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Commission on the Status of Women

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Agenda item 3

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Ministerial round table on “Women’s voice and agency: good practices towards achieving women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”

Chair’s summary

1. On 14 and 15 March 2022, the Commission on the Status of Women held a ministerial round table on “Women’s voice and agency: good practices towards achieving women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”, in the context of the priority theme “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”. Participants exchanged experiences, lessons learned and good practices in relation to the topic, with an emphasis on measures taken to promote women’s voice and agency, participation and leadership in climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and decision-making bodies.

2. The Minister for Welfare of Latvia, Gatis Eglītis, and the Deputy Minister of Forestry and the Environment of South Africa, Makhotso Magdeline Sotyu, chaired the round table on day one and made introductory remarks. The Deputy Executive Director for Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Āsa Regnér, summarized the key messages. Ministers and high-level officials from 22 Member States participated. The Minister for Women, Genders and Diversity of Argentina, Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta, chaired the round table on day two and made opening remarks. Ministers and high-level officials from 22 Member States and one



observer participated. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Capital Development Fund, Preeti Sinha, made closing remarks.

Recognizing the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

3. Ministers highlighted that gender inequality and climate change are two of the greatest challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and underscored the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and securing the political will of all stakeholders.

4. Ministers acknowledged that climate change and disasters affect women and men differently, with women most often bearing the brunt of the negative impact while simultaneously being the most likely to be activists for change and at the front lines of disaster risk response. Speakers emphasized that these gender-differentiated impacts are related to structural discrimination that constrains women from exercising their voice and agency. Accordingly, addressing the root causes of inequality and enabling women's voice and agency are critical for mainstreaming gender into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. Speakers also noted the importance of raising public awareness of women's agency and leadership in this area.

5. Speakers emphasized that climate change and environmental disasters exacerbate existing inequalities, including negative social norms, gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes, which affects women's representation in decision-making on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures across sectors.

6. Ministers highlighted strategies at the local, national and international level to reflect gender perspectives in energy, environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, economic empowerment, agriculture and disaster risk reduction plans and policies, including steps to address the needs of the most vulnerable, in particular those living in rural areas and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Speakers emphasized the importance of local and community involvement in developing policies and programmes, of engaging with women's civil society organizations and young people, and of building on local and indigenous knowledge. Speakers mentioned action plans and strategies that have been developed at the national level in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction, including some that explicitly mention women in leadership. At the international level, participants reaffirmed their commitment to multilateral cooperation and their support of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

7. Speakers emphasized the importance of addressing the specific needs of women in different contexts, as women are not a homogenous group, and the importance of a gender and diversity perspective when distinguishing groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Ministers recognized that rural women are disproportionately affected by droughts, changing rainfall patterns, crop failure and damaged infrastructure. Participants acknowledged the critical situation for women and girls in small island developing States.

8. Speakers underscored the lessons learned from addressing the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in terms of building social resilience, acknowledged that progress is insufficient and renewed their financial commitments to addressing climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction.

Measures to promote women's full and equal participation in climate change and disaster risk reduction discussions and decision-making

9. Ministers shared reports of progress in such areas as increased participation of women in elections and increased representation in parliament, leading ministries and private sector leadership positions. They acknowledged that efforts to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making are still at the early stages and that public awareness of the intersection between climate change and gender equality issues is low. Ministers emphasized that women's human rights were paramount when discussing any matters in this area.

10. Ministers provided examples of how to enable women's integration in the climate change discourse, with several underscoring the need to challenge the narrative that women are merely victims or subjects of climate change policy and to reframe women as leaders in coming up with solutions. Speakers noted that the knowledge and experience of indigenous women is crucial for managing climate change. Participants also mentioned the importance of including women early on in planning and early warning systems.

11. Speakers mentioned strategies to influence climate-related policies by increasing the number of women leading scientific institutions and by facilitating the access of women and girls to education programmes in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and information technology.

12. Speakers said that enabling the political participation and leadership of women, in particular young women, requires the full participation of civil society, community and indigenous women's organizations in climate change and environment management structures, in order for women to benefit equally from climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives. They recognized the increased vulnerability to violence and harassment faced by advocates and women participating in public spaces.

13. Ministers highlighted women's leadership in the private sector as an important goal in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction, and some noted the importance of temporary special measures and affirmative action to increase the number of women in leadership roles.

Best practices to promote women's economic empowerment in the context of climate change

14. Participants emphasized the need to empower women and reduce discrimination in the labour market to enable the full and effective economic participation of women, with the aim of increasing their resilience in the face of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.

15. Ministers acknowledged the critical issue of women's equitable access to resources such as land, water and education, on which many women's livelihoods depend and without equal rights to which their adaptive capacities and decision-making power are weakened.

16. Speakers underlined the need to address the disproportionate share of unpaid care, domestic and communal work borne by women, and acknowledged the increase in unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women during the pandemic. Ministers highlighted best practices for addressing this imbalance, including the provision of day care, nurseries and early childhood education.

17. Ministers provided details of practices aimed at promoting the ability of women to adapt to climate change, such as climate-resilient agriculture, with an emphasis on programmes targeting rural women. They underscored that the transition to a

sustainable economy should create opportunities that women can benefit from and shared information about various initiatives, such as equality labels for businesses and support for entrepreneurship.

Peace and security issues intersecting with women's voice and agency in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

18. Ministers expressed their support for and solidarity with women in Ukraine, who are facing an alarming humanitarian crisis and are victims of violence and discrimination but who are standing up as leaders. The speakers highlighted the interconnection between peace, security and human rights and the inter-relatedness of different crises, including climate change and environmental degradation, and their common disproportionate effect on women and girls.
