



Women's autonomy and gender equality at the centre of climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean

Regional consultation prior to the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women within the framework of the sixty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Lorena Aguilar Revelo



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Introduction

this document was prepared as part of the preparations for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2022 with the 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”.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region of the world in which, for over four decades, governments, the United Nations system, international bodies and civil society organizations, especially women's and feminist organizations, have gathered at the sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Out of this coordinated work has arisen a profound, ambitious and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda, which is the road map for reaching sustainable development by 2030, closing gaps in the implementation of gender policies and progressing towards substantive equality and the full guarantee of women's rights.

The governments gathered under the aegis of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean recognized that gender inequality has historically been a structural feature in the region, which is at the root of the unsustainability of the prevailing development model. It is associated with decades of wealth concentration, environmental deterioration and increasingly precarious living conditions for women. Gender inequality in the region is manifested in four structural challenges: socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty in a framework of exclusionary growth; discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns; the sexual division of labour and the unfair social organization of care; and the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere. These structural challenges exacerbate each other and generate complex socioeconomic, cultural and belief systems that hinder and reduce the scope of policies on gender equality and women's autonomy (ECLAC, 2017b).

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has hit at a time when human activity is intensifying environmental damage and accelerating climate-change. This activity is linked to an unsustainable development pattern, that disregards environmental costs and the value of care work. In this context, women have been doubly excluded: on the one hand, the heightened care demands amid the pandemic have fallen disproportionately on their shoulders; and on the other, the effects of climate change impact women in a differentiated manner owing to the sexual division of labour, as will be described later.

Given the need for transformative responses to address the multiple facets of the COVID-19 crisis—which have turned a spotlight on the pre-existing care crisis and the climate crisis—, and taking up the contributions made by feminist economics and women's and feminist movements in the region, as well as by indigenous and Afro-Latin and Caribbean peoples, ECLAC has called for progress towards a care society that cares for people and for care-givers, that takes into account inter-care and self-care as well as care of the planet (2021f). Accordingly, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, at their sixty-first meeting, adopted "The care society: a horizon for sustainable recovery with gender equality" as the central theme for discussion at the fifteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean of (ECLAC, 2021a).

However, approaches to people's relations with the environment, and to the issue of climate change in particular, have afforded scant consideration to the gender perspective, which has only relatively recently been incorporated into the various normative spheres, and into the design and implementation of responses.

In accordance with the international normative framework on human rights, States have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of ethnicity, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national origin or social status, economic position, birth, disability or other condition. Human rights instruments, and specifically the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which all the States of Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified, establish obligations for States to ensure substantive equality and the exercise of women's rights, and obliges States to adopt measures to end all forms of discrimination against women. The obligations are binding for States parties and apply in all areas, including the environment.

The evolution of environmental policy from 1992 to the present includes recognition of the importance of human rights and gender equality in sustainable development frameworks. This is the outcome of the consensus reached within the United Nations and other multilateral arenas,¹ in addition to the efforts and contributions of women' and feminist organizations, national and regional human and environmental rights defenders, public officials, civil society and research institutions, who work to ensure that environmental policies address development challenges and promote human rights and equality.

Other factors that have influenced this evolution include the gender-differentiated impacts on communities around the world of a planetary imbalance and a changing climate; the interconnected global political, environmental and economic challenges of recent years, more recently exacerbated by the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic; the growing understanding that gender equality and human rights are essential for the sustainable development and well-being of all people in their diversity; and the mounting research—and increasing attention it is receiving—on problems of inequality, gender equality, rights, poverty, the economy and the environment.

At the regional level, within the framework of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the member States of ECLAC have agreed on a transformative, innovative and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda to ensure all the rights of women in their diversity, including collective and environmental rights, and to move towards sustainable development patterns that contribute to the achievement of physical, economic and decision-making autonomy of women in the region (the Brasilia Consensus (2010), the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (ECLAC, 2017b), and the Santiago Commitment (ECLAC, 2020d)).

Of vital importance for the region is the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement),

¹ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD) and the Basel, *Rotterdam* and Stockholm conventions, as well as the main environmental financial mechanisms, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Climate Investment Funds (CIF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the *Beijing* Platform for Action, especially strategic objective K.

the first binding regional treaty on the environment (ECLAC, 2022). The main objective of the Agreement is to advance towards the full implementation of the rights of access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters and decision-making.

As the global demand for natural resources grows, the environment is becoming a new front for human rights and the future of humanity and the planet. Around the world, various communities and activists have spoken up to prevent irreversible damage to the environment, and to promote alternatives through more sustainable development (United Nations, 2016c). But, despite their work for human rights, environmental defenders face increasing violence and violations of their own rights.

In an effort to protect the safety of human rights defenders, at its seventieth session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 70/161, which represented progress in the formal recognition of the vital work of defenders and reaffirmed the “urgent need to respect, protect, facilitate and promote the work of those promoting and defending economic, social and cultural rights, as a vital factor contributing towards the realization of those rights, including as they relate to environmental and land issues as well as development” (United Nations, 2016b).

According to data from Global Witness (2021), of the 10 countries in the world with the highest number of registered attacks against defenders, 7 are in Latin America. In this regard, the Escazú Agreement establishes the first binding provision in the world on human rights defenders in environmental matters and also urges Parties to take the necessary measures to prevent, investigate and punish attacks and threats that these defenders may suffer (ECLAC, 2019b). The Agreement, which entered into force on 22 April 2021, had 24 signatory countries and 12 States Parties by early 2022 (ECLAC, 2021b).

However, without significant change, the threat against defenders of the land and the environment could worsen, as profits continue to be prioritized through land appropriation and forest clearance. According to the latest report by Global Witness, the structural drivers of this violence reflect the same problems seen in the analysis of the climate crisis itself: the impacts are uneven, extractive industries bear much of the responsibility, and governments have been unable to prevent these types of problems (Global Witness, 2021).

Notwithstanding this international and regional framework, efforts to mainstream gender equality in responses to climate change are often limited to measures that have failed to break unequal power structures or to have enough of a structural impact to close gender gaps or promote the enjoyment of women's rights. Gender inequalities thus continue to hinder sustainable development and manifest themselves in different areas and sectors — and climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives are no exception.

What is more, as argued by Picard (2021, p. 5) “the SDG5 lens on climate change, disaster and environmental risk allows us to see that gender inequalities in access to socio-economic resources and marginalization of women in national and local governance are socially constructed drivers of risk. It changes the narrative on how to address gender unequal outcomes, from the old story of helping the vulnerable, to the new one of addressing gender inequality as an underlying driver of risk and empowering women through increased presence, voice, agency, and resources in the policy-making process and implementing institutions”.

Climate action can reinforce, exacerbate or even generate new inequalities, or it can deliberately set out to eliminate them and quicken the pace towards gender equality. As countries and communities examine their regulatory, physical, economic and sociocultural structures in response to climate change, they can also identify and address long-standing gender inequalities.

I. The structural challenges of gender inequality and climate change²

Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be the most unequal region in the world and has been the region whose development has been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (ECLAC, 2021c). In this context of deepening poverty and inequality, the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change illustrate the structural challenges of gender inequality.

The planetary imbalance and the climate crisis have been hastened by the prevailing development pattern. Addressing the complexity of this phenomenon is a challenge for the whole world, and in particular for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is urgent to address its effects and devise regionally appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The discussion on climate change has focused on economic and environmental aspects without necessarily taking into account human rights, the situation of women and gender inequalities. This gap in the discussion leaves gender out of the analysis of the state of the environment, of the actions accelerating climate change and their gender-differentiated impacts on people and populations.

The economic activities that underpin the global economy require forms of energy, transportation and land use that generate greenhouse gases,³ which build up in the atmosphere and increase the temperature of the planet, thus causing changes in the climate. From an economic point of view, climate change has been described as an externality: those countries that emit greenhouse gases do not fully bear the costs of their consequences (Stern, 2007). These costs are passed on and experienced unequally by different countries and also by men and women. Although the effects of climate change affect the entire world population, it is the most developed countries—which have undoubtedly reaped the fruits of their current development model—that produce the most greenhouse gas emissions and also have the most resources to adapt to its effects. On the other hand, countries that generate fewer emissions are also the ones most exposed to the adverse consequences of climate change and with fewest resources for adaptation and mitigation.

² This section is based on ECLAC (2019b) and Aguilar (2021a).

³ Carbon dioxide is one of the main greenhouse gases.

This unfair dynamic impacts Latin America and the Caribbean: although the region is responsible for less than 10% of global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, it is highly sensitive to the effects of climate change, especially the Caribbean and Central America. This particular vulnerability is caused by factors such as the region's geographic and climatic situation, its socioeconomic, demographic and institutional conditions, and the high climate-sensitivity of its natural endowment (Bárcena and others, 2018). In view of this reality and the imminent effects of climate change, the region has expressed the importance of affording greater attention to resilience (IPCC, 2018) and adaptation measures.

