



**United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**

**Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of International Women’s Day 2022 (IWD 2022)
“Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow”**

**Tuesday, 8 March 2022, 10:00AM – 11:30AM
(Thailand Time Zone: GMT+7)**

Concept Note

1. Introduction

International Women’s Day, 8 March 2022 (IWD 2022) presents an opportunity to reflect on the progress made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality within the context of a “Sustainable Tomorrow”. In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of International Women’s Day 2022, jointly convened by ESCAP and UN Women, will acknowledge the remarkable roles and contributions of women and girls within communities and countries in Asia and the Pacific, specifically towards achieving SDG 13 on Climate Action.

The theme ‘**Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow**’ will discuss the gendered nature of climate change as well as women and girls’ involvement in climate change adaptation, mitigation and response. This also aligns with the priority theme of the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, ‘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’.

Advancing gender equality within the context of the climate crisis and disaster risk reduction remains one of the key challenges of the 21st century, with women and girls amongst the most affected population groups.¹ The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the most comprehensive and progressive blueprint for women’s empowerment to date – identified ‘Women and the Environment,’ as one of the twelve pillars for achieving gender equality. It emphasized the need to ensure women’s participation at all levels of environmental decision-making. More recently, the 2016 Paris Agreement noted the differentiated needs, experiences, priorities and capacities of women and men² and the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact Decision urged parties to raise ‘the full, meaningful and equal participation of women in climate action and to ensure gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation’.³

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories>

² <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf>

³ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cop26_auv_13%20gender_and_climate_change.pdf

While the importance of a gender-lens in climate action has permeated international dialogue, it has been largely overlooked within the Asia and Pacific region. There has been a narrow assimilation of a gender-lens in climate action across several governments⁴, and only a limited collection of gender-disaggregated data to monitor the progress towards the Beijing Declaration's outlines.⁵

A key challenge derives from this, due to the augmentation of climate impacts and the intensification of the gendered conditions of climate change, with women and girls experiencing increasing instability and disproportionate inequalities. Moreover, this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Societal norms and attitudes envisage women and girls to carry the additional work and emotional burden of the COVID-19 and climate crises, also amplifying the care crisis.

The interlocking of these COVID-19, climate and care crises have been embedded in an economic system that encompasses freeriding on women's unpaid and underpaid labour and the exploitation of the natural environment. It has resulted in an acute disproportionate concentration of wealth and power amongst a few and a deep-rooted sense of insecurity across others.⁶

At the forefront, however, women and girls' involvement in climate action is leading to heightened advancements,⁷ and if administered appropriately, changing societal norms can generate entry points for women's economic empowerment at the frontlines of climate action.⁸ Youth voices in particular have played a key role in advancing action on climate change. To highlight the role of youth, the winners of the Youth Ambassador for a Day contest will participate in the IWD commemoration and several winners will be featured in the programme. Youth applicants submitted video entries on how to address a social issue affecting women and girls in their communities and the winners shadow women Ambassadors or leaders from the Diplomatic Corps and United Nations in Thailand on International Women's Day.

International Women's Day dialogue, therefore, offers a platform for the strategic exchange of good practices and progressive measures to address the critical barriers to women's empowerment within the context of climate change in the region. It represents a call to change in order to enable the increased participation of women and girls at all levels of environmental decision-making; pertinent to building back a better, stronger and more sustainable future for all.

2. Objectives

The objective of the Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2022 is to discuss the ways in which ESCAP member States and other key stakeholders can accelerate progress towards incorporating a gender-lens in climate action, and facilitate a general consensus on strategies for advancing key frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the

⁴ UN Women. (2020). *Climate Change, Gender Equality and Human Rights in Asia: Regional Review and Promising Practices*. New York: UN Women. Available from:

https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2021/02/ap-hrcc-report_online-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=4426

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. (2020). *Women and the Environment: 25 Years On*. Available from:

<https://www.unep-wcmc.org/news/women-and-the-environment--25-years-on>

⁶ UN Women. (2021). *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*. New York: UN Women. Available from:

<file:///C:/Users/natas/Downloads/Feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice-en.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/announcement/2021/12/international-womens-day-2022-gender-equality-today-for-a-sustainable-tomorrow>

⁸ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-climate-and-security-en.pdf>

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); as well as the Paris Agreement and subsequent climate accords.

In particular, it aims to enable the exchange of knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned with respect to the progressive implementation of Beijing+25 commitments on 'Women and the Environment' in Asia and the Pacific, including within the context of worsening climate change impacts and the COVID-19 pandemic. The commemoration will facilitate the exchange of progressive policies, promising practices and forward-looking initiatives on incorporating women and girls into all levels of environmental decision-making within Asia and the Pacific and focus on how to help them mitigate, adapt and respond to disasters.

