GENERAL DEBATE ON EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF OF THE 84TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, FEBRUARY 22, 2023

Proposals for guidance to States Parties on measures to ensure full compliance with their obligations about women's rights to equal and inclusive representation in related decision-making systems the fight against climate change

1. This contribution is submitted at the initiative of the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation, in collaboration with Angela Martina Caretta, Carine Pionetti and the SOL association. It is supported by the associations WECF and Care France.

2. Martina Angela Caretta, PhD, is a feminist geographer specializing in the issue of climate change related to drought. She has conducted research on the differential discrimination faced by women and minorities, and how these groups adapt to climate change based on their local and indigenous knowledge. She has also written about the role of migration and conflict in adapting to water scarcity.

3. **The RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation**¹ has been hosted by the Fondation de France since its establishment in 2006. Its actions are focused on four areas: combating violence against women and girls, promoting girls' education and leadership, supporting women's professional integration and economic rights, and encouraging women's environmental initiatives. The foundation is dedicated to promoting women's environmental action² and, in 2015 during COP21, launched the Women & Environment program. It is a member of the Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice, which was formed as part of the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, and also belongs to the French Coalition of Climate Foundations (CffC)³.

4. Carine Pionetti, PhD, is an independent researcher in political ecology with a specialization in gender issues. She collaborates with national and international organizations on the inclusion of women in agriculture and the agroecological transition, the consideration of gender in climate change adaptation and the management of marine protected areas. She has also contributed to the development of tools for quantifying and recognizing unpaid care work.

5. The association SOL, Agroecological and Solidarity Alternatives⁴, aims to contribute to meeting the essential needs of peasant farmers and enhancing their roles in society. Its two main area of focus are promoting access to peasant agriculture and protecting natural resources and biodiversity. To achieve this, SOL supports alternatives implementing organizations in Asia, Africa, and France.

6. This contribution is supported by the NGOs **WECF International** and **CARE France**. WECF International is an ecofeminist network that works both on the ground and in global governance for a healthy, sustainable, and equitable world. WECF⁵ advocate for climate justice in relation to gender

justice and push for increased representation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels. CARE France is an international humanitarian network that has been fighting poverty and social injustice worldwide for over 75 years through grassroots actions, awareness-raising and advocacy.

7. During the 84th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, new guidelines for States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women will be discussed.

8. This contribution specifically focuses on the need to promote and achieve gender equality in decisionmaking systems related to the fight against climate change.

I. Need to promote gender equality in climate change decision-making systems

- A. Structural discrimination linked to climate change
- B. Effectiveness of a gendered response to the climate crisis

II. Lack of gender equality in climate change decision-making systems

- A. Lack of inclusive leadership in decision-making systems
- B. Lack of inclusive leadership in climate decision-making systems

III. Proposals to strengthen gender equality in decision-making systems related to climate change

- Gendered climate adaptation policy and legislation
- Gender-responsive financing systems
- Promote inclusiveness and in particular equal access to education
- Safety of girls and women

I. THE NEED TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE

9. While the countries in the Global North continue to contribute up to 40%⁶ of global greenhouse gas emissions, countries in the Global South face extractive practices often driven by large international corporation, leading to increase poverty and violence⁷. In this context, women constitute 49.6% of the world's population⁸ and play a crucial role in the daily management of ecosystems and natural resources. They are among the most affected by climate change⁹ but are also at the forefront of transformative pathways.

A. Structural discrimination linked to climate change

10. As the primary group dependent on local natural resources, women are the first to bear the brunt of climate change. For instance, as the majority of water workers, they are disproportionately affected by water scarcity and recurrent droughts, which often force them to leave their villages¹⁰, exposing them to the risk of sexual violence¹¹.

11. The consequences of climate change are gendered and unequal:

- Women are compelled to work more, often sacrificing their education. In Africa, the illiteracy rate is 55% for women compared to 41% for men¹². Consequently, they become economically dependent on their partner, increasing their vulnerability to economic, physical, and psychological violence¹³.
- Women currently make up **80% of climate refugees**, a population particularly susceptible to violence¹⁴ and often thrust into precarious situations.

12. Natural disasters also perpetuate discrimination: women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die in disasters¹⁵. Following Cyclone Gorky in 1991, nine times as many women were killed in Bangladesh¹⁶. During a drought in Kenya in 2016, women were the last to receive food assistance¹⁷.

