



**Welcoming Remarks by H.E. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council Side Event: Women's human rights and environment sustainability: challenges and opportunities  
New York, 9 February 2021**

Thank you Ambassador,  
Excellencies, and distinguished colleagues.

It is my pleasure to join you today at this important event.

I would like to thank his excellency, Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, my colleague, Vice President of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Missions of Maldives, Qatar, Botswana and Honduras for organizing this important event and for bringing us together to address the vital issue of women's human rights and the intersection with environmental sustainability.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental human rights and they have been acknowledged as vital and centric to achievement of the SDGs.

These are prerequisites for achieving sustainable development. Gender equality benefits both women and men, both boys and girls.

This equality is central to the wellbeing and health of communities and societies.

Women and men hold different but equally important roles in the management of natural resources that is central to environmental sustainability.

As farmers, women contribute to food security and protect agro-diversity.

Women manage water resources and fuel resources. They are central in the production of food in all the food-related industries including fishing.

However, women and girls, unfortunately face gender-based bias, discrimination, and inequalities which are rooted in social, cultural, and legal norms and customs of the past year.

For example, more women than men work in agriculture, forestry and fisheries but less than 14% of landholders are women.

In addition, women are often excluded from decision-making including environment related decision-making and planning.

Environmental sustainability requires that the knowledge, skills and experiences of both women and men are incorporated in policies, which uphold the human rights of women and girls and ensure equality in all stages of the process of promoting environmental sustainability and the achievement of the SDGs.

Equitable participation in decision-making on natural resources management is critical for sustainable development. Ladies and gentlemen, ECOSOC and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) have an important role to play in drawing attention to women's rights and contributions to environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

On 18th February, ECOSOC will hold a special meeting to address the issue of reimagining equality, the nexus with racism, discrimination and inequalities in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We will focus on those interlinkages as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts.



Gender inequalities, in particular, have been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indigenous women and women living in rural areas are facing intersecting forms of discrimination and are often among the most seriously affected by the current crisis.

Our meeting in ECOSOC will seek to generate political support and global action for equality and non-discrimination for all, including women and girls.

I hope to see you all at this meeting, which will be webcast. In addition, this year's High-Level Political Forum will focus on how a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic can promote sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs.

Gender equality and the advancement of women are critical for ensuring that the recovery from the pandemic supports the transition to a more sustainable and equitable development.

The Forum will also include thematic reviews on a number of SDGs that are very relevant to today's topics, including SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

The HLPF this year will systematically integrate a gender perspective as it reviews and promotes progress towards the SDGs in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

I am glad that distinguished permanent representatives of Finland and Iraq have agreed to serve as the co-chairs to prepare for the outcome of the HLPF this year.

We need to step up our efforts and act together to raise awareness of the interlinkages between women's equality and environmental sustainability.

By enlarging the gender footprint on social, economic and environmental strategies, we can ensure sustainable solutions for communities and societies.

ECOSOC and the HLPF are fully committed to playing their parts and will continue to support and promote gender equality and the advancement of women in their work.

I thank you.