
LAC Regional consultation prior to the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Special session: regional consultation prior to the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Consultation ahead of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held in New York from 14th to 25th March 2022.

I would like to begin by thanking **Alicia Bárcena**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

It has been an honour to co-organize this special session with you, Alicia. And as this will be your last regional consultation in your capacity as Executive Secretary, I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound appreciation for the work that you have done. Your strategic vision and leadership have transformed the economic agenda in ECLAC, elevating gender equality and women's rights to the centre of the Sustainable Development Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I am tremendously grateful for your close collaboration with UN Women to jointly develop the strategic agenda of the Regional Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with our work together on the COVID-19 response and the prioritization of the care economy as key for recovery and women's empowerment.

Particularly inspiring is your vision of the urgent need for a new social contract; one that will create a care society to address the pandemic and rebuild more resilient and sustainable societies in LAC.

Let me also gratefully recognize:

Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta, Minister of Women, Gender and Diversity of Argentina – who joins in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women

in Latin America, and representative of the country Vice-Chair of CSW on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC);

Mónica Zalaquett, Minister of Women and Gender Equity of Chile, for the virtual co-organization of the 62nd meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean;

All the **Ministers and high authorities** of the Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean;

María-Noel Vaeza, UN Women Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean;

And **all the UN officials, civil society and women's organizations that are actively engaged in this process.**

Excellencies, our CSW 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”, gives us the chance to tackle critical **interconnected** issues.

Since 2020, we have emphasized the many ways in which women are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; something which is still a major concern for the LAC region.

These pandemic-related impacts have also affected recent advances in addressing the existing crisis of poverty and inequality in the region, something which is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this challenging context, business as usual is not acceptable. We must work more comprehensively to **transform the social norms** that normalize gender-based violence, poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

Addressing the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on women and girls requires **transformational policy solutions.**

We know that the impacts of climate change exacerbate gender-based risk factors.¹ For example, climate change and disasters affect **women’s economic, physical and political autonomy**. And women and girls experience **higher rates of violence** in emergency shelters after disasters, due to a lack of privacy and safe gender-responsive sanitation facilities.

In 2005, CSW recognized that “the promotion of women’s economic autonomy and non-discrimination policies are necessary elements for sustainable economic growth and sustainable development; and that the gender-based division of labor limits women’s ability to gain economic autonomy, access to social security systems and build economic stability, including their ability to withstand adverse economic environments and preserve livelihoods, assets and revenue in times of crisis.”

We therefore call upon national authorities to guarantee the provision of essential services for prevention, response and recovery from sexual and gender-based violence in contexts of climate and environmental crises and disasters.

In the preparatory documents for the CSW, coproduced with ECLAC and UNDRR in LAC, we have identified important policy advances in this regard. However, **national legal and policy frameworks on climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction do not yet provide a cohesive basis for gender-responsive governance**.

Ample evidence confirms that the **participation and leadership of women in natural resource management and climate interventions leads to better governance**, yet ensuring women’s participation in decision-making also remains largely absent from these national frameworks.

Achieving climate stabilization and environmental sustainability with gender equality and care at the centre requires a **cultural change in production and consumption patterns** and significantly increased **public and private financing**.

¹ Owren C., (2021), Understanding and addressing gender-based violence as part of the climate emergency, UN Women : https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/66/EGM/Expert%20Papers/Cate%20WREN_CSW66%20Expert%20Paper.pdf

We must continue to learn from the scientific alerts on the current climate change crisis and adapt our policies accordingly. Equally important is adopting other forms of knowledge that you have in this region.

For instance, indigenous women’s connection to their territory and the defense of water and nature are key to environmental conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk reduction.

Their ancestral knowledge can positively contribute to the circular economy, ecological transition and the consolidation of clean and safe energies.

It is also important to recognize that **women environmental human rights defenders’ organizations – including indigenous women – are particularly vulnerable to rising threats and acts of gender-based violence, especially in LAC**, as they seek to protect natural resources from unsustainable exploitation.

Ensuring their protection and human rights must be a top priority.

The 2020 review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action called for gender-responsive policies, programmes and funding for effective natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, environmental governance and climate action. This was identified as critical within the framework of a just transition with decent work, care and social protection for all at the centre.²

I am pleased that **LAC has been leading several of these international negotiations** and that you are now positioning **the care agenda** at the centre of recovery.

In this sense, I would like **to recognize the vision for gender equality and women’s rights that Latin America and the Caribbean have maintained** for the past 40 years through the Regional Conference on Women.

² E/CN.6/2020/3.

We need to pay particular attention to women and girls in **Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States**, since they are among the most vulnerable to climate change. During the regional consultation will hear several voices from the **Caribbean countries** that are facing increased impacts of these interlinked crises and we should all learn from their experience.

I call upon all delegations to continue to advance this transformative agenda regionally, and at the multilateral level, to **ensure a strong outcome document in the next CSW**. Together we must seize this opportunity to strengthen the interlinked efforts needed to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and achieve the SDGs.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the importance of this **increased coordination with ECLAC to join efforts within the UN system**, together with all LAC member states and CSOs, to implement the Regional Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

You can count on UN Women to continue working with you all to place women and girls at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery, and at the forefront of actions on climate, the environment and disaster risk reduction.

I thank you all.