While mitigation efforts focus on reducing the causes of climate change (for example, by addressing deforestation and promoting the use of renewable energy), adaptation measures aim to address climate change impacts—such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels and intensified natural disasters—on people, structures and ecosystems. As the climate continues to change rapidly, adaptation measures will become increasingly critical. It is especially important to identify strategies for those living in areas vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (for example, low-lying coastal areas) and vulnerable groups, including women, who are often less resilient and lack access to measures for increasing adaptive capacity. At the same time, adaptation measures can be much more efficient and effective for the whole of society if they are gender-sensitive, involve women and take into account their needs and capacities. Otherwise, there is a risk of exacerbating existing inequalities and inequities.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on the current trajectory, the global average temperature rise will likely exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius between 2030 and 2052. In its special report of 2018 on global warming of 1.5 °C, IPCC examined the effects of this global temperature rise, which broadly include changes in weather patterns, intensification of natural disasters and loss of ecosystems, which would reduce the possibilities of ending poverty and inequality, and of achieving sustainable development. The effects of rising temperatures will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations, which could lead to food insecurity, higher food prices, loss of income and livelihoods, health impacts and displacement, among others. The greatest impacts are expected to be felt by those who depend on agricultural and coastal activities, women, indigenous peoples, children and older persons, those living in poverty, and the populations and ecosystems of island countries such as those in the Caribbean (Roy and others, 2018).

In this respect, IPCC emphasizes that “differences in vulnerability and exposure arise from non-climatic factors and from multidimensional inequalities often produced by uneven development processes... These differences shape differential risks from climate change ... People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses... This heightened vulnerability is rarely due to a single cause. Rather, it is the product of intersecting social processes that result in inequalities in socioeconomic status and income, as well as in exposure. Such social processes include, for example, discrimination on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability” (IPCC, 2014, p. 6).

Therefore, the gender-unequal impacts of climate change are strongly linked to socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty in the context of an exclusionary and unsustainable growth model. Women were already overrepresented among the population living in poverty before the COVID-19 crisis. According to data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, there were 112.7 women for every 100 men living in poor households in 2019, which testified to women's lack of economic autonomy. The crisis and its economic impacts have deepened poverty and inequality, and women have been particularly affected by the plunge in economic activity in sectors that are key for female employment, such as tourism, manufacturing, commerce and paid domestic work. This has resulted in a large-scale exodus of women from the labour force, pushing the rate of female labour participation back by 18 years, and the number of Latin American and Caribbean women living in poverty is projected to rise (ECLAC, 2021d).

The crisis caused by the pandemic has laid bare the depletion of the region's development model, based on the extraction of natural resources and fossil fuels, which have been exploited with no consideration of environmental and social sustainability, with little investment in activities focused on knowledge,

technology and quality employment creation, especially for women. At the same time, the structural nature of gender inequality means that women face persistent barriers in accessing productive resources such as credit, land, water, training, technologies and time (ECLAC, 2017b). In this context, the impacts of climate change can deepen existing gender inequalities. The poor and the marginalized, among whom women are overrepresented, usually have the least capacity to withstand even the most moderate climate risks and are the first to experience asset erosion, cycles of poverty and limits on adaptive capacity. Climate change is thus an additional burden that can push them into chronic poverty by directly and severely impacting access to livelihoods (Olsson and others, 2014).

Time-use surveys that have been carried out in various countries of Latin America and the Caribbean confirm the persistent and unbalanced sexual division of labour and the unfair social organization of care. According to the survey data, women spend more time on unpaid work: on average they spend two thirds of their time compared with one third on paid work, while the trend for men is the inverse, with one third of their time devoted to unpaid work and two thirds to paid work (ECLAC, 2021e).

Climate change has direct impacts on natural resources that are essential for daily life, such as water, fishery resources, the availability of energy sources and biodiversity. The scarcity of these resources or difficulty in accessing them can have serious implications from a gender and time-use perspective, worsening the situation described in the paragraph above. Women, especially rural, indigenous, and Afrodescendent women, are primarily responsible for feeding the family, as well as collecting basic resources for household subsistence, such as water and firewood.

As recognized by the group of experts convened by UN-Women in the framework of the preparations for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work that falls on women and girls, rooted in the unjust sexual division of labour, and the unequal distribution of care and domestic work responsibilities within the household, as well as between the household and the State, is intensified by climate and environmental crises and disasters, resulting in the deepening of the structural challenges of inequality.⁴

In this framework, at their sixty-first meeting, the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean emphasized “the importance of care for countries’ development and the need to foster greater redistribution of care” and called for “the elimination of legal, institutional and policy barriers for the benefit of the human rights of women and girls, particularly to guarantee their full and effective participation in the economic sphere” (ECLAC, 2021a).

At the same time, discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of the culture of privilege endure in Latin America and the Caribbean and manifest themselves in the issue of climate change as well. Although women have been the guardians of biodiversity and have specific and valuable knowledge that can offer sustainable solutions in relation to climate change, patriarchal cultural patterns tend to exclude and ignore the knowledge of women, especially rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women (ECLAC, 2017b). These patterns also exclude women from the technical and scientific sectors where many of the mitigation and adaptation solutions are proposed.

This is reflected in the concentration of power and hierarchical relationships in the public sphere. Institutional decision-making structures in the field of climate change demonstrate women’s limited access to the exercise of power and decision-making. As described later, the concerted efforts of feminist and civil society organizations have succeeded in increasing women’s participation in various arenas of representation through parity representation mandates; however, it remains very low in some spheres. In view of these structural inequality challenges, and in a scenario that threatens the very sustainability of life, a key challenge is to ensure that response actions generate the necessary conditions for equality, and that women, in particular, are not excluded from the search for solutions and from participation in the response to this global challenge.

⁴ Virtual meeting of experts in the framework of the preparations for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, convened by UN-Women from 11 to 14 October 2021.

II. Incorporation of the gender perspective in the international normative framework on climate change⁵

It was starting in 1992, with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) —also known as the Earth Summit— that full and equal participation of women in environmental sector issues and decisions was recognized as fundamental for sustainable development.

The mobilization on the environment by the international feminist movement was also historic, with the 1991 World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet in Miami, attended by 1,500 women from 83 countries. The policy document outcome of the Congress was the Women's Action Agenda 21, which was used as the basis for negotiations at the UNCED preparatory meetings and at the Earth Summit itself (WEDO, 2011). Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 "Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development" was built on the proposals put forth in this process, and its objectives include: to increase the proportion of women decision makers in environment fields, to assess the implementation and impact of environment policies and programmes on women, to formulate and implement governmental policies and guidelines, strategies and plans for the achievement of equality, and to adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting violence against women.

Three multilateral environmental agreements arose out of UNCED: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD). Since its inception, UNCCD contained a firm mandate on the importance of involving women in all its spheres of action. In fact, it is the first environmental convention to have a gender focal point that supports countries in mainstreaming gender in their national plans to combat desertification. In 2011 UNCCD developed its Gender Policy Framework and in September 2017 adopted its first Gender Action Plan at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP13).

In preambular paragraph 13 of its founding text, CBD recognizes "the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation

⁵ This section is based on Aguilar (2021b).

of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation". Its first gender action plan was signed in 2008 and a second, five-year, plan was adopted in 2015. The third gender action plan under CBD is currently under development.

Unlike its "sister" conventions, UNFCCC is the only one not to have a mandate or mention of women's rights and gender equality from the outset. This is largely because, at its inception, UNFCCC was a vertically organized technocratic forum with policies focused solely on greenhouse gas reduction.

Another major milestone was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The Platform addresses women and the environment in its strategic objective K, which urges governments to "integrate women, including indigenous women, their perspectives and knowledge, on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including in particular those designed to address and prevent environmental degradation of the land; [...] develop a strategy for change to eliminate all obstacles to women's full and equal participation in sustainable development and equal access to and control over resources" (United Nations, 1995).

In addition to these agreements, in 1979 the United Nations General Assembly adopted and opened for signature and ratification the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the first specific international treaty on women's rights. Although the Convention contains no specific references to the environmental sector, its article 14 obliges Parties to adopt "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels" (United Nations, 1979). In 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women (United Nations, 2016a) and later General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change (United Nations, 2018).

It would take over 16 years from its adoption for UNFCCC to progress with the recognition of gender equality. A paradigm shift began to emerge in 2008, when UNFCCC began to substantially address gender equality and women's empowerment, largely thanks to an advocacy strategy developed and pursued by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA).⁶ Since the creation of GGCA, all the Conferences of the Parties have incorporated gender equality in almost all the thematic areas of UNFCCC.

Little by little, it has been accepted that the causes and impacts of climate change are highly complex and require a multidimensional and systemic approach that goes beyond technical measurements of GHG emissions or concentrations. This understanding was strengthened with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), based on the need to build a more just, equitable, safe, sustainable and socially inclusive world, leaving no one behind.

