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BEIJING+30 REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING

“Reviewing 30 years of Beijing Commitments to Accelerate Gender Equality in the ECE Region”

22 October 2024,
Building E, Room XVII, Palais de Nations, Geneva

Tuesday, 22 October 2024 (15:00 – 16:30, GMT+2)

Item 9. Thematic session: Closing the gender gap: Effective policies to deliver on SDGs in the UNECE region

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background and context

As economies shift towards both low-carbon and digital economies, the idea of a “just transition” has become increasingly significant. Global climate frameworks like the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal recognize the transformative role of gender equality and women’s empowerment in these transitions. Despite these acknowledgments, gender equality is often overlooked in both energy transition and digitalization initiatives, risking the exacerbation of gender inequalities. Structural barriers—including limited access to decision-making, insufficient participation in STEM fields and entrenched gender norms—prevent women, particularly in rural areas and migrant communities, from benefiting equally from the transition.

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Women, especially those engaged in agriculture, rural economies and the informal sector, are disproportionately affected by the shifts towards low-carbon and digital economies. Climate change, environmental degradation, and the impacts of regional conflicts—such as Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine—reduce access to essential resources, social protection and stable employment opportunities for rural and migrant women. The digitalization of economies presents both a challenge and an opportunity in this regard. Ensuring that women have equal access to digital tools, jobs, and skill-building opportunities is crucial to prevent widening gender gaps in the evolving economic landscape. Digital platforms and tools, such as mobile banking and e-learning platforms, can also enhance women’s access to information, services and markets.

Food systems and rural livelihoods are also at the centre of these transformations. Women constitute a large share of the agricultural workforce in the UNECE region, yet they typically hold fewer decision-making positions and have less access to essential resources such as credit, technology and land rights. The challenges faced by rural women are intensified for migrant women, who often have limited access to formal employment and are overrepresented in precarious, low-paid jobs.

A just transition must integrate gender-transformative approaches, including investing in gender-responsive social protection systems, promoting decent work for all, leveraging digitalization to create new economic opportunities for women and ensuring that the voices of migrant and rural women are included in climate action and decision-making processes.

2. Objectives

The thematic session will address progress and challenges over the last five years and put forth concrete actions for integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment into low-carbon and digital transition strategies, focus on dismantling structural barriers, closing persistent gender gaps and adopting gender-transformative approaches to ensure both rural and migrant women and girls are not left behind in the transition process, with the aim of accelerating implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BfPA\)](#) in the next five years.

3. Tentative Guiding Questions:

What key policy actions are needed to ensure a gender-transformative just transition as a critical catalyst for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- What policies are required to ensure that the gender dimensions of digital connectivity, climate change and energy transition, food systems and education are effective catalysts for implementing the BPfA and achieving the SDGs?
- What are the most pressing challenges in implementing gender-responsive policies to close the gender gap in the UNECE region, particularly in the context of the green economy, energy transition, food systems, and digitalization, and how have these challenges evolved since the Beijing+25 review?
- What are some notable good practices and policies from the region and beyond in closing the gender gaps in these areas, and how can those be contextualized to the region to ensure a just transition for women and girls?
- How can the UNECE region leverage the emergence of new jobs in the green energy sector (e.g., wind, solar, critical material mining) to close existing gender gaps in those industries related to education and employment?
- How can gender-responsive approaches in food systems be designed to ensure food security and equitable access to resources for women, particularly in the face of climate change?
- How can the digitalization of economies be leveraged to close the gender gap, and what policies are needed to ensure women have equal access to digital tools and opportunities?

4. Agenda

15:00 – 15:45	<p>Moderated panel</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Ruth Zugman Do Coutto, Head, Climate Mitigation Branch, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</p> <p>Panellists:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Ulla Saar, Deputy Secretary-General of Labour, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Estonia • Ms. Leyla Hasanova, COP29 Presidency Youth Climate Champion Chairperson, NAM Youth Organization, Azerbaijan • Mr. Nabil Gangi, FAO Deputy Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia • Ms. Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, CEO and Founder of Women at the Table, Switzerland • Ms. Katri Viinikka, Ambassador for Gender Equality, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
15:45 – 16:30	Open discussion with member States, civil society, experts.

5. Expected outcome

To set out at least three concrete policy measures to address the gender dimensions of digitalization, education, climate action, energy transition and food systems to accelerate the implementation of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BfPA\)](#) and to deliver the SDGs.

6. Background documents

- [Gender dimensions of just transitions in the Economic Commission for Europe region](#)
- [Status of rural women in the Economic Commission for Europe region: action needed](#)
- [Empowerment and Equality for Migrant Women and Girls: Progress and Opportunities in the Economic Commission for Europe Region](#)
- [Key trends on gender equality across the Economic Commission for Europe region. Regional review of progress: regional synthesis](#)
- [Guidance Note for Comprehensive National-Level Reviews](#)
- [UN Women CSW69 / Beijing+30 Preparations Web Page](#)
- [UNECE Gender Portal](#)