13. Women activists and Women Human Rights Defenders are particularly vulnerable: between 2016 and 2019, Mexico and Central America recorded 1,698 acts of violence against women WHRDs¹⁸. These women become targets of patriarchal harassment, impeding their rights. As part of COP27, two members of the Colombian Ministry were suspended for sexual harassment¹⁹.

B. Effectiveness of a gendered response to the climate crisis

14. At local level, equal and inclusive participation in decision-making bodies has been proven to enhance the effectiveness of responses to the climate crisis²⁰. Women often bring innovative techniques to agriculture²¹, such as floating vegetable gardens²² or the utilization of organic waste to for fertilizer production²³. As powerful agents of change, when women's voices are heard in decision-making forums, it leads to greater representation and improved climate policies²⁴.

15. Gender equality in the governance and conservation of natural resources is also associated with better outcomes²⁵. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that granting equal rights to men and women in agricultural could increase yields by 20 to 30%²⁶. Scholars and practitioners argue that including women in decision-making processes would result in improved water²⁷ and forest governance as well.

16. Women in leadership positions are associated with better environmental outcomes and increased transparency²⁸. In 2019, increased representation of women in national parliaments led to the adoption

of stringent climate change policies, resulting in reduced carbon emissions²⁹ Studies have shown that countries with higher numbers of women parliamentarians tend to have more advanced climate and environmental policies³⁰.

17. Therefore, to ensure greater effectiveness in combating climate change, it is crucial to pursue climate policies that prioritize social justice and gender equality³¹. By integrating gender perspectives and promoting equal participation, we can foster more inclusive and sustainable approaches to tackling the climate crisis.

II. LACK OF GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS

A. Lack of inclusive leadership in decision-making bodies

18. Gender equality in the public, private and political spheres is a fundamental right that urgently needs to be properly implemented for the sake of an inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable world.

19. The equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems is not only a human right but also a crucial means of achieving international gender equality goals, including articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women³², Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals³³, in the Declaration³⁴ and the Beijing Platform for Action³⁵ and in Article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights³⁶.

20. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³⁷ asserts the right of everyone to participate in the conduct of public affairs in their country. This is further complemented by article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Democracy³⁸, which emphasizes that a democracy cannot exist without genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of public affairs.

21. However, gender inequalities persist at the highest levels of political decision-making. Women currently comprise only 26.3% of all parliamentarians worldwide³⁹, and a mere 1% of these women are under the age of 30⁴⁰. Shockingly, there are only five countries in the world where women hold over 50% of ministerial positions⁴¹: Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates⁴². Out of 197 states, only 22 are led by a woman⁴³, and 119 states have never had a female head of state.

22. Furthermore, despite the existence of laws and regulations, the United Nations Development Programme highlights that only 1% of official development assistance in the economic and productive sectors adopts a gendered approach⁴⁴. This means that the vast majority of funding fails to adequately address gender disparities and promote gender equality.

B. Lack of inclusive leadership in climate change decision-making systems

23. The Lima Agenda⁴⁵, adopted in 2015 under decision 18/CP.20, aims to promote gender-responsive climate policies, enhance the capacity of gender negotiators, facilitate gender exchange workshops, and increase women's participation in decision-making bodies related to climate change. Four years later, the Lima Enhanced Programme of Work on Gender and its Plan of Action for Gender Equality⁴⁶ were adopted at COP25, as outlined in decision 3/CP.25. These initiatives strive to enhance women's participation in international negotiations, national climate policies, and access to climate finance for women's organizations.

24. The Beijing Declaration⁴⁷, signed by 189 States, urges States Parties to take all necessary measures to achieve real gender equality, emphasizing three strategic objectives⁴⁸ for government action in the environmental realm. These objectives include promoting equal participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making pertaining to the environment and establishing mechanisms to assess the gender impact of environmental policies.

25. In 2021, during the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly⁴⁹, States Parties reiterated the importance of including women in climate leadership to build back better and effectively address the climate emergency and pollution crisis.

26. Various initiatives have called for improved gender representation, such as an open letter to the COP27 management team, advocating for greater accountability and transparency regarding gender parity within their team⁵⁰. Additionally, there have been efforts to organize a counter-COP27⁵¹ and the International Labour Organization (ILO) has requested G7 Member States to implement measures to protect women⁵².