At the beginning of November 2021, UNFCCC had 87 gender-related mandates on 12 themes:

⁶ GGCA was founded in 2007, at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to UNFCCC in Bali, by four organizations, led by the Global Gender Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). GGCA pursues joined-up advocacy for the recognition of gender equality in the discussion on climate change. The Alliance has formed a constituency of over 140 organizations, from United Nations agencies to grass-roots groups.

Table 1
Gender-related decisions in UNFCCC, by theme

Theme	Number
Adaptation	17
Gender balance and women's participation	6
Compliance	6
Capacity-building	13
Financing	20
Response measures	1
Mitigation- including REDD+	6
Loss and damage	4
Technology transfer	7
Transparency	1
Article 6	3
Shared vision	3
Total	87

Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Gender Climate Tracker [online] <https://genderclimatetracker.org/>.

Of these mandates/decisions, six are especially noteworthy because they represent turning points:

- (i) At COP16 (2010), language relating to gender considerations was adopted for the first time in one of the mechanisms associated with mitigation —reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+)—, constituting a qualitative leap, since most of the previous decisions had focused on adaptation (UNFCCC, 2011). In addition, at COP17 (2011) (UNFCCC, 2012a), it was agreed that gender considerations must be respected in information systems for reporting on how safeguards are addressed and respected. These decisions led to the development of the first six global action plans on gender and REDD+, three of them in Latin America (Ecuador, Mexico and Costa Rica)⁷ (IUCN, 2018; World Bank and others, 2018).
- (ii) At COP17 (2011), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created by virtue of decision 3/CP.17 (UNFCCC, 2012b). This decision contains a series of gender references in the rules and procedures, in which it is established that the Fund must adopt a gender-sensitive approach. GCF is thus the first public financing mechanism to include gender equality from its inception.
- (iii) At COP18 (2012), by virtue of decision 23/CP.18, gender equality was made a permanent item on the agenda of the Conference of the Parties (COP), no longer in the section "other issues" (UNFCCC, 2013). This step entails reporting to COP on the status of implementation of decisions.
- (iv) The Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) was adopted in the framework of COP20 (2014) (UNFCCC, 2015). Although the original idea of several States members was to develop the first gender action plan (GAP), this was not achieved at COP20 owing to lack of unanimous support by the Parties. In-depth analysis of LWPG shows a series of actions in various thematic areas, which lay the foundations for the five thematic areas of the first gender action plan in 2017.

⁷ The other countries are Ghana, Uganda and Cameroon (IUCN and others, 2015).

A point that should be noted in the Lima Work Programme on Gender, owing to its transformative value was the adoption for the first time of the term “gender-responsive”⁸ (which unfortunately went unnoticed in the Spanish-speaking world owing to an incorrect translation into Spanish).⁹ Paragraph 4 of LWPG states that “gender-responsive climate policy still requires further strengthening in all activities related to adaptation and mitigation as well as decision-making on the implementation of climate policies”. This means identifying, understanding and implementing actions to close gender gaps and overcome historical gender biases in policies and measures (Aguilar, Granat and Owren, 2017).

Also important is the mandate given to the Secretariat by LWPG to assign a gender focal point to advocate for greater attention and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in the policy and programming of Convention.

- (v) The text of the Paris Agreement, signed at COP21 (2015), includes a guiding principle (preambular paragraph 11) that entails an intersectional approach, urging parties to “respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity” (United Nations, 2015).
- (vi) The adoption of the first gender action plan (COP23, 2017) and the second gender action plan (COP25, 2019) under UNFCCC (2017 and 2019). The main value of the plans is that they translate mandates and decisions to an operational level, with concrete actions, responsible parties and time horizons.

Gender action plans have also promoted a more comprehensive approach to gender, no longer merely as a guiding principle, but as a key element in the design and implementation of climate agendas, and a higher level of ambition in terms of gender. Both effects are visible in the new generation of nationally determined contributions (NDC).

As mentioned earlier, it was to be expected that the first gender action plan would be confined to the negotiations with thematic axes such as coherence, which aimed to strengthen the integration of gender considerations in the work of the UNFCCC bodies and ensure gender balance and women's participation and leadership in Convention processes.

The second gender action plan was designed in a global context that demanded action and greater ambition, as exemplified by young people demanding practical responses to the climate emergency in the global arena. In the negotiation process, intense discussion arose between the Parties, observers, the UNFCCC Secretariat and interest groups, regarding the need to move from a “negotiation mentality”—which had been necessary at the beginning—to an “action mentality”. For most of the Parties suffering the devastating impacts of climate change, it was clear that the goal of the new GAP had to be “implementation” and a call for higher ambition (Aguilar, 2019).

However, the second gender action plan responded only timidly to that call. It includes five priority areas (see box 1), of which only one (number 4) refers to “gender-responsive” implementation. Even so, of the seven activities proposed under priority area 4, three are limited to promoting the exchange of experiences and lessons learned in the UNFCCC negotiation spaces through workshops, groups of experts or webinars.

⁸ “Gender-responsive” means identifying, understanding and implementing actions to close gender gaps and overcome historical gender biases in policies and measures. Gender-responsive application means contributing proactively and deliberately to promoting gender equality (Aguilar, Granat and Owren, 2017).

⁹ It was translated in the Spanish text as *sensible a las cuestiones de género* (“sensitive to gender matters”).

Box 1**Priority areas of the second gender action plan of UNFCCC**

1. **Capacity-building, knowledge management and communication.** To enhance the systematic integration of gender considerations into climate policy and action and the application of understanding and expertise to the actions called for under the Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, and facilitate outreach, knowledge-sharing and the communication of activities undertaken to enhance gender-responsive climate action and its impacts in advancing women's leadership, achieving gender equality and ensuring effective climate action.
2. **Gender balance, participation and women's leadership.** To achieve and sustain the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the UNFCCC process.
3. **Coherence.** To strengthen the integration of gender considerations within the work of UNFCCC constituted bodies, the Secretariat and other United Nations entities and stakeholders towards the consistent implementation of gender-related mandates and activities.
4. **Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation.** To ensure the respect, promotion and consideration of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.
5. **Monitoring and reporting.** To improve tracking of the implementation of and reporting on gender-related mandates under the Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan.

Source: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *Gender and climate change. Proposal by the President. Draft decision -/CP.25: Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan (FCCC/CP/2019/L.3)*, Madrid, 2019.

In November 2021, two important mandates were adopted in the framework of LWPG at COP26, held in Glasgow (United Kingdom). The first mandate "invites Parties and observers to submit via the submission portal, by 31 March 2022, information on the progress of implementation of the activities contained in the gender action plan, areas for improvement and further work to be undertaken, including, as appropriate, information on the multidimensional impacts of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic on progress, and consideration of other diverse challenges that may impact future implementation of the gender action plan at all levels". In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was invited to "prepare a technical paper exploring linkages between gender-responsive climate action and just transition for promoting inclusive opportunities for all in a low-emission economy" (UNFCCC, 2021).

Additionally, in recent years a series of efforts have been made at the international level to address the link between the construction of gender equality, environmental sustainability and the response to the effects of climate change. Among these is the Climate Action Summit of September 2019, where various countries committed to climate action that contributes to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.¹⁰ The commitments made by the countries by 2025 are:

- (i) Adopt and implement gender-responsive climate change action plans, policies, or strategies.
- (ii) Improve the evidence base by supporting women's knowledge platforms and quantifying the benefits and effectiveness of engaging women and girls in climate action and other initiatives.
- (iii) Track progress by including in their regular reporting to United Nations bodies and other related fora: (i) efforts, actions, initiatives supporting the implementation of gender-responsive climate policies and programmes; (ii) percentage of climate-related programmes that incorporate gender considerations.

¹⁰ The climate change and gender axis track was led by the Coalition of Social and Political Drivers for Climate Action (SPD), the Governments of Peru and Spain, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The gender working group of this coalition was supported by Costa Rica and Australia, and by Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF).

- (iv) Promote and enhance innovative tools that demonstrate and measure the transformative power of women's and girls' leadership in modifying patterns of consumption to reduce carbon emissions.
- (v) Support and promote initiatives that foster women's and girls' full participation and leadership in mitigation and adaptation measures, including in science, technology, research and development.

Also noteworthy at the international level is the Generation Equality Forum, which is convened by UN-Women and jointly organized by the Governments of Mexico and France, together with civil society organizations, through Action Coalitions mobilizing governments, feminist and women's organizations, youth-led organizations, international organizations, the private sector and United Nations bodies, in order to catalyse collective action; spark global and local intergenerational conversations; drive increased public and private investment; and deliver concrete advances in gender equality for women and girls.

The Action Coalitions address six specific themes: (i) gender-based violence; (ii) economic justice and rights; (iii) bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; (iv) feminist action for climate justice; (v) technology and innovation for gender equality; and (vi) feminist movements and leadership.

