**Ways to Ensure Access to Sustainable Resources,**

**While Upholding Gender Equality and Women’s Rights**

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I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the organizers for the invitation to this meeting.

**Sustainable Resources, an Adequate Standard of Living and Women’s Rights**

1. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) prescribes that that the States parties “recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, …including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living standards” and further “take appropriate steps to ensure full realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.” (Art. 11.1) In the Covenant, non-discrimination based on sex and the principle of gender equality are guaranteed. Article 3 stipulates “the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.”

2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), in its Art. 14, also emphasizes that women in rural areas should be able “to enjoy the adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications,”(para. 2, h.) as well as “equal treatment in land, agrarian reform and land resettlement schemes.”(para. 2, g.) The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) also recognizes the importance of the “provision of adequate nutritious food and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution.”(Art.24, para. 2, c.)

3. Thus, since the 1960s, understanding of the international community on the importance of sustainable resources and healthy environment has progressed and expanded. Safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, energy, land and environment are the essential components of everyone’s right to an adequate standard of living, including women and children. Realizing the importance of water, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued a general comment on the right to water (GC No. 15, 2002). In this general comment, the Committee emphasized that the right to water should be realized for the present and future generations, and the adequacy of water, as a social and cultural good, should be measured on availability, quality and accessibility (physical, economic, and information accessibility, and based on non-discrimination). Women’s disproportionate burden of collecting water is indicated, as well as women’s specific needs, although not in great detail.

4. The Committee is currently working on three general comments, two of which are in relation to sustainable resources. One is on sustainable development, environment and the economic, social and cultural rights; and the other is on the right to land. Both are expected to take a couple of years each to develop and to be adopted. Several statements issued by the Committee on topics such as the right to development, sustainable development agenda and sanitation would be the background materials. The issues of gender equality and women’s equal rights will be taken up in the drafting of these two general comments. These general comments, when adopted, will provide essential guidance for the States Parties in their implementation of the Covenant.

**Lack of Information and Gender Impact Analysis on Sustainable Resources Issue**

5. When the CESCR reviews the States parties’ reports, there are no enough or systematic, nor sex-disaggregated information, provided by the States on the issues of water, sanitation, land or environmental pollution. This makes the Committee difficult to analyze whether women are enjoying fully their right to these resources. When there is a serious problem, however, usually NGOs and/or the national human rights institutions provide information on the situation, but again not enough analysis on its gender impact.

6. Women’s equal right to sustainable resources, or particular impacts on women’s rights, is not given the proper attention in a systematic and consistent manner. For example, the Committee’s concern on the negative impact of dams under construction on people’s forced evictions and compensation as well as on the environment and cultural impact of these dams was in general terms (CObs to Turkey, 2011, para. 26). Likewise, the Committee expressed its concern about the environmental impacts of mining and agribusiness projects in Ecuador and in particular about their effects on people’s right to water in rural areas, as well as the issue of land ownership for campesinos and forced sales. (CObs to Ecuador, 2012, paras. 25 & 26).

7. The Committee did raise concern on women’s right or lack of it to enjoy access to sustainable resources, but in sporadic manner. In dealing with Uganda, the Committee raised the issue of oil and gas extraction and mining activities and the disproportionate effect land grabbing had on women and customary landowners (CObs on Uganda, 2015, para. 14). Very recently, the Committee raised the issue of limited access to water and sanitation facilities at schools and recommended separate toilets for girls and boys (CObs to Niger, 2018, paras. 55 & 56). Given the time constraints of the Committee, it is difficult to raise the issue of women’s rights in full detain, especially when there is no information provided.

8. Women’s rights organizations are familiar with CEDAW and regularly submit alternative reports. This is not the same for the ICESCR and its Committee. It is important and necessary to mainstream the gender perspective into the work of all the treaty bodies, in particular the CESCR. Often, women’s NGOs do not have the same level of familiarity or enough resources to bring their issues to CESCR.

9. Given the fact that the treaty body’s concluding observations are integrated into the reports by OHCHR to the UPR process, and given the fact that the economic, social and cultural rights, in particular women’s rights in these areas, are not sufficiently dealt with, it is essential that the situation of women’s time use in collecting water, cooking with no efficient and clean energy, their negative impact on women’s education, health, employment and overall well-being should be researched and provided to the treaty bodies in a more regular and consistent manner. At the same time, information on women’s ownership of and inheritance to land and control of the produces should be provided in a consistent manner on the States parties to be reviewed.

10. In its concluding observations, the CESCR has a standard paragraph on the implementation of SDGs, recommending that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level”, on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination ensuring that no one is left behind. Maybe in the List of Issues, the rights of women, especially of the disadvantaged groups of women can be raised.