High Level Event:
Empowering Women in Climate Action
29th of September 2015, 8:00-9:30hrs
Conference Room 7, United Nations Headquarters

The government of France, together with the United Nations Development Programme and UN Women, are organizing a High Level Event on ‘Empowering Women in Climate Action’ during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, with the participation of the governments of Peru and Morocco. In the lead up to the Paris Climate Change Conference, where State parties will agree on a new agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is critical to look at the gender equality dimensions of climate action, so that the new climate agreement responds and contributes to the central role women play in building resilience and supporting low emission development. It is equally critical that any future climate agreement reduces, rather than exacerbates, gender inequalities.

The High Level Event on ‘Empowering Women in Climate Action’ will deliver a political statement on the importance of scaling up gender-responsive climate actions and empowering women as an effective response to climate change. The event will include a presentation by the Green Climate Fund on its gender policy and the prospects for financing, implementing, and assessing gender-responsive initiatives.

Background

Highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, women are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change. Across all regions, women lack equal rights and have less access than men to the productive resources, opportunities, information and decision-making power that build resilience and facilitate adaptation to the effects of climate change. Leveling this playing field would have a dramatic impact on the resilience of communities to climate change as well as on agricultural production and food security.
At the same time, women are powerful agents of change. Given their diverse roles as workers, farmers, entrepreneurs, consumers, networkers and contributors, women are key stakeholders and planners in responses to climate change. Their knowledge and experience can make climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies at all levels more successful. For example, if women farmers were given the same access to resources (such as land, finance and technology) as men, their agricultural yields could increase by 20-30%; national agricultural output could rise by 2.5-4%; and the number of malnourished people could be reduced by 12 to 17%.\(^1\)

Gender equality is not only a matter of human rights, but is also catalytic for development. The success of climate change actions depend on elevating women’s voices, making sure their knowledge, experiences and views are heard at decision-making tables and supporting them to become leaders in climate adaptation, in the use and production of renewable energy, and in green jobs and businesses.

Since 2007, there have been significant efforts to acknowledge gender and other social issues under the UNFCCC negotiations and they have now become one of the central components within formal discussions. As of 2010, gender references have included throughout outcome documents, and the adoption of Gender Decisions has also taken place in the most recent Conference of the Parties\(^2\). Moreover, the Green Climate Fund, a key mechanism for financing adaptation and mitigation actions, has integrated gender equality in its operational policies.

However, climate change responses will not be effective if they don’t systematically take into account gender equality and empower women. Throughout the world, small scale initiatives are addressing women’s vulnerability and agency in the areas of adaptation and in a lesser extent in mitigation, technology and climate finance. Nonetheless, there is still a need of scaling up effective gender sensitive initiatives into national climate policy frameworks.

Less than two months ahead of the opening of COP21, interested States are welcome to join this event to reiterate their commitment to the equal rights of men and women, recognize that women are specially affected by climate disruption and that their involvement is essential to the success of the fight against climate change, and support women’s participation in climate negotiations, and in the financing of measures of adaptation and mitigation.

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\(^1\) FAO, 2010-2011 State of Food and Agriculture

\(^2\) Gender Decision 23/CP.18 COP18 in Doha, FCCC/SBI/2013/L.13 COP19 in Warsaw and Gender decision 18/CP.20 COP20 in Lima
UN Secretariat
Conference Room 7
8:00-9:30am (1.5 hours)

Agenda

8:00 - 8:10  Welcome by Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator, UNDP (Chair)

8:10 - 8:20  Remarks by His Excellency Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Government of France

8:20 - 8:30  Remarks by His Excellency Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Minister for Environment and President of COP20, Government of Peru

8:30 - 8:40  Remarks by Her Excellency Hakima El Haite, Minister for Environment, Government of Morocco

8:40 - 8:50  Remarks by Her Excellency Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland

8:50 - 9:00  Video Message by Ms. Héla Cheikhrouhou, Executive Director, Green Climate Fund

9:00 - 9:10  Closing Remarks by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women

9:10 - 9:30  Questions and Answers Session