

UN Climate Change Conference COP 30 - Belém, Brazil
Side Event



United Nations
Climate Change



Powering Change: Gender-Transformative Climate and Energy Pathways

Location: D138, SDG Pavillion

Date: 12th November 2025

Time: 16:30 – 17:30 Brazil Local Time

Link for Live Streaming: <https://www.youtube.com/unitednationsDESA>

Session Co-Organizers:



GWNET
Global Women's Network
for the Energy Transition



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

GN  **SEC**
Global Network
Regional Sustainable
Energy Centres



**EQUALITY
IN ENERGY TRANSITIONS**
INITIATIVE OF THE CLEAN ENERGY MINISTERIAL

mPOWER
BRASIL

Side Event Description:

This event will spotlight gender-transformative pathways in climate and energy policy, presenting evidence, key entry points, and inclusive solutions to accelerate just and equitable energy transitions.

Women remain underrepresented across the energy sector and are disproportionately affected by energy poverty, health risks, and limited access to finance and technology. Gender-blind policies continue to exacerbate these inequalities. According to UN Women's latest Gender Snapshot, if current trends persist, 321 million women will still be without access to electricity by 2030, including 275 million in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Against this backdrop, the session will explore how gender-transformative energy and climate strategies, action plans, and data frameworks can empower women and enhance climate outcomes. It will highlight the economic, social, and environmental benefits of inclusion and diversity, such as improved profitability, innovation, and sustainability, and emphasize the need for gender-disaggregated data and indicators to track progress and accountability.

This event takes place at a pivotal moment, as COP30 will see the adoption of updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the revised UNFCCC Gender Action Plan—offering a crucial opportunity to embed gender equality at the heart of climate governance. It also contributes to the growing momentum toward the review of SDG7 at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2026, underscoring the urgent need for inclusive and equitable energy transitions.

The session will bring together representatives from member states, governments of the Gender and Energy Compact, UN agencies, women's networks, the private sector, financial institutions, and civil society organizations (CSOs). It will also include a joint commitment segment, inviting key stakeholders and new members to reaffirm and strengthen their pledges to advance gender equality in climate and energy planning and implementation.

By bridging policy, implementation, monitoring, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, the event aims to set the stage for sustained action and contribute to inclusive climate and energy transitions in line with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Audience Profile:

This event seeks to promote dialogue and collaboration among a diverse, cross-sectoral audience, providing practical insights and policy-relevant evidence to support the design and implementation of gender-responsive and transformative climate and energy strategies. Key target groups include:

- **Government representatives and policy advisors**, particularly those involved in:
 - Updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs);
 - Negotiating or implementing the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan;
 - Preparing for the review of SDG7 at the High-Level Political Forum in 2026.
- **Development partners and donors** supporting gender-transformative climate and energy programmes and looking to strengthen collaboration and impact.
- **Civil society organizations** advocating for gender equality, youth empowerment, and Indigenous rights within climate and energy policy processes.

- **Private sector actors**, including financial institutions and clean energy enterprises, interested in inclusive business models and gender-transformative investment strategies.
- **Youth leaders and activists** promoting climate justice and energy access initiatives.
- **Gender and climate policy experts** engaged in mainstreaming gender across national and international climate and energy frameworks, with a focus on inclusive energy transitions.
- **Energy sector professionals**, including those working in clean cooking, renewable energy, and infrastructure planning, who are advancing equitable and sustainable energy access.

Session Outcomes:

- **Enhanced commitments, political will, and intentional actions** to advance gender equality within climate and energy frameworks—aligned with the Paris Agreement, the forthcoming UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5 and SDG 7).
- **Strengthened global dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships**, fostering collaboration among key actors committed to achieving a gender-just, transformative, and inclusive energy transition.

Format of the session:

The session will be conducted in an interactive format to encourage lively discussion and active participation from all attendees. It will begin with welcome remarks to introduce the context and outline the objectives of the gathering, followed by high-level opening statements and scene-setting presentations to provide key insights and establish the foundation for the discussion. Subsequently, a high-level panel—featuring representatives from governments and member states, the private sector, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders, will share their perspectives and experiences on advancing gender-transformative climate and energy action.

Run of Show (60 Minutes)

Time	Segment
5 min	<u>Welcome & Introduction by Moderator:</u> Mr. Hans Olav Ibrekk, Policy Director, Energy and Climate Change, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Co-Facilitator of SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group
5 mins	<u>High-Level Opening remarks:</u> Mr. Ciyong Zou, Deputy to the Director General and Managing Director of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Industrial Development, UNIDO
5 mins	<u>Scene Setting:</u> Ms. Bridget Burns, Executive Director Women's Environment & Development Organization WEDO, member of the Women and Gender Constituency (TBC)
40 mins- (Max 5 minutes per speaker)	<u>High-level Panel Discussion</u> • H.E. Ms. María Erla Marelisdóttir, Climate Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iceland • Dr. Yusuf Mkungula, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change, Malawi (Tentative) • Ms. Jane Cohen, Senior Programme Manager – People-Centred Clean Energy Transitions, International Energy Agency (IEA) • Ms. Eduarda Zoghbi, Founder, MPower Brasil, Board Member, Student Energy, WiSER Pioneer • Mr. Marco Serena, Chief Sustainable Impact Officer, Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG)
5 mins	<u>Summary and Closing Remarks</u> Ms. Sophie Westlake, Deputy Director and Head, International Energy Unit, Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, UK Government

