**Human Rights Council – 41st session**

**Panel discussion on women’s rights and climate change:   
climate action, good practices and lessons learned**

*Concept note (draft as of 21 June 2019)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Friday, 28 June 2019, 4 - 6 p.m.,** Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva  *Will be broadcast live and archived at* [*http://webtv.un.org*](http://webtv.un.org/) |
| **Objectives:** | This panel discussion will focus on good practices and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in the context of the adverse impact of climate change. The objectives are:   * **To enhance understanding** of the gendered impacts of climate change; * **To highlight the benefits** of gender-responsive climate action; * **To identify good practices** in the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in the context of the adverse impacts of climate change; * **To share lessons learned** in promoting gender-responsive climate action; * **To identify opportunities** for collaboration and action by States, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to implement a gender-responsive approach to climate action that benefits people and planet; * **To identify opportunities** for international cooperation in mitigation and adaptation actions which promote and protect the rights of women and girls. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Coly Seck**,President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  **H.E. Ms. Hilda C. Heine**, Presidentof the Marshall Islands (*by video message*) |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Mary Robinson**, Adjunct Professor of Climate Justice at Trinity College Dublin, Chair of The Elders and former President of Ireland * **H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan**,Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva * **Mr. Martin Oelz**, Senior Specialist on Equality and Non-Discrimination at the International Labour Organization * **Ms. Nahla Haidar**,Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women |
| **Outcome:** | The panel discussion will provide an opportunity for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the adverse impacts of climate change on the effective enjoyment of the rights of women and girls and the promotion and protection of their rights through gender-responsive climate action. The anticipated outcomes of this discussion include:   * **Improved understanding** of the gendered impacts of climate change, including good practices in the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in the context of the adverse impacts of climate change; * The **identification of strategies and lessons learned** with respect to the participation of women and girls in climate action; * The **identification of opportunities** for international cooperation with respect to mitigation and adaptation actions which promotes and protects the rights of women and girls; * **Recommendations** fora gender-responsive approach to climate action at all levels of governance; * A **summary report** of the panel discussion to the Human Rights Council. |
| **Mandate:** | In its resolution [38/4](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/38/4) on human rights and climate change, the Human Rights Council decided to incorporate into its programme of work for the 41st session a panel discussion on women’s rights and climate change: climate action, best practices and lessons learned. The Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to submit a summary report of the panel discussion to the Council at its 42nd session. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including opening statements, panellists’ presentations and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for interventions from the floor, divided into two slots, for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the discussion and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Background:** | Climate change has and will continue to cause or contribute to an increase in the frequency and intensity of both sudden and slow onset events which adversely affect the full enjoyment of a broad range of human rights. An individual’s capacity to adapt to climate change depends on a variety of factors, including social status, gender, poverty level, access to resources and discrimination. While international human rights law prohibits gender-based discrimination, women and girls often face systemic discrimination, harmful stereotypes and social, economic and political barriers that limit their adaptive capacity. In general, women and girls are more likely to experience the adverse effects caused by climate change than men because women constitute most of the world’s poor and are often directly dependent on natural resources that are threatened by climate change as their primary source of food and income.  The risks to human rights posed by climate change have been documented by the Human Rights Council, its special procedures mechanisms and OHCHR in resolutions, various reports and activities. The disproportionate harms sometimes experienced by women and girls are also increasingly recognized. Most recently, the Council acknowledged, in its resolution 38/4, the need to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to climate change. The Council further highlighted the importance of international cooperation and assistance, in particular to better promote women’s access to food, water, health care, education, housing, decent work and clean energy.  The call for cooperation and assistance to address the impacts of climate change, and to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls is also found in other legal and policy instruments. In its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women highlights the importance of gender-responsive climate action and highlights the steps needed to achieve gender equality and promote climate resilience.[[1]](#footnote-1) Article 7(5) of the Paris Agreement states that Parties acknowledge the need for gender-responsive climate adaptation and Article 11(2) calls for gender-responsive capacity-building. More than 60 UNFCCC decisions are addressing gender and since 2012, gender and climate change has been a stand-alone agenda item before the Conference of the Parties, and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation.[[2]](#footnote-2) Human rights are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal 13 (climate action) explicitly calls for Member States to “promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change…including focusing on women.”  The consultation and full and equal participation and leadership of women and girls in decision-making, planning and implementation of climate action is essential to protecting women’s rights and ensuring effective climate action.[[3]](#footnote-3) Women’s unique knowledge and experience, particularly at the local level,[[4]](#footnote-4) related to agriculture, conservation and the management of natural resources makes inclusion of women in climate action and decision making processes critical to effective and informed action.[[5]](#footnote-5) By ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment of women and men is established as a specific focus and goal from the outset, climate action has the potential to spur low-carbon development and economies for both men and women, build inclusive societies, transform gender norms, enhance women’s participation in economic activities and contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, for which women are fundamental actors.[[6]](#footnote-6)  This panel discussion will be informed by the analytical study of OHCHR on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women. It presents an opportunity to develop a more profound understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change and to identify opportunities to implement a gender-responsive approach to climate action in the context of the adverse impacts of climate change. |
| **Background documents:** | Human Rights Council resolutions on human rights and climate change:   * [Human Rights Council resolution 38/4](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/38/4) of 5 July 2018; * [Human Rights Council resolution 35/20](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/20) of 22 June 2017; * [Human Rights Council resolution 32/33](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/32/33) of 1 July 2016; * [Human Rights Council resolution 29/15](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/29/15) of 2 July 2015: * [Human Rights Council resolution 26/27](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/26/27) of 27 June 2014; * [Human Rights Council resolution 18/22](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/18/22) of 30 September 2011; * [Human Rights Council resolution 10/4](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/10/4) of 25 March 2009; * [Human Rights Council resolution 7/23](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/7/23) of 28 March 2008.   OHCHR analytical study on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women (2019): [A/HRC/41/26](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/26) |

1. [CEDAW/C/GC/37](https://undocs.org/CEDAW/C/GC/37), para 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNFCCC, “Gender and Climate Change- UNFCCC related activities- 2017” at <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/gender-and-climate-change-unfccc-related-activities-2017>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [A/HRC/39/28](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/39/28). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Agarwal, B. (2009), “Gender and Forest Conservation: The Impact of Women’s Participation in Community Forest Governance.” Ecological Economics 68 (11): 2785–99. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mary Robinson Foundation, ”Women’s Participation: An Enabler for Climate Justice’’ (2015) at <https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MRFCJ-_Womens-Participation-An-Enabler-of-Climate-Justice_2015.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ILO, “Gender, labour and a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all,” (2017), <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/publications/WCMS_592348/lang--en/index.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)