



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 December 2021

Original: English

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 International Network of Liberal Women, and Liberal International, non-governmental organizations 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is one of Liberal International's strongest strategic pillars. This implies enhancing the role of women as drivers of poverty reduction, recognizing their crucial contribution to political leadership, human rights protections, and prevention of climate change, and directly contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water, clean environment, innovation and infrastructure, and to Goal 5 on gender equality.

Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (A/47/38), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention and Protocol on Water and Health, the Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1) the Katowice Climate Package (4/CMA.1, 10/CMA.1, 12/CMA.1, 15/CMA.1, 18/CMA.1, 20/CMA.1), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, and Articles 2, 3, 21, 22, 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Liberal International reiterates that women's leadership in the governance of access to water is central to effective climate adaptation and mitigation, the improvement of human rights situations in developing countries, and to the empowerment of women in all aspects of life.

As established by United Nations Water, the absence of safe drinking water and effective sewage and sanitation systems imposes serious limitations on the economic, political, and societal emancipation of women. First, water collection, usually performed by women, is an arduous and time-consuming domestic burden that impacts their capacity to develop other skills, attend schools, or work. Second, the process of water collection and the use of open defecation sites leaves women vulnerable to abuse and attack. Third, women have water-specific needs during menstruation, pregnancy, and child-rearing.

According to United Nations Environment Programme (2016), nearly half of the global population will face water scarcity by 2030. While women are primarily responsible for water provision and its domestic and agricultural use, they are traditionally excluded from its management.

Considering the compounded vulnerability of women in the event of the climate crisis and their unique expertise in resource management, it is critical that women are elevated to positions of decision-making and leadership when it comes to planning mitigation, adaptation, strategizing at every level of development and climate planning.

Water management is an excellent lens through which to politically empower women and address the climate crisis because it is deeply embedded in traditionally gendered divisions of labour, it elevates women as political decision-makers on the basis of that expertise, it provides women with an opportunity to access new skills training and technologies in terms of implementing projects and repairing existing infrastructure, it impacts carbon production and food waste in agriculture, it decreases fuel needed to transport water to water-scarce communities, it directs development projects through a human rights-oriented and climate-mitigating prism, and it permits the focusing of gender equality and gendered division of resources into climate-mitigating development projects and at all levels of political decision-making.

Therefore, the solutions to meaningful women's inclusion in politics, improving the safeguarding of human rights, empowering women at a grassroots level, and effectively planning to address the impacts of climate change are all impacted by the challenge water scarcity.

Women and girls possess particular local expertise in the management of household and local resources and accessing water systems. As noted by the Food and Agriculture Organization, women farmers are generally more effective custodians of the water in its agricultural use. They are usually the first to effectively adopt new technologies and tend to be more efficient in their use of water while preserving soil fertility and increasing crop yields. In the last decade, 55% of the improvement in water, food, security in developing countries came from programmes promoting women and girls' empowerment.

However, women's ability to maximize resource stewardship is limited by uneven legal restrictions on their right to access financial loans and to access, inherit, and own land. The legal restrictions suffered by women are made more rigid by lack of meaningful gender representation and women's influence in political bodies, whose issues are less likely to appear or be progressively considered on political agendas.

To empower women to produce more effective water scarcity mitigation and adaptation strategies that produce fruitful outcomes for human rights, it is of utmost importance that at the highest levels of political decision-making and resource allocation, women are actively included, protected, supported, and listened to.

Liberal International implores this body to ensure the meaningful participation of women with diverse backgrounds in relevant decision-making processes, as this lies at the heart of a human rights-based, gender-responsive approach to climate change and will improve climate action outcomes.

Liberal International calls thus upon the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and its member states to:

Design and implement its programming recognizing the link between women's political empowerment, more effective climate change mitigation and adaptation, and better human rights outcomes;

Ensure that women are meaningfully included, supported, and have influence in political decision-making bodies;

Include women in all aspects of development planning and programmatic implementation dealing with water scarcity, hygiene, and sanitation, including consultation, funding, leadership, infrastructure instalment, and training;

Integrate the requirement of women's inclusion, participation, and improved welfare into funding and training resources and programmes and the evaluation of their outcomes;

Conduct gendered analysis when considering adaptation and mitigation options and when monitoring the impacts of programs addressing water scarcity, hygiene, and sanitation;

Advocate that women have equal legal rights to own, access, and inherit land;

Advocate that women have equal legal rights to access financial loans;

Progressively eliminate inequalities in access to water and sanitation by 2030.