



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

Agenda item 3 (b)

**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”: emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men**

### **Interactive dialogue on the focus area and emerging issue “Getting back on track: achieving gender equality in a context of overlapping emergencies”**

#### **Chair’s summary**

1. On 16 March 2023, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on the focus area and emerging issue “Getting back on track: achieving gender equality in a context of overlapping emergencies”. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Māris Burbergs (Latvia), made an introductory statement and chaired the dialogue. The following speakers made opening remarks: the Executive Director of the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion and the National Convener of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Do not break your promises) campaign, Annie Namala; the Deputy Director of Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Lauren Phillips; a senior lecturer in economics at The Open University, Jerome de Henau; Gender Adviser at SERVIR Amazonia, Marina Irigoyen; the Founder and Executive Director of the Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development, Hamsatu Allamin; the Chief of the Economic Empowerment Section of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Jemimah Njuki; and the Chair of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Mary Wangui Mugwanja. Representatives from 16 Member States, one observer and one representative from a United Nations organization contributed to the dialogue. Representatives from five non-governmental organizations also provided their views.



### **Overlapping emergencies affecting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

2. Speakers expressed concern about the existence of multiple overlapping emergencies and the resulting adverse impact on gender equality. They noted that the compounded effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and conflict had reversed gains made in gender equality and that, based on the current pace of progress, it was projected to take approximately 300 years to attain gender equality. Speakers highlighted that COVID-19, climate change and conflicts had widened the pre-existing inequalities between men and women in terms of food security and malnutrition, as underscored by the fact that, in 2021, 150 million more women around the world faced food insecurity than men and 8.4 times more women faced food insecurity that year than in 2018. Furthermore, they added that 25 million more women and girls lived in extreme poverty than men and boys. In that context, speakers argued that it was critical to prioritize gender-responsive climate-resilient food programmes that were also aimed at addressing women in vulnerable situations, disabled women and girls and women and girls living in rural areas.

3. A number of speakers also expressed their concerns about the use of sexual violence by armed groups as a means to attain political or military objectives. They noted that perpetrators of such crimes, including abduction and forced marriages, often exhibited signs of radicalization and indoctrination, capitalizing on the vulnerability of women and girls, which, they argued, originated from poverty, isolation and gender inequality. They added that women and girls who were displaced by conflict were particularly vulnerable to trafficking and were more likely to experience poverty and malnutrition linked with limited economic opportunities. The speakers stated that addressing the impact of conflicts required an intersectional approach, as well as a focus on social justice and human rights and the use of technology.

4. As digital platforms and innovation play a significant role in attaining sustainable development, participants emphasized the importance of data collection and community-based monitoring processes to identify key issues and develop targeted policies to promote women's empowerment. Speakers argued that there was a need to focus on marginalized communities and people in rural areas, who often lacked access to information, by establishing local initiatives. They noted that geographic isolation, language barriers and illiteracy resulted in poor public representation, thus highlighting the need for capacity-building, education and technology to overcome the gender gap. As poverty and inequality led to an increase in the vulnerability of women and girls in rural areas, collective action to develop educational gender-responsive climate-resilient programmes were essential to ensure equal opportunities for all.

### **Strategies and best practices**

5. Several delegations presented examples of actions taken to address the effects of the pandemic and its disproportionate impact on women and girls, such as establishing gender-related policies, addressing gender-based violence during lockdowns and providing funding and implementing reforms to achieve inclusive economic growth. Some noted that the pandemic had catalysed the use of digital technology to empower women and highlighted how they were providing training to help women to acquire digital skills and find flexible employment arrangements. They also highlighted how the use of digital technologies had helped to simplify and expedite administrative procedures and services during conflict and underscored the importance of increasing digital literacy to leave no one behind.

6. Highlighting that women continued to bear a disproportionate burden in the domestic sphere, with unpaid work and childcare responsibilities, participants called for the establishment of affordable high-quality care services, and delegations shared steps taken to redistribute the burden of unpaid care work equally between women and men through the introduction of family-friendly policies. Regarding humanitarian emergencies, speakers underscored the importance of gender responsive emergency preparedness and the need to include women in all aspects of humanitarian action so that entire communities could benefit. Delegations also described their initiatives to promote women's leadership and meaningful participation.

#### **Key actions to strengthen policies and recovery efforts**

7. Participants proposed a number of actions to strengthen policies and recovery efforts and empower women and girls affected by overlapping emergencies. Several speakers highlighted the need to collect more up-to-date and reliable sex-disaggregated data to monitor the impacts of crises on gender equality and to inform policies, programmes and investment plans. They also noted that citizen- and community-generated data could be an important tool to fill data collection gaps and strengthen an intersectional approach. Speakers further stressed the need to prioritize universal, gender-responsive social protection systems to provide a bulwark against economic and environmental shocks and conflicts and address the specific risks and challenges faced by women and girls. More specifically, speakers highlighted the need to invest in affordable high-quality care services, while noting that the care economy was critical to support women's entry or re-entry into the labour force and for the well-being of children and older persons.

8. In addition, participants stressed the need to mainstream intersectional approaches into policies and programmes – from designing technologies and innovative instruments, to ensuring women's and girls' equal access to digitalized tools and services – by respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls in all their diversity. To combat food insecurity, speakers highlighted the need to prioritize transitions with gender-responsive climate-resilient food systems at the centre to address the interrelated food, jobs, care and climate crises. They also suggested to strengthen the nexus between the policy domains of gender equality and women's empowerment and food security and nutrition, arguing that those often remained disconnected at the country and international levels and noting that objectives in food security and nutrition were rarely reflected in gender-related policies, and vice versa.