



## Untapped potential: Expanding women's leadership and voice on climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and actions in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey

Sub-regional consultations to prepare for CSW 66 session, 24 February 2022

### Summary of discussions

The general purpose of the consultations was to prepare for the Commission on Status of Women 66 session's (CSW66) consultations and jointly agree on key joint messages to form the sub-regional vision, its perspectives, experiences, and recommendations on the game-changing actions in the climate change, environment, and disaster risk reduction arena. The consultation was conveyed and hosted by the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of Serbia together with UN Women and it brought together representatives of national gender machineries, environmental management and disaster risk reduction institutions, and representatives of UN Women regional Civil Society Advisory Group and youth as well as Regional Coordination Council and European Institute for Gender Equality. Findings of the consultations will be shared at CSW66.

The participants shared data and evidence on how the environment, climate change and disasters are affecting women and girls in the region, challenges and how to strengthen climate change action by promoting gender equality in the region and shared best practices and examples of success stories of women-led climate projects and highlighting the unique contribution women have made to the climate movement in the Western Balkans. The consultation included representatives from national ministers, state representatives, gender equality mechanisms, civil society, and the gender research community.

Speakers highlighted the untapped potential in the sub-region to build on and the need for resilience building, by empowering women and other vulnerable groups. Some recommendations were highlighted by several speakers and thus constitute key outcomes of the consultations. These key recommendations include, for instance, gender mainstreaming as an institutional strategy to respond to climate change, and as part of this to raise awareness among public and private sector employees on gender mainstreaming in climate change response and to have climate change and gender as cross cutting in policy efforts across sectors. Another key recommendation was the need to systematically collect data, disaggregate data by gender, to measure success and identify challenges in measuring, analysis, planning and monitoring. An additional key recommendation was to ensure the full, fair and meaningful participation of women in the responses to climate change, including the youth and other marginalized groups, at all levels of decision making. A key recommendation was to strengthen socio economic conditions of women as a way to enable adaptability to climate change, by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid domestic and care work and support women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas. Another key recommendation was to finance NGOs and CSO initiatives on gender responsive climate adaptation to find joint solutions. Participants

highlighted that mainstreaming gender into policies and programmes on climate change and environment also requires innovative responses and approaches and shared some examples of this.

**The first session** was devoted to an assessment of the climate challenges the region is facing and defining potential solutions. The second session was devoted to discussing best practices and success stories of women-led climate initiatives, how to increase financing for gender-just climate solutions to build the resilience of women and girls to climate impacts and disaster risks and key messages and take-aways to bring to and advocate for at CSW66 global consultations. CSO position was shared at the consultation – **Annex 1.**

**The main challenges and barriers for strengthening gender-responsive climate actions in the sub-region are:**

- Lack of information and gender disaggregated data;
- Low institutional capacity to mainstream gender, lacking awareness among public and private sector on gender and climate;
- Lack of meaningful participation of women in decision making process and policy making as well as in jobs related to climate management, adaptation, and mitigation;
- The large burden of domestic and care work on women.

**The set of key messages and recommendations brought forth by participants during the consultation – they are framed around following four areas:**

#### Gender responsive and inclusive decision making:

- Gender mainstreamed design, planning and implementation stage of programmes, policies and legal frameworks of disaster risk reduction. Mainstreaming gender into policies and programmes on climate change requires innovative responses and approaches, such as actions to challenge gender stereotypes in professions and it is crucial to promote and support women’s innovative ideas linked to digitalization and the green economy;
- Develop laws and normative frameworks - coordinated work across departments and units is needed to ensure gender equality is taken into consideration when developing climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes;
- Adopt programmes to increase gender equality and participation of women in decision making bodies of all political parties;
- Strengthen women’s and girl’s full participation and leadership in climate, environment and DRR action and governance at all levels. Women are strong leaders and agents of change, that must be included and participate in effectively managing the response to climate change, including youth, local and marginalized communities – as leaders, decision makers, educators – in all sectors;
- Participation and leadership of women in natural resource management and climate interventions;
- Measure the impact of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, rural women, and women with disabilities;

