



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Sixty-sixth session**

14–25 March 2022

**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”**

### **Statement submitted by Christian Conference of Asia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), a regional ecumenical organisation comprised of 98 member churches and 21 national ecumenical councils representing 45 million Christians from Japan in the east to Iran in the west, and from Nepal in the north to New Zealand in the south, welcomes the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women's focus on 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" and the review theme, "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work", both of which are intrinsically connected. As a faith-based organisation, the CCA focuses on all these areas and concerns as part of its regular programmatic involvement. The CCA upholds the equality and dignity of all human beings, the care of creation, and the call for eco-justice with responsible stewardship.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its associated challenges of structural economic inequality and injustice have pushed the world into deep uncertainty with its compounded effects. Life as we know has been upended. However, the climate crisis remains unrelenting and unabated in its devastation. The COVID-19 pandemic is simply an additional layer of complexity over the climate crisis, revealing the imminent disasters if immediate action is not taken to mitigate it. In the long term, the toll of climate change on people's lives is set to supersede the impact of COVID-19.

Asia is home to the world's largest coastal population. Communities in low-lying coastal areas and floodplains comprise 90 percent of the world's population at risk of exposure to tropical cyclones. Rising sea levels coupled with cyclones of increasing intensity have repeatedly inundated Asia's coastal communities. Asia's large rural agrarian populations face food insecurity due to changes in crop production and yields, loss of arable land and potable water, and poverty due to a general increase in food prices and costs of living. The oil, gas, and mining sectors in several Asian countries are accused of environmental degradation and abject discrimination against indigenous Asian communities, robbing them of their rights to their ancestral land and livelihood.

The climate crisis renders sustainable development in Asia a distant dream, challenging fundamental goals such as equality, prosperity, and growth. Poor and vulnerable communities are threatened by increased inequity and loss of livelihoods as climate extremes limit their options to cope with adverse events and disasters. Competing national priorities and weak governance, concentrations of wealth and power in the hands of the powerful, limited awareness and capacities, limited financial resources, and institutional barriers further impede the resolution of the climate crisis.

Just as climate change affects regions very differently, it also impacts men and women very differently. The climate crisis is pushing women back into regressive gendered roles and responsibilities in households and communities. It threatens to reinforce gender inequalities or even erode the progress that has been made towards gender equality in many developing countries, especially in Asia, as women are expected to shoulder the increased burden of climate change. Poor women's limited access to resources, restricted rights, limited mobility, and lack of representation in decision-making positions can render them more vulnerable to the compounded effects of climate change, affecting their resilience and abilities of adaptation and mitigation.

The health risks triggered by climate change are borne by all people, but it is undeniable that disproportionate impact of climate change is borne by women and

girls. Scarcity of water in rural Asian communities leads to poor maternal health and menstrual hygiene with unintended consequences such as school dropouts and effects on mobility.

Women must be considered as valuable agents of change and not defined only by their vulnerability. Women have been at the forefront of several environmental, social justice, and political movements, demanding change and developing solutions. These efforts are often unpaid, underfunded, or unrecognised, and are carried out by those women who already shoulder the responsibility for family and community wellbeing. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, women activists, leaders, and human rights defenders have continually articulated the multifaceted nature of the climate crisis and the deep and fundamental changes needed for a sustainable future.

Although the window of opportunity is narrowing, fighting climate change is still possible with concerted and collaborative action. The most vulnerable among us are disproportionately affected when those in power refuse to acknowledge or take responsibility for the onslaught and alarming frequency of climate-related events. Thus, the CCA calls upon the United Nations member states and the international community to:

Prioritise the climate crisis by being accountable for their obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, along with commitments of the Paris Climate Accord, the Biodiversity Convention and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

- Enhance allocations for climate financing, especially for Asian developing countries, to help tackle a problem caused mainly by industrialised countries;
- Promote policy-making and transnational action in pursuit of a just transition to green and low-carbon economies that fully respects the rights of women to secure and sustainable employment and livelihoods;
- Increase the representation of women in climate-negotiating bodies and other decision-making platforms at all levels;
- Integrate the needs and concerns of different groups of women, such as climate refugees, migrant and displaced women, those grappling with food insecurity, women food producers, indigenous women, rural women, and other affected communities.

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