The vision for 2026 of the feminist action for climate justice track is:

- To promote the transition to an inclusive and regenerative green economy that recognizes the interconnectedness of climate change with issues of gender justice and protects and amplifies the voices of grass-roots and indigenous communities, including frontline defenders, across social and political arenas.
- Women and girls in their full diversity equitably and meaningfully participate in decision-making processes at all levels, including in aligning key climate policy instruments with national development plans and developing climate responses that respect human rights.
- Financing institutions and the donor community reframe risk, prioritize women's organizations as priority partners, and are held accountable to shift capital to support resilient societies and transformative investments in gender-just climate and ecosystem-based approaches.
- Women and girls in their full diversity equitably access climate finance, technologies and knowledge, and access and control natural resources for management and protection, including through securing land rights and ownership.

III. Progress on gender and climate change at the regional level

The Regional Gender Agenda: a progressive, innovative and comprehensive road map

With respect to the normative framework at the regional level, and in particular the Regional Gender Agenda, the issue of climate change is included in the Brasilia Consensus, adopted at the eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2010, which recognizes that “climate change and natural disasters can have a negative impact on productive development, time use by women, especially in rural areas, and their access to employment” (ECLAC, 2017a). At the same time, the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (ECLAC, 2017b)¹¹ recognizes that the inclusion of women’s rights and autonomy in climate change adaptation and mitigation is not only essential and complements global commitments to women’s human rights and gender equality, but also maximizes the effectiveness of climate policies, programmes and resources. The Strategy also makes a call to “harmonize regional norms consistent with women’s human rights, and evaluate the extraterritorial effects of the legislation and policies adopted, with respect to transnational issues such as... climate change... and the rights of Afro-descendent women and women of different indigenous and ethnic groups” (ECLAC, 2017b).¹² In turn, the pillars for implementing the Strategy (section C) concerning financing, participation, capacity-building, communication and technology represent tools for forging synergies with climate change-related efforts.

Further backstopping this approach, the Santiago Commitment, the outcome of the fourteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2020), contains three agreements (32, 33 and 34) concerning gender and climate change:

“Advance in building a gender, intersectional, intercultural and rights perspective into national policies and budgeted programmes on sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction, especially in the most vulnerable territories, strengthening women’s participation and the inclusion of gender equality in

¹¹ The purpose of the Montevideo Strategy is to guide the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda and ensure that it is used as a road map for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the regional level from the perspective of gender equality and women’s autonomy and human rights.

¹² Montevideo Strategy, measure 8.a.

needs assessments and response plans, as well as in the planning and execution of public investment for reconstruction;

Integrate the gender perspective into national policies on climate change adaptation and mitigation, recognizing its differentiated effects on women, adolescents and girls, as well as on other groups in vulnerable situations, promote climate action respecting, promoting and considering the respective obligations with regard to gender equality, through strengthened coordination between machineries for the advancement of women and the governing entities of policies on environment, climate change, planning, energy and human rights, among others;

Actively support the participation of women's organizations and movements, including those of indigenous, Afrodescendent, grass-roots and rural women, in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies on climate change mitigation and response and disaster risk management, and promote the protection of the traditional and ancestral knowledge of the indigenous and Afrodescendent women of Latin America and the Caribbean" (ECLAC, 2020d).

The Escazú Agreement: importance and implications from a gender perspective

The Escazú Agreement, which came into force on 22 April 2021, promotes environmental democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a pioneering and visionary instrument, considered one of the most important environmental and human rights agreements of the past 20 years. The Agreement embodies, in a binding treaty, the three rights of access or procedural rights enshrined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Its aim is thus "to guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters" (ECLAC, 2018).

Principle 10 and Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, like the Escazú Agreement, are based on a fundamental premise: in order to ensure environmental protection, the fulfilment of human rights, the strengthening of democracy and the consolidation of a sustainable development model, States have the duty to ensure access to information, public participation, and justice in environmental matters.

These three pillars, which are interdependent and are each rights in themselves, constitute a sure path to the fulfilment of other human rights, be it the right to free association, the right to participate in the government of each country, or indeed the right to a healthy environment, to water, to health, to food and to live in peace and dignity.

All the substantive articles of the *Escazú* Agreement, from articles 1 to 12, translate into obligations that are principles of environmental law and human rights relating to: (a) procedures, such as impact assessments, access rights and the empowerment of people and communities; (b) legal and institutional frameworks that protect and have the capacity to address environmental damage that interferes with the enjoyment of human rights; and (c) persons who form part of vulnerable groups. On this last point, the Escazú Agreement is also a precursor insofar as it is the first treaty in the world to include a definition of persons or groups in vulnerable situations, in article 2.

The Escazú Agreement is, moreover, the first treaty in the world that particularly seeks to ensure a safe and enabling environment for individuals, groups and organizations that promote and defend human rights in environmental matters, without threats, restrictions or insecurity.

This is especially important in Latin America and the Caribbean, as the region where environmental and human rights defenders are most at risk. According to the report "Last Line of Defence: The Industries Causing the Climate Crisis and Attacks Against Land and Environmental Defenders" (Global Witness, 2021),

227 land and environmental defenders were killed in 2020. Of these killings, 226 occurred in countries in the Global South, and over 70% of them in Latin America.

Global Witness also reports that:

- The records may not capture the true scale of the problem in countries of the Global South, mainly owing to restrictions on a free press or lack of independent reporting of attacks. Killings also occur in a much broader context of reiterated threats that are less reported, such as intimidation, surveillance, sexual violence and criminalization of environmental defenders.
- Information barriers are also significant in efforts to analyse killings by the economic sector they are associated with. In 49.3% of cases, killings could not be definitively linked to a specific economic motive, such as logging or agro-industry. This reflects the difficulty of investigating and reporting on these events, especially in remote areas, and even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In 2020 over a third of all fatal attacks targeted indigenous people despite their making up only 5% of the world's population. Moreover, indigenous peoples were the target of five of the seven mass killings recorded in 2020.
- Of all the cases that were classifiable by economic sector, most were linked to resource exploitation (logging, mining and largescale agribusiness), and hydroelectric dams and other high-environmental-impact infrastructure. In particular, in Latin America, logging was associated with 20 killings in 2020, which took place mainly in Brazil, Nicaragua and Peru. Conversely, fishing was the sector with fewest victims associated with defence of land and the environment.

Just as the effects of violence against environmental defenders are unequal across the world, with the Global South being the worst affected (United Nations, 2016c), the impact is also unequal between men and women. This is a complex inequality: although in 2020 almost 9 of every 10 people killed were men (Global Witness, 2021), women are often subjected to gender-specific forms of violence, such as sexual violence, physical assault and violence during pregnancy (Forst, 2018), and even slander, finger-pointing and smear campaigns (Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, 2017).

Women human rights defenders in general are more exposed to gender-based violence because they challenge patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes, which are deeply rooted in the role of women in society (OHCHR, 2016). In this regard, for women the risks of being environmental defenders are heightened by misogyny, and attacks against them are underreported in formal records, especially in remote and rural areas (Global Witness, 2021). For example, in Mesoamerica, there were 2,197 documented attacks against women human rights defenders between 2015 and 2016, 37% of which had a gender-specific component (Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, 2017).

Moreover, women face a dual struggle in the public and private spheres. Just as they speak out publicly to protect their land, water and environment, within their own communities and families they must also defend their right to speak out and be heard in discussions on the use and stewardship of natural resources (United Nations, 2016c). Many women defenders are isolated from their own communities and immediate environment, who label them "bad women" or "bad mothers" (Forst, 2018).

At the same time, indigenous and Afrodescendent women are particularly vulnerable to violence, and in fact, roughly half of all women activists killed in 2017 were killed for defending their communities and environmental rights (Ervin, 2018).

Faced with this reality, and based on the recommendations, mandates and observations made in the framework of international law, the Escazú Agreement seeks, on the one hand, to give legal, fair, and deserved recognition to individuals, groups and organizations that defend human rights in environmental matters, and on the other, to consolidate a robust agreement that ensures rights of access to environmental

information, public participation in decision-making and justice for environmental defenders and for everyone. Article 9, paragraph 3, establishes that “each Party shall also take appropriate, effective and timely measures to prevent, investigate and punish attacks, threats or intimidations that human rights defenders in environmental matters may suffer while exercising the rights set out in the present Agreement”.