27. As the environmental crisis intensifies, existing texts and agreements fall short in addressing the pervasive issues of discrimination and gender inequality within decision-making groups concerning the fight against climate change. The status of women in these contexts is not adequately recognized.

- 1. Despite representing 40% of the workforce in the agricultural sector and contributing to for 60-80% of food production⁵³, women own less than 10% of the land⁵⁴.
- 2. In 2016, approximately 30% of European farms were owned or co-farmed by women⁵⁵. However, it is important to acknowledge the concerning situation of farmers' wives who, not being recognized as farmers, have no rights to the land they work on. In France⁵⁶, there has been some progress since 1999 with the establishment of the "collaborating spouse of a farm or agricultural business status"⁵⁷.
- 3. Despite being the primary collector of water (62%)⁵⁸, women perform this task unpaid, unlike men who often utilize water for profit⁵⁹.

28. **State aid in the agricultural sector** also exhibits discriminatory practices. In sub-Saharan Africa, 70% of credits are allocated to high-tech projects, predominantly led by men. The remaining 30% is allocated to small community projects, some of which are led by women⁶⁰. Limited access to credit hampers women's ability to strengthen their leadership.

29. Gender inequalities **in the scientific world** impact strategic directions regarding research and the development of innovative solutions. Women currently constitute only 28% of all scientific researchers (45% in Latin America⁶¹).

30. In 2015, women comprised a mere 22% of executive members in major international funds dedicated to combating global warming⁶².

31. In the context of Conference of the Parties (COPs), only 10% of heads of delegation were women in 2009. This figure slightly increased to 13% in 2021, with the highest representation recorded at of 26% in 2017.

- 1. During COP21, only 8 out of the 150 heads of government in attendance were women⁶³. Green Climate Funds and Global Green Environment Funds are less than 15% women⁶⁴.
- 2. At COP26, out of the 232 members serving in the 16 committees, only 34% were women. Three of the committees had a composition of 50% or more women, while four committees had 20% or fewer⁶⁵. Regarding party delegations, only 39% of the leadership positions were held by women, although this marked an improvement compared to previous reports.
- 3. At COP27, which took place at the seaside resort of Sharm El Sheikh, out of the 110 leaders in attendance, only 7 were women, accounting for a representation rate of 6.36%⁶⁶.

32. Since 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change⁶⁷ (IPCC) has produced 6 assessment reports, 11 special reports and 9 methodological reports⁶⁸. However, the topic of women as a force for proposals, solutions, or as leaders or spokespersons in the climate crisis is addressed in only one report, which is the latest one⁶⁹. Within the summary report of that report, only two paragraphs are dedicated to this theme⁷⁰. This report was written by 33% of women⁷¹. On the other works, the 4th general report had only 15% women participants, while the 5th report had 21%⁷². Additionally, among the main authors of the latest report, only 32% were women⁷³.

III. PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE CHANGE DECISION-MAKING SYSTEMS

33. Equal participation must be established within high-level spaces. For this, policy and legislative measures for climate adaptation must be gendered. It is therefore necessary to:

- 1. Advocate for intersectional participation in high-level advocacy spaces⁷⁴, including women, particularly young women⁷⁵, rural population and indigenous communities. This approach has been successfully implemented in Canada during its delegation for COP23⁷⁶.
- 2. Integrate gender perspectives into holistic environmental and climate risk reduction policies and programs⁷⁷. This includes recognizing the differential impacts of climate change on women and men and addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities and needs.
- 3. Encourage the appointment of national gender equality coordinators⁷⁸ to ensure a dedicated focus on gender mainstreaming in climate change decision-making processes.
- 4. Propose the creation of a special rapporteur.se position on climate justice that includes a specific focus on equal gender representation in decision-making spheres related to fight against climate change.
- 5. Ensure greater transparency in the appointment methods and selections of individuals for management teams of climate organizations to promote accountability and avoid bias⁷⁹.
- 6. Aim to achieve by 2030 a quota equal to or greater than 30% of women in local, national, and international climate policy leadership institutions⁸⁰,
- 7. Regarding the IPCC itself:
 - a. Monitor equal gender representation in national nominations and the participation of women in expert group⁸¹,
 - b. Develop a gender equality policy and implementation plan that sets clear objectives and action steps⁸²,
 - c. Create a Gender Equality Committee within the IPCC to oversee the implementation plan and regularly report on progress during IPCC plenary sessions, drawing inspiration from initiatives like the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council in Canada⁸³.
- 8. Strengthen or enforce women's land rights⁸⁴, particularly in the context of agriculture, to recognize their status and promote their empowerment. This can be achieved through measures such as recognizing customary and traditional systems⁸⁵, disaggregating land ownership data by gender⁸⁶ (as in Mexico), and forging strategic partnerships with communities and private sector companies to support women's land rights⁸⁷.
- 34. Ensure that adaptation measures are framed to avoid exacerbating inequality⁸⁸.
 - 1. Conduct thorough assessments during the development phase of these measures to identify and mitigate any potential adverse impacts on gender equality⁸⁹,
 - 2. Establish laws and mechanisms for enforcing compliance with accommodation measures, as demonstrated by Sweden's approach⁹⁰,