It serves as a forum for policy dialogue, capacity building and networking for stakeholders, in order to:

- Enhance the knowledge of participatory gender-responsive approaches to the design, implementation and monitoring of gender equality within the context of climate action, and broaden the assimilation of a gender-climate lens,
- Share lessons learned and discuss prevalent challenges faced by women and girls in the context of climate change adaptation, mitigation and response, and discuss national priorities for advancing gender equality
- Promote the sharing of experiences and good practices related to collecting gender-disaggregated data within the context of climate change, and valuing of women and girls' inputs in the Asia-Pacific, with a view to providing recommendations for concrete future policy initiatives related to the above regard.

3. Participants

The Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2022 will bring together government officials, experts and professionals working towards spotlighting the gendered nature of climate change and the involvement of women and girls in all levels of environmental decision-making, in addition to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Declaration and international climate commitments. Participants will be comprised of members of the diplomatic community, policymakers, representatives from civil society organisations and the private sector, representatives of relevant UN agencies, and other stakeholders across Asia and the Pacific.

4. Modality/Structure of event

The Asia-Pacific Regional Commemoration of IWD 2022 will be convened virtually using the Zoom platform. It will be conducted through an interactive format to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, good practices and lessons learned by representatives from countries in Asia and the Pacific. Participants may ask questions during the Q&A session(s) via the chatbox function and/or share their own observations and experiences through brief interventions.

5. Links to key documents

[Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+25 Review](#)

[Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+25 Review](#)

[Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the Parties: Paris Climate Agreement Report](#)

[Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties \(COP 26\): Glasgow Climate Compact](#)

[United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP and UNDP/PA/UNEP Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change](#)
[UNESCAP Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021](#)

[UNESCAP Harnessing Environmental Action for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific](#)

[UN Women Climate Change, Gender Equality and Human Rights in Asia: Regional Review and Promising Practices](#)

6. Contacts

Ms. Cai Cai, Chief of Section, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP caic@un.org

Ms. Channe Lindstrøm Oguzhan, Social Affairs Officer, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP lindstromoguzhan@un.org

Mr. Emad Karim, Advocacy & Campaigns Coordinator, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women, emad.karim@unwomen.org

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provides an inclusive intergovernmental platform for governments and other stakeholders in the region to accelerate the implementation of global gender equality commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

ESCAP works to ensure that gender equality is addressed holistically in order to develop forward-looking strategies and contribute to efforts towards gender equality, poverty reduction, and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and benefit women and girls worldwide.

UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific located in Bangkok, covers a total of 42 countries and exercises its triple mandate and functions at a regional level and in support of UN Women's offices and UN Country Teams in 24 countries across the region.

7. Background: The Gendered-Nature of Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to, pose a number of challenges to socio-economic development within Asia and the Pacific, exacerbating inequalities – particularly heightening the risks and vulnerabilities faced by women and girls – and slowing the progress towards achieving the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development conveyed women’s economic participation and empowerment to be paramount to achieving equitable and comprehensive development.

Women and girls, however, are still experiencing disproportionate effects from the pandemic, with extensive consequences. Domestic abuse rates have mushroomed, as have job losses and unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities – often at the expense of women and girls’ mental and physical health – and child marriages and female genital mutilations are predicted to rise.⁹ The pandemic has also spotlighted the imminent environmental and climate crisis, which, similar to the pandemic, has already begun to erode the hard-fought gains on gender equality.¹⁰

Climate change presents one of the most pertinent threats to human welfare globally, with rising temperatures, water scarcity and more recurrent and multifaceted weather events holding severe human health, security and livelihood repercussions.¹¹ Experts have underscored the importance of understanding and responding to the channels in which gender norms, expectations and power structures identify how men and women encounter, participate in and respond to climate-related security risks.¹²

In his 2019 Annual Report on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General affirmed that “the global threat of climate change and environmental degradation is poised to exacerbate the already increasing number of complex emergencies, which disproportionately affect women and girls. There is therefore an urgent need for better analysis and concrete, immediate action to address the linkages between climate change and conflict from a gender perspective”.¹³

The intersection between climate change and gender equality has, therefore, permeated international dialogue, with a rising number of recent laws and frameworks on the issue. It has, however, been largely overlooked within Asia and the Pacific, with only a narrow incorporation of gender issues into climate change policies and commitments. Actors have also made limited progress towards integrating gender into climate action entails in practice.

ESCAP’s 2021 report on the progress towards achieving SDGs indicated that the Asia-Pacific region is moving in the reverse direction on climate action. If efforts are not accelerated to adopt national disaster risk reduction strategies to mitigate, adapt and build resilience towards disasters, the region will likely miss its 2030 objectives for SDG 13. To change current trends, experts denote it is imperative that some of the major

⁹ Refer to footnote 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ IPCC. (2014). “Summary for Policymakers.” In *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. C.B. Field, V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White. Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1–32. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>.