In March 2021, a workshop was held on the Escazú Agreement and the feminist environmental agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (Freidrich Ebert Stiftung and others, 2021), with the aim of building, from the feminist movement, an agenda that ensure the rights of access to information, decision making and justice on environmental matters. The challenges identified included:

- *Women's right of access to information.* Women are prevented from fully exercising their right to access information on environmental matters by the persistence of gender roles and stereotypes that produce inequality and discrimination, as well as illiteracy, digital illiteracy, the technical language of environmental information, poor access to calls and/or public policies related to agricultural, fishing, forestry and environmental activities, and lack of access to electricity, the Internet and computers. This is compounded by the limited time available to women owing to their reproductive and care burden, geographic barriers and mobility difficulties.
- *Women's decision-making in environmental matters.* Women are not generally taken into account in decision-making spheres. The percentage of women participating as decision-makers is very low. There is also an absence of institutional mechanisms to ensure women's effective participation, especially in the case of rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women.
- *Environmental defence and access to justice for women.* Women encounter barriers such as the lack of jurisprudence from a gender perspective, the implementation of sentences and gaps in environmental terms within the environmental legal framework; the lack of access and costs associated with information and communication technologies (ICT); the lack of mechanisms to ensure anonymity of women who report issues; and the difficulty for indigenous communities in accessing information due to lack of Internet connectivity. This is in addition to discrimination, finger-pointing and violence against women in environmental conflicts. The overburden of care work in the home and inequity in land tenure prevent women from fully exercising their right to defend their environment.
- *The protection by women defenders of territory and natural resources.* This is undermined by the lack of recognition and appreciation of the work of women defenders, as well as limited or absent State protection for them, including the lack of protection mechanisms. This is in addition to gender-based violence that manifests in threats, aggressions, forced displacement and femicides, aggravated in turn by the growing militarization of territories in the region. Finally, the lack of land ownership and tenure makes it difficult for women to defend their territory (Freidrich Ebert Stiftung and others, 2021).

It is essential that gender equality be viewed as one of the guiding principles of the Escazú Agreement. Unless the Agreement is implemented in a gender-responsive manner, it is hard to see how the commitments it enshrines can be brought to fruition.

Gender in other regional and subregional environmental agreements

In the framework of the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) developed the Regional Strategy on Climate Change (CCAD/SICA, 2018), with its respective 2018–2022 Action Plan. Two of the Strategy's six principles address gender:

- Mainstreaming, intersectorality and interculturality; one of the most important cross-cutting themes is gender equity and equality.
- Coherence of governance and solidarity policies, equity, gender equality and social justice.

Section five of the Strategy recognizes that gender inequalities intersect with the risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change and that women's historical disadvantages, limited access to resources, restrictions on their rights and limited participation in decision-making spaces are determining factors that make them highly vulnerable and are likely to increase existing patterns of inequality (CCAD/SICA, 2018).

The Strategy also refers to the need for a gender perspective in order to ensure the recognition of conditions of inequity and, therefore, of the different kinds of inequality faced by women in relation to unwanted effects of climate change, which worsen their situation in relation to the various elements generated by it. Hence the importance of reducing the risks posed to women in particular by the effects of climate change, in order to prevent the aggravation of pre-existing gender inequalities.

In terms of implementation, the Strategy commits to integrating all general and specific measures that enable women to participate actively under equal opportunities and conditions in the processes and actions set forth in the different dimensions, areas and levels of the Strategy.

Similarly, the Council of Ministers of Energy of SICA adopted the Central American Sustainable Energy Strategy 2030 for the SICA countries. This Strategy served as a basis for the preparation of regional targets for the energy sector (for mitigation and adaptation) and a regional energy compact. The Strategy recognizes substantive gender equality as a strategic and high-priority issue that must be incorporated into national and regional development policies and plans and given the centrality it deserves (ECLAC, 2020a).

The **Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development** (2013), contains a chapter on gender equality (chapter E). In chapter A on full integration of population dynamics into sustainable development with equality and respect for human rights, the countries also agreed to "guarantee sustainable production and consumption patterns and avoid exacerbating the undesirable climate change phenomena brought about by human activity" (ECLAC, 2013).

In addition, chapter G on territorial inequality, spatial mobility and vulnerability takes into account the link between climate change and population mobility, making a call to "plan and manage territorial and urban development, from a human rights and gender perspective, by formulating mobility, population settlement and activity location policies that contemplate, among their objectives, avoiding the use of vulnerable and protected areas and preventing and mitigating the impact of socioenvironmental disasters and combating the environmental vulnerability of those living in poverty and ethnic and racial groups who are subject to discrimination, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation" (ECLAC, 2013).

At the third session of the **Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean** (2019), the countries adopted the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development, which proposes a series of axes and lines of action for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. In relation to disasters, these emphasize the need to "strengthen comprehensive and universal social protection systems that, in their design and operation, and in the design and operation of their policies and intervention models, mainstream the rights-based, gender, ethnic and racial, life-cycle, territorial and disability approaches", and to "contribute to increasing the response capacity of public institutions and the resilience of populations affected by humanitarian crises and disasters, especially those living in poverty, also taking into account the heightened vulnerability and limited response capacity of children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities to adverse effects during and after crises" (ECLAC, 2020b).

Meanwhile, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway recognizes the unique and particular nature of these States, considering that the adverse impacts of climate change compound existing challenges and place additional burdens on their national budgets and their efforts to achieve the SDGs with equality. In fact, the Samoa Pathway reaffirms the importance of gender equality and the effective participation of women, indigenous peoples, youth and persons with disabilities for effective action on all aspects of climate change (United Nations, 2014) in the current global and regional situation.

At the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (2021), the ministers called for the environmental dimension to be placed at the heart of plans for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for reactivation to be based on social inclusion, resilient, low-carbon economies and the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. In one of the eight decisions adopted by virtue of the Bridgetown Declaration (UNEP, 2021b), the ministers committed to promoting gender equality, urging “all countries of the region to develop affirmative actions within the framework of environmental public policies that recognize women’s contributions to sustainable development, as well as the existing gaps in access to natural resources and the negative impacts on women and girls derived from their unsustainable exploitation” and listing a series of prerequisites for achieving the SDGs: “generating information disaggregated by sex; integrating gender-sensitive approaches in public policies; achieving a gender balance in participation and decision-making mechanisms; and designing policies that support the elimination of any legal or social barrier to women’s rights” (UNEP, 2021a).

Climate change and gender equality in instruments at the national level

At the national level, the countries of the region have been developing a series of normative measures. Examples include gender equality plans, nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national or sectoral climate-related gender action plans. Countries have also been making efforts to mainstream gender in their environmental regulations. In 2020, UNDP documented the mandates and/or gender considerations that eight countries (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago) have incorporated into their national policies, plans, strategies and communications related to the climate agenda (Quesada-Aguilar, 2021).

Gender equality plans are instruments used by most of the countries in the region, and are spearheaded by national machineries for the advancement of women. They guide the actions of the State and enable planning and joint work between the different sectors, thereby strengthening gender institutionalization and mainstreaming (ECLAC, 2019a). Of a total of 37 gender equality plans in the countries of the region compiled by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean from 1997 to 2021, 20 of them—57%—include the term “climate change”. Of the 20 gender equality plans that mention climate change, 8 (i.e. 21.6 % of the total) do so as part of a strategic pillar or objective (Aguilar and Aguilar, 2021). Box 2 describes how the subject is addressed in these eight gender equality plans.

Box 2

Treatment of climate change in eight gender equality plans

- (i) **Dominican Republic:** The National Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2018–2030 (PLANEG III) of the Dominican Republic includes as one of its themes “environment, risk management and climate change.” Under this theme, component 5.3. calls for ensuring a gender equality approach in the implementation of the national sanitation strategy throughout the national territory and the specific objective linked to this component establishes that women’s rights are to be taken into account at all stages of the planning of programmes and projects related to the environment, land management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
- (ii) **Grenada:** The Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (GEPAP) of the Government of Grenada establishes a pillar in both the policy and the action plan, entitled “Gender, climate change, natural disasters and natural resource management”. According to this, the government will recognize and integrate the different and complementary roles of men and women into policies and strategies on climate change, disaster management and natural resource development, and the building of a “green economy”. In addition, the policy commitments (article 280-iii) indicates that the government will ensure the equitable participation of men and women in developing strategies and mechanisms for adapting to climate change.
- (iii) **Panama (2012):** The Public Policy on Equal Opportunities for Women of Panama establishes two strategic objectives (1.7 and 1.8) under the thematic pillar on the environment: the first, to promote strategies and incentives for women in environmental management, through start-ups and markets for environmental services, development and promotion in the fishing, maritime, ecotourism, and agroforestry sectors, taking into consideration the phenomenon of climate change and the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources,

and, the second, to incorporate the gender and human rights approach in programmes and projects related to the civil protection system, humanitarian aid and prevention and care related to climate change and natural and technological disasters.