- Climate change efforts must be prioritized and cross cutting in policy efforts across sectors. Strengthen climate policy planning and gender equal participation in preparation of low carbon development strategies and national climate and energy plans;
  - Involving women in building awareness in local areas on consequences climate change, rural women and to education and information of women;
  - Set-up gender responsive early warning mechanisms;
  - Youth women and girl child should have a seat at the table when their future is at stake;
  - New challenges require new and innovative solutions, often designed by women;
  - Provide education and training to promote women in green jobs and jobs related to climate change mitigation and adaptation;
  - Adaptability of climate change requires strengthened socio-economic conditions for women, therefore we need to recognize, reduce, and redistribute domestic work and care work and support women entrepreneurs;
  - Support and cooperate with NGOs, CSOs and women’s cooperatives to increase resilience of women to climate change and environmental disasters.
  - Take measures to improved employability and entrepreneurship possibilities for women, in particular in rural areas, through socio economic platforms and provide training and tools for green production.

Gender responsive financing:

- Acceleration of Agenda 2030 implementation, with comprehensive budgeted plans. Key to use gender responsive planning and budgeting. Gender responsive budgeting for gender transformative interventions in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
  - Important to understand and address the multiple ways in which climate change affect women, for example the risk of stagnation of women’s economic empowerment – improving women’s livelihoods;
  - Provide funding for NGOs and civil society organizations on impact assessment. Investing in ecofeminist movements and organizations as well as youth movements;
  - Re-direct funds for militarization to climate action and gender equality
  - Move towards low carbon and renewable energy sources but taking into account the needs of and the consequences on women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals;
  - Stronger regulations for transnational and national corporations and the public and private partnerships on essential services based on human rights and the health of the planet.

Gender accountable implementation:

- Gender institutional mechanisms to provide professional support to strategies on environment policies and to point to marginalized groups, the different roles and needs of men and women;
  - To increase the awareness of rural women on their rights to land and property, to empower them with skills to use and benefit from technology;

- To implement climate change impact assessment on health to make promotional materials for the protection of health;
- Awareness raising and training of employees in public and private sector on gender and climate to ensure financial institutional support for gender expertise and strengthening political directives;
- Sex disaggregated data is key to measure the effect of climate change and natural disasters on women and girls. Evidence based decision should ensure inclusive sex and gender disaggregated data collection and analysis at all levels. There is a need to develop indicators and systematically collect data, disaggregate data by sex, to measure success and identify challenges in analysis, planning, measure and to monitor progress in implementation of policies and programmes through gender analysis. Set an obligation to present and publish sex aggregated data of all public authorities;
- Information and best practice exchange between different parties;
- Strengthen women in rural areas, including their access to loans and financial tools;
- Consultative meetings are very important to contribute to further actions and activities in the region;
- Increase support for rural development to strengthen local and national food systems, reduce irregular migration and increase the welfare of women and girls living in rural communities;

#### Evidence based feminist climate action:

- Full application of general recommendations no. 37 on the gender related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change ;
- Referring to the human rights council resolution 4813, recognizing that human rights are clean, healthy and sustainable environment and include these perspectives in all climate crisis and disaster risk reduction responses with a focus on their gender impact;
- Challenge gender stereotypes in professions. Climate change does not recognize stereotypes and grounds of discrimination but recognize the joint action of all stakeholders;
- Aside of environment protection, policy measures are also needed in relation to labour and employment, social protection, sexual and reproductive health, education and energy in order to achieve full realization of gender equality
- Support and amplify feminist solutions to the climate crisis and eco system-based approaches that work in harmony with the ecosystem;
- Peace is the pre-requisite for environmental, economic, social and justice integrated development with gender equality.