable networking and building of alliances between UN agencies, faith-based and other civil society actors working for gender and climate justice, to support women's collective action and a gender-just climate response.
- Ensure that women at the center of climate change mitigation and adaptation participate fully in climate change policy and decision-making.
- Adopt the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender, adopted at the 25th meeting of the Conference of Parties and fund implementation of the 5-year Gender Action Plan (2020-2025). Support implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates in the Convention, with clear agreed goals, targets, and budgeting, monitored and transparently reported by all parties.
- End unsustainable fossil fuel subsidies by Governments.
- Redirect resources to measures, including adequate social protection, that build resilience and uphold the rights of women and marginalized communities on the front line of the climate emergency.
- Demonstrate solidarity between major, industrialized economies and climate vulnerable countries, through climate finance and additional measures, including debt relief, to ensure climate vulnerable countries have sufficient resources to implement an equitable and gender-just climate response.
- Work with faith actors as critical partners in ensuring a gender-just response to the climate emergency.
- Promote the protection of environmental women human rights defenders especially those advocating for responsible natural resource governance and challenging unsustainable use of natural resources by multinational companies.