¹² UNEP, UN Women, UNDP and UNDPPA/PBSO. (2022). *Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*. New York: UN Women Headquarters. Available from:

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-climate-and-security-en.pdf>

¹³ United Nations Security Council. (2019). S/2019/800. Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General.

economies within the region achieve their commitments to net-zero emissions.¹⁴ The region not only accounts for over 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions but has also seen no progress since 2015 in protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and conserving biodiversity, with ocean health continuing to deteriorate.¹⁵

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) expressed that persons socially, economically, culturally or otherwise marginalised, are particularly susceptible to climate change. This is the outcome of a conjunction of social processes that lead to inequalities around socioeconomic status, income and exposure, such as – but not limited to – discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity and disability.¹⁶ These have intensified inequalities within and between countries.

The effect of various climate change crises have been recorded by stakeholders within the Asia-Pacific region, encompassing sea-level rises; extreme weather events (including typhoons, droughts and wildfires); water and food scarcity; and heightened vulnerabilities to disease outbreaks (both water-borne and vector-borne).¹⁷ Labelled 'the most disaster-prone region in the world'¹⁸ the key concern follows its susceptibility due to its geographical exposure to environmental shocks and stressors – resulting from housing vast coastlines, low-lying territories and multiple small island states – in addition to the considerable systemic social inequalities present.

A 2019 report by ESCAP discerned an average of 142 million people in the Asia-Pacific region have been impacted annually by natural disasters since 1970, which exceeds the global average of 38 million,¹⁹ and rose from 1.2 million in 1980 to 18 million in 2010 within the Pacific alone.²⁰

Women working in agriculture are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of disasters. Women generate roughly 60 to 80 per cent of the food within developing countries, however, inheritance and other laws predominantly hinder their ability to acquire, manage or lease land, in addition to securing the appropriate loans and investments to do so.²¹ Where women do not maintain pronounced agency, voice and rights, they are impeded from preparing for, or re-building after, natural disasters, or generating sustainable businesses that protect the natural environment.

In the same regard, a large proportion of women within rural areas are the principal resource managers for their families and are increasingly dependent on the natural environment for survival, however, climate change is hindering their ability to conduct tasks that sustain their livelihoods, and progressively increasing their vulnerability to environmental shocks in comparison to men. The disruption of ecosystems prevents their

¹⁴ UNESCAP. (2021). *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021*. Bangkok: UNESCAP. Available from: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ESCAP_Asia_and_the_Pacific_SDG_Progress_Report_2021.pdf

¹⁵ UNESCAP. (2018). *Harnessing Environmental Action for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*. Bangkok: UNESCAP. Available from: [Harnessing Environmental Action for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific](https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2019)

¹⁶ Refer to footnote 9.

¹⁷ World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2020). *2020 State of Climate Services: Risk information and early warning systems*. Geneva: WMO. Available from https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=10385

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2019>

²⁰ UN Women. (2014). *Climate Change, Disasters and Gender-Based Violence in the Pacific*. Suva: UN Women. Available from: <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2014/6/sids%20brief%2020climate%20change%20disasters%20and%20gender%20based%20violence%20in%20the%20pacific.ashx?la=en>

²¹ Refer to footnote 16.

ability to feed their families and assist the sick or wounded using herbal remedies, translating to both higher death rates and hunger and malnutrition rates. Moreover, this disproportionately affects women and girls who – due to hierarchical familial structures – are often the last to eat within households and communities.

This follows the general trend that climate-related and other disasters hold gendered impacts, in that they disproportionately affect groups with lower adaptive and risk mitigation capacities correlating to their geographical susceptibilities and the scale and incidences of the crises they are experiencing. The Pacific Island nations, for example, have been affected drastically more than other nations even though their contribution to climate change is amongst the lowest.²²

Overall, women and girls' low autonomy in safeguarding the health, protection and prosperity of ecosystems within Asia and the Pacific is a considerable barrier to their economic empowerment. Having managed the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for generations and holding a unique wealth of knowledge in preparing for and responding to natural disasters, women should be viewed as agents of change, able to drive strong avenues of development within climate action. Their reliance on healthy ecosystems for their individual and community subsistence gives them an invested need and diverse experience and skillset to build upon.

Still, women and girls are predominantly underrepresented in environmental decision-making at all levels and their access to – and property management of – land and resources is exceedingly restricted by laws and rights. With this, countries that utilise this opportunity to acknowledge the barriers to women and girls' economic empowerment within climate action and value their input through these channels, will build the resilience of their economies in addition to encouraging longer-term growth and sustainable development for their populations.

²² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=26168&LangID=E>