

Regional Meeting on Climate Change and Gender Equity

High Level Inauguration and
Session 1: Towards a transformative recovery for Sustainability and Gender Equality

September, 2nd, 2021

Key Messages Report

Background

The opening ceremony of the Regional Meeting on Climate Change and Gender Equity was held on the 2nd. The event was opened by the Minister of Environment of Chile and President of COP25 Carolina Schmidt, followed by Jolita Butckeviciene (Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) European Commission), María Noel Vaeza (Regional Director, UN Women) and Santiago Lorenzo, head of the Economics of Climate Change Unit of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

After the welcoming remarks, the first session: *“Towards a Transformative Recovery for Sustainability and Gender Equality”* began with the objective of exploring the regional state of the art in light of the advances at the international level in terms of challenges, opportunities and gaps regarding gender and climate change issues. For this purpose, a working document was presented by Pilar Román, from the Eurosocial+ Program of the European Union and the two gender experts also appointed for the task; Margarita Velázquez and Itzá Castañeda, which provided useful information and analysis on the main challenges highlighted in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the European Union regarding gender-climate change interlinkages.

Then, under the moderation of Paula Fuentes, COP 25 Advisor, a discussion was held together with Piedad Martín (Deputy Regional Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Office for Latin America and the Caribbean), Fleur Newman, (Gender and Climate Change Leader of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Ana Güzmes, (Director of the Division of Gender Affairs, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

The main messages of the session are summarized below.

High Level Key Messages

Minister Schmidt pointed out that the gender perspective plays a fundamental role due to the structural inequalities existing in society and that its inclusion in decision-making in order to overcome the gender gaps in all areas are key elements for progress. *“When women lead transformations, entire communities benefit from it”.*

Director Butkeviciene highlighted that evidence shows that women are disproportionately more vulnerable to the effects of climate change: their autonomy and adaptive capacity is limited by inequalities in access to land, natural resources or technology; which in turn, deepens gender gaps. In this context, it is essential to promote the integration of the gender approach in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies in order to advance in climate action and also in gender equality and women's empowerment.

For Santiago Lorenzo, this is a crucial moment for the Latin American and Caribbean region, the hardest scourge by the pandemic in different dimensions. He pointed out that setbacks in gender equality are another dimension of the pandemic and this is only the prelude to the climate emergency. A transformative recovery is needed to energize the economy through strategic sectors to achieving higher inclusion results and address the climate crisis with bold action.

On behalf of UN Women LAC, Director Noel emphasized that the discussion on climate change has been focused on economic and social aspects, without considering the gender inequalities that are reproduced and negatively impact women, so it is essential to address the issue of climate change from a gender lens. She stated that understanding the gender-environment nexus is not only key to analyzing social and environmental inequalities and barriers to sustainable development, but also to achieving transformative action.

Working Paper Key Messages

- Only with gender equality and a more active and equitable participation of women in decision making will truly effective climate action be possible in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Gender equality is key in driving a green and inclusive recovery in one of the regions of the world that have suffered from a hardest scourge by the pandemic and also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Among the structural causes of existing gender inequality in the region are the unequal distribution of domestic and care responsibilities in households, labor informality and the wage gap. Among the challenges for the aforementioned gaps are the data production for decision-

making, political will, capacity building, institutional arrangement mechanisms, and access to climate finance with a gender perspective.

- Progress has been made at the level of national and international regulatory frameworks, so now the challenge is to implement the commitments made. In order to comply with these commitments, institutional collaboration and articulation are key elements as well as learning to work together and approaching intersectoral work among ministries, sectors, actors.
- It is important to have sex-disaggregated data in specific contexts that will allow to construct responsive indicators for impact evaluations.
- Ensure gender-responsive climate finance.

The discussion revolved around two questions:

What key aspects of this working document stand out or particularly stand out to you, and what aspects do you think need to be further developed at the regional level?

