



## Economic and Social Council

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

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**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 Young Diplomats of Canada, 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

### **Addressing the unique risks faced by girls and young women in climate change policies**

The climate emergency is a matter of social and intergenerational justice where those who contribute least to the problem are suffering its worst impacts. Children and young people, particularly girls, people of colour, and Indigenous people, are disproportionately impacted by a changing climate and ecological damage and bear the greatest future impacts, despite contributing the least to their causes. Due to this, those most at risk also face intense consequences of our current climate emergency.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction requires policies and programmes that understand the unique risks faced by young women during our climate emergency. It is important to consider the following:

The inequality and discrimination experienced every day by marginalized girls and young women is exacerbated by climate change and ecological damage. Specifically, during and after extreme weather events, women and girls are at increased risk of violence and exploitation, including sexual and physical abuse and trafficking.

We know the solution cannot be achieved without education for all. Education is a key component of fighting against gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, which is heightened during times of crisis and disaster-induced displacement.

During periods of crisis, girls are often forced to drop out of school, where they are best able to learn about the climate emergency and how to deal with its impacts, which in turn limits future economic and livelihood opportunities.

In situations of economic instability and humanitarian crises, including those caused by climate change, child marriage is often seen as a relief from financial burdens on families. Women and girls, who are often in positions of less economic power, have less resources to adapt or rebuild from climate-related disasters.

Disruptions to health services often lead to unplanned pregnancies, sexual and reproductive health problems, and reduced access to adequate care – issues which are further exacerbated by food insecurity. Climate crises create food insecurity, and women and girls are more likely to go hungry and suffer from certain diseases due to malnutrition and lack of water, especially if they are menstruating, pregnant or are young mothers.

The climate crisis is reinforcing gendered labour, as domestic responsibilities such as food collection and caregiving are intensified during times of crisis and are disproportionately shouldered by women and girls.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of the climate emergency and ecological crisis, disaster risk reduction policies and programs must:

- Understand the unique risks faced by young women, protect their right to education, support the integration of climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience into education curricula, and expand risk reduction investments in all education systems;
- Emphasize adaptive response measures that support women and girls during a crisis;

- Ensure that women and girls' voices are meaningfully represented in the design of, and decision-making processes for, climate and environment programs and strategies;
- Respect the leadership of young women in holding political leaders to account by investing in education programs that develop girls' leadership skills, and protecting their rights and safety online;
- Provide equal economic opportunities to young women in the transition to a low carbon and sustainable future;
- Support gender-inclusive and transformative climate adaptation, environmental conservation, restoration and disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness initiatives that work to limit the disproportionate impacts of disasters on vulnerable and marginalized groups; and,
- Deliver climate justice so that rich countries, who are historically responsible for the most emissions, provide support for communities and youth and women's rights organizations around the world to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of the climate emergency.

Without considering and implementing the aforementioned points, those most at risk will continue to bear a majority of the impacts on their future. If we aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes must understand the unique risks faced by young women.

This statement is endorsed by Plan International, Inc., an ECOSOC-accredited organization.

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