- (iv) **Panama (2016–2019):** The subsequent Equal Opportunities for Women Action Plan of Panama takes up strategic objective 1.8 of the 2012 gender equality plan and establishes again as strategic objective (1.2) to incorporate the gender and human rights approach in programmes and projects related to the civil protection system, humanitarian aid and prevention and care related to climate change and natural and technological disasters.
- (v) **Uruguay:** The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2030 of Uruguay establishes four strategic lines, corresponding to guideline XI.3, which relates to climate change. Thus, it mentions promoting measures for adaptation to climate change, identifying adaptation capacities and promoting women's resilience to climate change, generating information systems with gender-responsive indicators for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and generating knowledge on climate change and resilient and low-carbon development.
- (vi) **El Salvador:** The National Equality Plan 2016–2020 of El Salvador establishes two outcome indicators concerning the management, use and control of natural resources and the environment, which refer to guaranteeing the principle of equality and non-discrimination in policies, plans and projects on climate change and risk reduction and promoting the participation of women in decision-making in the development and implementation of policies, plans and projects on climate change and environmental risk reduction.
- (vii) **Honduras:** The II Gender Equality and Equity Plan of Honduras 2010–2022 mentions climate change in two strategic objectives. In the first case, the objective is to promote the creation of mechanisms for surveillance and social auditing of the international commitments undertaken by the State of Honduras in the areas of environmental conservation, natural resources, climate change and disaster prevention, ensuring the participation of women's organizations. In turn, strategic objective 1.6 of the Plan calls for incorporating the approaches of equality, gender equity and interculturality in policies, programmes and projects for climate change mitigation and adaptation, ensuring the participation of women in all decision-making arenas at the municipal, regional/departmental, national, regional and global levels. The document also indicates that the State will ensure the incorporation of the gender perspective in policies, plans, programmes and projects for comprehensive disaster risk management, in coordination with strategies and actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- (viii) **Mexico:** The National Programme for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women of Mexico refers, in line 1.1.8, to the need to promote the harmonization of women's rights with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It also indicates the need to promote women's participation and role in natural resources access, use, control and management, and to make women protagonists in decision-making to improve their position with respect to the conservation, stewardship and use of natural resources, environmental management and climate change.

Source: L. Aguilar and M. Aguilar, "Planes de igualdad de género y su vínculo con el cambio climático en América Latina y el Caribe", *Hojas Informativas*, San José, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), 2021.

In short, the eight gender equality plans may be divided into two groups: those that indicate the need to incorporate the gender and human rights approach in programmes and policies on climate change and those that establish a government commitment to ensure women's participation in decision-making on climate change adaptation.

Although the first mention of climate change was identified in 2008, it was not until 2010—with the II Gender Equality and Equity Plan 2010–2022 of Honduras—that it achieved a significant position as a strategic axis or objective in a gender equality plan. Similarly, by 2016, two gender equality plans had been adopted (by Panama and El Salvador) that treat climate change as part of a pillar or strategic objective. Further, in 2018, four gender equality plans³³ make at least one mention of climate change.

The analysis of gender equality plans shows that, although the first considerations on climate change occurred in the late 2000s, it was not until just under a decade ago (in 2016) that these plans regularly began to include climate change as part of a strategic objective or guideline.

³³ These four plans are: the National Agenda for Women and LGBTI persons 2018–2021 of Ecuador, the IV National Equality Plan 2018–2024 of Paraguay, the Fourth National Plan for Equality between Men and Women 2018–2030 of Chile and the National Plan for Effective Equality between Men and Women of Costa Rica.

Nevertheless, deeper examination of the ways that climate change is mentioned and considered in the gender equality plans under the responsibility of national machineries for the advancement of women clearly shows that the spectrum of priorities of the region's governments comprise political participation, mainstreaming of the gender equality approach and recognition of women and certain age groups as the most vulnerable population.

Undoubtedly, this group of gender equality plans represents a promising step forward for the region. However, as national equality plans are renewed, it is necessary to reflect and implement international, regional and national mandates and agreements on gender equality and climate change. It is also necessary to harmonize national normative frameworks on climate change with the gender mandates adopted under UNFCCC and other regional instruments such as the Montevideo Strategy, the Regional Gender Agenda and the Escazú Agreement.

With respect to NDCs, these form the core of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of its long-term objectives. NDCs embody each country's efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change. The Paris Agreement (article 4, paragraph 2) requires each country to prepare, communicate and maintain the successive nationally determined contributions it intends to achieve (United Nations, 2015).¹⁴

As of 2020, countries have started to submit their new NDCs. In Latin America and the Caribbean, preliminary analysis shows that, by October 2021, 22 countries had submitted their NDCs, all of which included gender considerations.

Another effort under way is the development of climate change gender action plans (ccGAPs).¹⁵ Six national-level ccGAPs have been developed in the region—by Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama and Peru—, while at the subnational and local level, Mexico has developed two ccGAPs for a natural protected area in the State of Sonora and for the Yucatan Peninsula.

The methodology is based on a participatory, multisectoral, multi-stakeholder process that brings government and civil society together to identify gender and climate change issues in the local context and devise innovative activities to improve the national climate change strategy or plan. One of the values of ccGAPs is that they act as a fulcrum that channels coherence between different national and international instruments and normative frameworks.

Other countries have also developed national planning tools (i.e. plans, strategies, gender and climate change road maps) using other methodologies. Uruguay, for example, prepared a Gender and Climate Change Strategy (2020–2025) and Paraguay has a National Gender Strategy on Climate Change (2017). In the Caribbean, Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines developed road maps for gender and climate change. Trinidad and Tobago developed its gender action plan with the support of the NDC Support Programme of UNDP.

Over the past decade, several of the region's countries have been developing strategic documents to drive action on gender equality and women's autonomy in a particular sector. Specifically, Mexico and Costa Rica have developed gender action plans relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; Nicaragua has a gender action plan with on gender-equal rights and rights of access to forests, foster resources and their benefits; and eight Caribbean countries are pursuing Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) initiative.

¹⁴ NDCs are presented every five years to the UNFCCC Secretariat. The Paris Agreement provides that successive NDCs will represent a progression compared to the previous NDC and reflect the highest possible ambition. The Secretariat requested all Parties to submit the next round of NDCs in 2020 and every five years thereafter (e.g. by 2025, 2030).

¹⁵ For the full list of ccGAPs, see [online] <https://genderandenvironment.org/ccgaps/>.

IV. Priority areas for regional action from a gender perspective

In light of the above and in view of the need to address gender inequality in the region in the context of climate change, and in the framework of the regional consultation prior to the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, this document puts forward a series of recommendations in five priority areas. These recommendations highlight the role of the feminist movement and the relevance of national machineries for the advancement of women for advancing in incorporating the gender perspective in public policy tools and in measures taken in response to climate change. This should lead to the bodies governing and/or implementing public policies on gender equality and women's autonomy being more actively involved and exercising a transformative leadership role in the response to climate change at both the national and international levels.

(a) Coherence between normative frameworks and other related initiatives: international agreements on climate change, and their harmonization and operationalization at the regional and national levels.

There are many overlaps and correspondences between the range of agreements, conventions, treaties, commitments, and guidelines produced in recent years at the international, regional, and national levels on the link between gender, the environment and climate change. It is becoming increasingly necessary to improve coherence and coordination as the region seeks to address gender equality more systemically in areas and frameworks that matter for the sustainability of life, such as the climate.

On this basis, the recommendations in this section are divided into regional and national actions.

At the regional level

- Conduct an analysis on coherence, interrelationships and correspondences between the agreements, conventions, treaties, commitments and guidelines produced in recent years at both the international and regional level on the theme of gender and climate change. This study will inform and strategically map out actions for the region in this sphere.
- Design an advocacy strategy, based on the proposals in this document, aiming to have the needs and priorities identified in the regional agenda of women in Latin America and the Caribbean reflected in international decision-making spheres. The next two years are of

vital importance as the process begins to determine the impact of the second gender action plan and set out the third gender action plan under UNFCCC. Suggested actions include:

- Set up a working group of the UNFCCC national gender focal points of the region to adopt a joint position in spheres such as: the consultation workshops under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)¹⁶ of UNFCCC and voluntary presentations¹⁷ relating to the gender approach.
- Study the agenda items for negotiation in the meetings of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and SBI as well as for COP itself, in order to forge a regional position on gender equality and climate change issues.

At the national level

- Incorporate international, regional and national mandates and agreements on gender equality and climate change into the process of renewing gender equality plans. Actions that can guide this process include:
 - Conduct an in-depth analysis of the decisions of COP in relation to gender considerations¹⁸ and of the two gender action plans¹⁹ developed in the framework of UNFCCC.
 - Study the gender action plans of the other two Rio conventions, CBD and UNCCD (UNEP, 2014; UNCCD, 2018), to identify possible activities and initiatives that could galvanize the mandates of the various conventions in relation to climate change.
 - Include the commitments emanating from the Regional Gender Agenda, particularly the Santiago Commitment.
 - Study the country's most recent NDC document to identify possible entry points to ensure that gender considerations are included in its implementation.
 - Promote the development of new gender and climate change planning instruments (i.e. plans, strategies and road maps) for those countries that do not yet have them, and update existing plans, seeking better alignment with international and national agreements on gender and climate change. In addition, assess the feasibility of developing planning instruments at different territorial levels. These should be aligned with NDC commitments and implementation, to avoid them being simply statements of ambition that never come to fruition.
 - Support resilience and promote women's and girls' autonomy for response and recovery from the impacts of climate change, disasters and extreme weather events, by providing essential infrastructure and services while ensuring, among others, universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and promoting the full exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as access to comprehensive services for prevention and care in relation to gender-based violence, social protection and decent work for women.
 - Promote national institutional arrangements (engaging national machineries for the advancement of women and other institutions/ministries involved in the implementation of the climate agenda) that will enable policies, programmes and projects to approach gender in a joined up, consistent, systemic and comprehensive manner.
 - Harmonize national normative frameworks related to climate change with the gender mandates adopted under UNFCCC and other regional instruments such as the Regional Gender Agenda, in particular the Montevideo Strategy, the Santiago Commitment and the Escazú Agreement.