- As presented in the working document, advances can be appreciated in the integration of the gender approach in climate change management, but they are still isolated. These efforts are reflected more in the NDCs than in the Long Term Climate Strategies and National Communications.
- The importance of the role of the circular economy in productive and reproductive work: what we value and how we value it is crucial to hold this discussion.
- We have the answers and the solutions: supporting women's organizations is a way to bring perspective into government and this is key if we are going to make this systemic change that is needed.
- We are at the forefront of the crisis by COVID which is health, social and economic; there is also a crisis of structural inequality and a climate crisis. But we are also experiencing a crisis of care for our planet, our health and society.
- Although we have the commitments and solutions, we understand pilot initiatives, with external funding and few political, economic, and fiscal pacts to make equality a central objective.
- Mainstreaming IS NOT ENOUGH, we must make structural changes for deep recovery.

- It is necessary to promote parity between men and women and commit ourselves to equality. Intersectionality is to bring to the forefront those who are traditionally left out, such as indigenous peoples, rural communities, Afro-descendants, migrants, etc.

From your agendas and workspaces, what are the advances in gender and climate change issues?

- UNEP has developed a key role as technical secretariat of the gender working group of the Forum of LAC Ministers of Environment and one of the priorities agreed by the group according to its work plan was i) Women in environmental decision making (ii) Integration of Human Rights and gender approach in NDCs.

The LAC region has been one of the hardest scourge in terms of COVID deaths, aggravated by vaccine shortages. Under this recovery all expenditures have been earmarked for emergency purposes, only 16% of GDP was allocated for recovery. The global amount of funds for green recovery is 19% but, in the region, only 2% was allocated for that goal. There is little fiscal space for recovery, but the money is invested in sectors that are not aligned with the Paris Agreement.

- The role of the Escazú Agreement and the protection of women environmental defenders for the peaceful and preventive resolution of conflicts is crucial.
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- In the framework of the UNFCCC, we observe that there is a consistent trend in increasing awareness of gender equality and climate change, the new and revised NDCs, adaptation plans and other communications we receive gradually incorporate the gender approach.
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- But we also see that it is not that more countries are referring to it, but an increase in deeper understanding of what it means to integrate gender into climate action in the last 5 years. We see that there is a link between the Lima Work Program, the Gender Action Plan and the awareness of the importance of investing in the work that needs to be done. It is important to recognize that there is a CHANGE.
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- There is a continued need and interest in communicating how and what is needed to be done on gender and climate change. Technical events are needed and there is interest from organizations and ministries.
- At the global level there are many commitments that can lead to duplication and confusion. So there is a need for greater consistency on what to report and where. For

this it crucial to share this critical information for accountability and progress and bring together the different regional and global agendas.

- UNFCCC joined UNEP, countries and civil society organizations to form a Climate Justice Coalition, connecting the pieces to the Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Action Plan.
- Among challenges there are data production and the persistent lack of gender balance in decision-making spaces, such as in states and businesses where key decisions are made about activities that can increase or decrease the effects of climate change. Decisions made today about infrastructure will have a long-term impact. There is a continuing sense of urgency.
- There is certainly a narrative in progress. Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world that for more than four decades has developed the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean that articulates progress on gender equality with an ambitious, progressive agenda. The last meeting with the Santiago Commitment includes considerations on climate change. The gender perspective must be central to the programs. It cannot arrive late, with lack of funding, it must be central in climate policies for adaptation and mitigation, sustainable development, as well as disaster reduction.
- Strengthening coordinated work between the mechanisms for the advancement of women and other sectors is still a major challenge. ECLAC is developing publications to support with evidence in this regard.

Along with implementation, it is necessary to ACCELERATE ACTIONS and RISE AMBITION to reduce inequality gaps. It is not possible to speak of economic autonomy without fulfilling the commitment of a life free of violence and free of discrimination.

- Next year, the Commission on the Status of Women will address gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of climate change in the context of disaster risk reduction as a central theme. ECLAC will be leading to regional consultation on a systematic basis.

This is the time for action, for results, for counter-cyclical policies, and for more key articulations focused on solutions.