SPEAKER PROFILES

Moderator	
	<i>Mr. Hans Olav Ibrekk, Policy Director, Energy and Climate Change, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Co-Facilitator of SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group</i> Mr. Ibrekk has over 30 years of experience in government, international organizations, research, and consulting, covering development cooperation, climate change, energy, water resources management, environmental financing, and capacity building. He serves on the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and previously on the Board of the Adaptation Fund (2007–2017), including as Chair in 2013 and 2015. He is also the Ministry’s focal point for water and sanitation and has worked at Norad, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).
High-Level Opening remarks	
	<i>Mr. Ciyong Zou, Deputy to the Director General and the Managing Director of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Industrial Development</i> Mr. Zou leads UNIDO’s efforts on sustainable industrial development, supporting SDG implementation in environment, energy, and SME sectors, with a focus on competitiveness, job creation, digitalization, and AI. He is also the Director General’s Special Representative for the G77 and China. At UNIDO since 2013, he is the architect of the Programme for Country Partnership. Previously, he served in senior roles at the Chinese Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, and as China’s GEF Operational Focal Point.
	<i>Bridget Burns, Executive Director, Women’s Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)</i> Bridget is a feminist environmental activist specializing in gender equality, women’s rights, and climate justice. She has focused on integrating gender into UNFCCC decisions and serves as co-Focal Point of the Women and Gender Constituency, supporting women’s political participation in climate processes. Prior to WEDO, she worked at LEAD International coordinating global environmental leadership programs. Bridget holds a Master’s in Gender, Development, and Globalization from the London School of Economics and a Bachelor’s in International Policy, with practical experience in renewable energy, global health, disaster resilience, and women’s economic development across several countries.

	<i>H.E. Maria Erla Marelsdóttir, Climate Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iceland</i> H.E. Marelsdóttir is Climate Ambassador at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland and served as Iceland's first female ambassador to Germany (2019–2024). She has extensive experience in renewable energy and geothermal utilization and previously served as Director General for Development Cooperation, focusing on international partnerships in climate action. She holds a law degree from the University of Iceland and a Master of European Laws from Stockholm University.
	<i>Ms. Jane Cohen, Senior Program Manager- People Centered Clean Energy Transition, IEA</i> Jane Cohen is a Senior Programme Manager at the International Energy Agency and leads the People-Centred Clean Energy Transitions team. She has an extensive background in energy, environmental health, public health and human rights. She previously served as the Executive Director for the Governor's Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy, and as a Senior Policy Advisor for the Governor of New Jersey where she oversaw the environment and energy portfolios. While working for the Human Rights Watch's Health and Human Rights Division from 2007 to 2015, she used her investigative research skills to develop environment and human rights initiatives and conducted international advocacy on public health and environment issues.
	<i>Eduarda Zoghbi, Founder, MPower Brasil, Board Member, Student Energy and WiSER Pioneer</i> Eduarda Zoghbi is a Climate and Energy Specialist at the Climate Investment Funds and Founder of MPower Brasil, an initiative to increase women's participation and representation in the Brazilian energy sector. With over a decade of experience in international climate cooperation, Eduarda has been recognized Brazil Forbes Under 30, Reuters Future Leaders in Energy and World Energy Council FEL-100. Additionally, she is a Board at Student Energy and Fellow of the Atlantic Council's Women Leaders in Energy program. Her work has been distinguished internationally with awards, including GWEC's REvolutionaries, AMP's Global Youth Visionary, and NAAEE 30 Under 30. Eduarda holds an MPA in energy policy from Columbia University and a bachelor's in political science from the University of Brasilia.

	<i>Mr. Marco Serena, Chief Sustainable Impact Officer, Private infrastructure Development Group (PIDG)</i> Marco leads PIDG’s work on sustainable development impact, including investment assessments, monitoring, and programs on gender and climate. He has over 15 years of experience driving development impact in frontier markets through private investment. Previously, he led DFID’s Impact Investing team, supported AgDevCo, developed public-private partnerships in Africa, and held leadership roles in social enterprises and consultancy across multiple countries. Marco is also an associate member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
	<i>Ms. Sophie Westlake, Deputy Director, international energy team, UK Government</i> Sophie leads the UK government’s multilateral energy diplomacy, including negotiations at the G7 and G20, and bilateral energy dialogues with key partners. She previously led sustainable energy and climate policy at the Department of Education and has worked at the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. With a background in European energy policy, Sophie spent 10 years in Brussels, including as UK First Energy Secretary, and two years at the European Commission, DG Energy.