¹⁶ The Subsidiary Body for Implementation is the body that agrees upon gender issues within UNFCCC.

¹⁷ See United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Submission Portal [online] <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissionsstaging/Pages/Home.aspx>.

¹⁸ The Gender Climate Tracker is a platform for accessing UNFCCC gender mandates.

¹⁹ First gender action plan COP23, 2017 (UNFCCC, 2017) and second gender action plan COP25, 2019 (UNFCCC, 2019).

- Prepare a calendar with dates and deadlines for country reports related to climate change commitments and establish institutional mechanisms to afford national machineries for the advancement of women a stronger role in the preparation of these documents.

(b) Developing and building capacities: improve and develop skills and capacities related to gender equality and climate change at the national level, affording special attention to machineries for the advancement and women's organizations.

The transition to a development pattern that seeks a balance with the planet in a fairer world requires new knowledge and theoretical and methodological approaches. It is imperative to create specialized knowledge on topics such as resilience, urban planning, nature-based solutions, decarbonization plans and emissions reduction in order to ensure that responses to climate change not only leave no one behind, but are also have an impact on reducing inequalities and contribute to achieving the SDGs in a synergistic manner.

One of the key challenges for capacity-building among policymakers is the diversity of sectors and issues related to climate change (energy, forestry, coastal management, disasters, transportation, urban planning and health, among many others). This means that processes involved in determining skills and in building capacities must consider not only the level of responsibility and role in the design of the action or policy but also the specific nature of the sector and subsector in which the measure will be implemented. Although standardized learning modules on gender equality and climate change can be developed, "tailor-made" training processes are required to meet the specific needs of the sector or subsector that needs to be transformed.

Thus, the diversity of the "audience" to be trained implies a level of specialization among those responsible for imparting knowledge and facilitating learning processes or supporting technical assistance work. Expertise in gender issues is not enough: it is also necessary to address the intersection between the gender approach and the challenges related to climate change. This involves taking into account the interconnected nature of social identities such as age, ethnicity, gender and class, as overlapping and interdependent systems of experience, discrimination or disadvantage. Rather than separating identity categories from each other and from degrees of marginalization or privilege, the intersectional approach looks at how an individual's different identities (e.g. gender and ethnicity) intersect and influence each other to create unique experiences and biases.

The recommendations that may be made for strengthening capacities related to gender equality and climate change at the national level (State and civil society) with special attention to machineries for the advancement of women and women's organizations include the following:

- Enhance knowledge of the implications of the gender perspective in the sphere of climate change policies among staff of machineries for the advancement of women.
- Develop virtual arenas, for example, on governmental websites (machineries for the advancement of women, ministries of the environment, offices of the president, ministries of the interior), for knowledge exchange on gender equality and climate change for specific topics.²⁰
- Keep a roster of experts in gender studies and areas related to climate change in the region, in order to support the exchange of information, provide technical assistance and strengthen capacities for the analysis and design of actions by the State.
- Invest in specific training for the different sectors and subsectors that deal with climate change mitigation and adaptation issues, and include personnel from these sectors and from machineries for the advancement of women.

²⁰ Materials such as methodological guides, case studies and training manuals developed by organizations and groups such as: C40 Cities, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC have specialized sections on the gender perspective, as do other multilateral environmental agreements.

- Foster the development of training materials and skills-building, as well as training strategies for women's and feminist organizations, indigenous women, and Afrodescendent women, as well as LGBTIQ+ communities, women with disabilities or women involved in processes of human mobility,²¹ on the understanding that these groups—and the organizations they work with and in which they are organized—are impacted by climate change in a differentiated manner.²²
- Conduct a campaign to disseminate the respective country's UNFCCC mandates concerning gender and climate change among the relevant public entities, at both the national and subnational levels.
- Strengthen the capacities of national and subnational governments and other stakeholders for gender mainstreaming in the formulation, implementation and monitoring, as appropriate, of national climate change policies, plans, strategies, and measures, including NDCs, national adaptation plans and national communications.
- Encourage research and academic training through partnerships with universities and think tanks and promote diploma courses or certifications on gender equality and climate change with different slants (rural women, indigenous women, LGBTIQ+ persons) and for different sectors and subsectors (forestry, maritime and coastal, agriculture and energy, among others).
- Foster the participation of indigenous, first nation and Afrodescendent women, both to strengthen their capacities and to promote the sharing of their ancestral knowledge on adaptation and mitigation measures.

(c) **Representation and parity-based participation:** promote gender parity and encourage the participation and representation of women, in their full diversity, in negotiations and decision-making on matters relating to climate change at the subnational, national and international levels.

In the mid-2000s, international commitments and agreements were crucial for incorporating women's right to full and equal participation in the policies and action plans of the three Rio conventions—CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC—as well as in other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. In the case of UNFCCC, there has been a gradual increase in women's participation in the associated global processes since 2008, although gender equality was not included in the Convention from the outset.

This progress may be attributed to decisions within COP, aimed at adopting a gender parity objective in the Convention's bodies in order to improve women's participation (UNFCCC, 2013), civil society initiatives to promote women's leadership in the negotiations, the emergence of research on the link between gender and climate change, and the development of gender and climate change policies and plans at the national level.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are two instruments that recognize the existence of barriers to women's participation and propose actions to remove them. A safe and enabling environment is a necessary condition for women's full and effective participation without discrimination. The Montevideo Strategy devotes a specific pillar to the participation of women's and feminist organizations and movements in the design, implementation and monitoring of gender equality, women's rights, and sustainable development policies. One of the measures agreed upon in the Montevideo Strategy calls for the establishment of effective, institutionalized participation mechanisms that are representative of women, especially in sustainable development policies and policies on the mitigation of and response to adverse weather events, risk management and resilience-building at the regional, national, subnational and local levels. It also calls for fostering mechanisms for seeking free, prior and informed consent, especially for rural communities and indigenous peoples, and to ensure access to public information, so that civil

²¹ Human mobility refers to different forms of internal or international movement of people, whether voluntary or forced.

²² Based on discussions of the C40 Cities advisory group for the development of guidelines for mainstreaming gender-inclusive climate action in cities. June–October 2020.

society can fulfil its role in monitoring public policy (Montevideo Strategy, measure 3.c). Meanwhile, the Escazú Agreement (article 7, paragraph 10) provides that “each Party shall establish conditions that are favourable to public participation in environmental decision-making processes and that are adapted to the social, economic, cultural, geographical and gender characteristics of the public” (ECLAC, 2018).

With respect to women's participation in national and subnational decision-making in relation to climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean, data or statistics for regional-level analysis are lacking. Although some countries are making efforts in this direction, information remains fragmented and is relevant only for one territory—usually associated with a particular project—so that data of the requisite quality are not available.

Where broad participation by young women in Latin America does occur is in youth groups on the climate emergency. This is confirmed by the interesting fact that male and female delegates at the UNFCCC are equally balanced in the 26–35 age group (UNFCCC, 2020).

The recommendations in this section are divided into regional and national actions:

Actions to promote fuller and more effective participation of the countries of the region at the international level:

- Designate a country focal point for gender and climate change at UNFCCC and officially inform the gender focal point of the UNFCCC Secretariat.
- Form a regional network of national UNFCCC gender and climate change focal points, in order to coordinate actions and develop proposals for regional initiatives.
- Request the State body that represents the country at UNFCCC (for example, the State may be represented before the Convention by the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to include the national machinery for the advancement of women and diverse women's groups (such as feminist, indigenous, Afrodescendent, rural and urban women's groups, among others) in the official delegation.
- Call upon the State representative to the Convention to seek parity in delegations and greater representation of women as heads of delegation, as well as to present women's candidacies to UNFCCC bodies. It is also recommended that all delegation members receive training on the importance of the link between gender and climate change.
- Apply for travel funds for women delegates, administered by the UNFCCC gender focal point or by civil society organizations. One possibility is to directly request donors to establish a fund for female delegates for Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Request the gender focal point of UNFCCC to include female delegates from the country in formal and non-formal education and training programmes conducted in the framework of the negotiations.
- Ensure that the country's position takes into account the differentiated impacts and needs of indigenous and Afrodescendent women and men, as well as their proposals regarding climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Actions at the national and subnational levels:

- Establish a network of subregional gender and climate change focal points facilitated by the national gender and climate change focal point.
- Organize meetings with the women who participated in the national delegation to the UNFCCC in order to share the status of the negotiations with national and subnational organizations and identify actions going forward.
- Facilitate the participation of women, in all their diversity, in decision-making spheres associated with climate change (e.g. the development and implementation of NDCs).