3. Implement a process for assessing the impact of these laws⁹¹, such as annual reports on the effectiveness and outcomes of these measures, drawing inspiration from practices in Sweden⁹² and Canada⁹³.

35. Implement a gender-sensitive funding system:

- 1. Propose funding from wealthier countries to support projects that promote inclusion and gender equality within climate-related decision-making systems⁹⁴. Prioritize funding for sectors with significant greenhouse gas emissions. For example, in the Ecuadorian Andes, indigenous women can assume sustainable agricultural leadership through funding from the Municipality of Madrid, UN Women, and the provincial government of Azuay⁹⁵,
- 2. Allocate a portion of international funding towards initiatives that foster inclusive climate leadership policies⁹⁶,
- 3. Systematically integrate environmental and gender issues into the economic and financial strategies of all representative and decision-making bodies at the local, national, and international levels)⁹⁷,
- 4. Ensure that 100% of climate finance is gender-sensitive, considering the differential impacts of climate change on women and men and supporting gender-responsive initiatives.⁹⁸.

36. From the perspective of the business sector, it is important to integrate SDG 5 (Gender Equality) into corporate social responsibility strategies⁹⁹.

37. These inclusion measures should promote inclusivity and address barriers to equal access to education¹⁰⁰. This entails:

- 1. Advocating for equal access to training and employment opportunities¹⁰¹,
- 2. Improving access to affordable or universal public services such as childcare, education, healthcare, and social protection¹⁰²
- 3. Increasing access to reproductive health and family planning services¹⁰³,
- 4. Enhancing women's access to credit, banking services and microcredit programs¹⁰⁴,
- 5. Advocating for equal pay for work of equal value¹⁰⁵
- 6. Promoting equitable sharing of domestic and caregiving responsibilities¹⁰⁶,
- 7. Developing access to digital tools and technology 107 .

38. These measures should be accompanied by awareness-raising efforts targeting both the public and women themselves. This includes:

- 1. Raising awareness among the public about climate issues and the leadership of women, particularly from the Global South, to highlight their contributions to the fight against climate change.,
- 2. Increasing awareness among women and girls by organizing information and training campaigns to empower them and promote their rights¹⁰⁸,
- 3. Implementing strategies to attract girls to agricultural institutions and training programs to promote their participation in the sector¹⁰⁹,
- 4. Encouraging the reading and sharing of stories of women at the forefront of climate action worldwide¹¹⁰, such as recipients of the Gender and Climate Solutions Award¹¹¹.

39. This awareness-raising should also address the safety of **girls and women**¹¹², including local, national, and international leaders, as well as women's rights defenders. It is crucial to advocate for zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment and workplace violence¹¹³.

40. The contributors to this proposal express gratitude to the Committee for initiating this discussion and urge its members to actively promote and recognize women leaders who are often underrepresented in climate change debates.

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- ¹¹⁰ Réclamer la place des femmes dans le leadership | ONU Femmes (unwomen.org)
- ¹¹¹ Découvrez les lauréat es du Prix Solutions Genre et Climat 2022 ! WECF France (wecf-france.org)
- ¹¹² Microsoft Word N1345032.doc (un.org)
- ¹¹³ Réclamer la place des femmes dans le leadership | ONU Femmes (unwomen.org)

⁸⁵ <u>untitled (fao.org)</u>