- Create gender and climate change study groups on topics such as: renewable energies, landscapemanagement, reductionofconsumptionandemissions,andsocialco-responsibility for care, among others.
- Develop specific innovative and transformative projects on gender and climate change, specifically designed by and for women, that have an impact on reducing gender gaps and fostering the empowerment of women in their diversity.

(d) **Production of knowledge, data and statistics:** enhance the generation, availability and dissemination of knowledge, and the analysis and use of data, statistics and indicators on issues related to gender equality and climate change.

Enormous challenges exist in relation to the generation and availability of gender statistics and indicators in the environmental sector—as well as regarding sound gender analysis from an intercultural approach—which hinder the emergence of a more just, equitable and inclusive sustainable development model not only in Latin America and the Caribbean, but throughout the world. Limitations range from the lack of global standards to the lack of institutionalization of environmental statistics and, in the case of the gender link, the absence of multi-stakeholder dialogue (between national machineries for the advancement of women, national statistics offices and sectoral ministries) to determine data needs. For example, one of the main barriers is that environmental information systems and climate transparency frameworks (which are called for in the Paris Agreement) do not include gender and climate change indicators and do not support subsequent gender analyses. Nor is there any global guidance on gender, environment and climate change indicators that would allow for innovative analyses capable of correlating the environmental and social dimensions.

What is more, many systems and processes are not designed to capture the complexities of socioeconomic and environmental interactions at the territorial level; good-quality data are lacking, as data are often inaccurate or are not based on any standards and, where data are available, they are not used or have limited dissemination.

The production, analysis and use of statistics are—and must be— part of gender equality policies, and a priority among official producers of statistics in the countries of the region. This, for example, is enshrined in implementation pillar 9 of the Montevideo Strategy (ECLAC, 2017b), which establishes that information systems are crucial to transform data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decisions.

Measuring and collecting gender-responsive data in relation to climate change and sustainable development contributes to the formulation of more solid, evidence-based policies and supports the evaluation of policy effectiveness, thus facilitating better policy development (GBA/IDB/Data2X, 2019).

Without data disaggregated by sex and an intersectional approach to climate change, it is impossible to know how much progress has been made and the distance that remains to achieve the objectives set forth in regional and international agreements, conventions and targets or in national and subnational policies.

In terms of knowledge generation, the region would benefit from a multisectoral approach to issues such as the care economy and climate change, gender violence and climate change, and human mobility linked to environmental factors, and their differentiated effects.

For example, the issue of human mobility linked to environmental factors is increasingly a reality in our region. According to the *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021* of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), conflicts and disasters caused 40.5 million new displacements in 149 countries worldwide. This is the highest number ever recorded: 30.7 million were associated with disasters, of which 30 million were climate-related, with 32,000 related to drought, 26,000 to extreme weather, 102,000 to landslides, 1.2 million to wildfires and 1.4 million to floods. Some women go across international borders to seek protection and assistance, usually in neighbouring countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that, although some cases are well documented, the total number of people displaced across borders by disasters is unknown. This is also true of people displaced within their own countries or across borders in the context of environmental degradation (Kälin and Weerasinghe, 2017). The lack of common criteria to distinguish human mobility makes it difficult to identify those in this situation (Aguilar, 2022).

Recommendations at the national and regional levels include the following:

At the national level

- Contribute to the production of quality data on gender and climate change by means of the following measures:
 - Develop and add gender-relevant questions to surveys related to the environment, climate sectors (i.e. energy, waste management, transportation, and so on) and disasters.
 - Consistently record gender and other variables associated with intersectionality and interculturality in administrative data sources related to the environment (e.g. property records, payment for environmental services, concessions to extract natural resource, climate insurance, among others).²³
 - Foster the development of a monitoring and reporting system for NDC gender commitments.
- Use data to inform gender-sensitive climate change policies, strategies, measures and actions by means of the following measures:
 - Capacity-building for policymakers to build awareness of where to find and how to interpret and use data on the gender-climate change nexus.
 - Promote dialogues and other forms of collaboration between data production sources (on gender, the environment or gender-environment) and data users (e.g. environmental policymakers, defenders, journalists, etc.) to facilitate data access, interpretation and use and promote evidence-based decision-making.

At the regional level

- Form a regional working group to develop a guide for gender-specific indicators related to mitigation and adaptation measures in climate transparency frameworks.
- Leverage the work of the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean and other coordination mechanisms at the regional level, including the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean (SDG Gateway),²⁴ to identify the needs for data, statistics and indicators on issues related to gender and climate change for monitoring the SDGs at the regional level and for exchanging knowledge between countries, agencies of the United Nations system and civil society.
- Take advantage of arenas for dialogue and regional agreements such as the Statistical Conference of the Americas and its linkages with the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean and other subsidiary bodies of ECLAC that convene high-level authorities of the governments of the region, to identify and promote promising practices in terms of gender equality and climate change adaptation and mitigation at the regional level and to advance an agenda of statistical capacity-building for the production of indicators that enable follow-up of commitments made.
- Foster the development of gender-sensitive studies on human mobility and climate change.

²³ Other examples of indicators are available in Seager (2019) and UNEP (2016).

²⁴ The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the regional office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the region and the Development Coordination Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, have developed an online portal, the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. See [online] <https://agendaz030lac.org/en>.

- Promote the development of a regional monitoring and evaluation system (based on information from gender-responsive monitoring systems at the national level) to follow up on the progress and impacts of gender considerations under NDCs.

(e) Public and private climate finance flows earmarked and invested in gender-responsive climate solutions

The current crisis should be treated as an opportunity not only to rethink the countries' development financing agenda, but also to form a sociopolitical consensus for ambitious reforms that would enable a sustainable and equitable reconstruction process to begin. Building forward better means placing equality and environmental sustainability at the centre of the recovery phase. In this context, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Alicia Bárcena, warned of the need to reform the international financial architecture in order, among other things, to expand financial support to small middle-income countries that are highly indebted and vulnerable to climate change (ECLAC, 2020c), giving special consideration the Caribbean countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change and highly indebted owing to previous disbursements made to address the impacts of extreme weather events.²⁵

Today, for the first time, all the major climate finance mechanisms associated with climate change have mandates in the form of gender policies or action plans. This represents a significant step forward and serves as a signal for the rest of the global climate finance architecture to follow suit. The incorporation of gender equality principles speaks to the importance of inclusive and equitable resource allocation, women's participation and their increased access to resources, as these factors are key to effective and efficient implementation that will be sustainable over time at all levels. However, one of the great challenges is to ensure compliance and put into practice, at the implementation stage, the gender policies of international financial instruments at the national and regional levels related to mitigation and adaptation.

Climate adaptation can bring great benefits for people and the economy. Unfortunately, actions and financial commitments have not matched the scale of the crisis. In the framework of COP 26 of UNFCCC, UNEP (2021c) presented the report *Adaptation Gap Report 2021. The Gathering Storm: Adapting to Climate Change in a Post-pandemic World*. The report concludes that adaptation costs are likely to be at the upper limit of an estimated range of US\$ 140 billion to US\$ 300 billion per year by 2030, and US\$ 280 billion to US\$ 500 billion per year by 2050 for developing countries alone. Climate finance flowing to developing countries for mitigation and adaptation planning and implementation was US\$ 79.6 billion in 2019. Overall, estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are 5 to 10 times higher than current public adaptation finance flows, and the gap is widening. The report also indicates that less than a third of the 66 countries surveyed had explicitly funded COVID-19 measures to address climate risks by June 2021 (UNEP, 2021c).

Nevertheless, financing for climate change adaptation offers a real opportunity to promote human rights and gender equality in line with the ambitions of the Paris Agreement (see preambular paragraph 11 of the Paris Agreement). However, without careful consideration, there is also a real risk that these investments will not benefit those who need them most—vulnerable people in communities on the frontline of climate change—or, worse, will exacerbate existing inequalities or generate new ones. Hence the need for adaptation-related finance to be gender-responsive, by addressing gender differences and involving the meaningful participation of women and men in their full diversity.

²⁵ In this regard, at the regional level, in 2015, within the framework of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) of UNFCCC, held in Paris in December that year, ECLAC presented the strategy to reduce the external public debt of Caribbean countries considered small island developing States (SIDS), by creating a regional resilience fund to finance climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. The Debt-for-Climate Adaptation Swap Initiative is a key part of this proposal and consists of financing through instruments such debt swaps for climate change adaptation and mitigation, in exchange for which beneficiary countries would commit to allocate the resources saved in debt service costs to the resilience fund, which—managed by a solid and reliable financial institution— would be devoted to financing climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. See ECLAC (2015 and 2016).

Unfortunately, the architecture of climate finance has not been designed to involve small grass-roots organizations. Funds generally channel resources through “implementing agencies,” which are mostly large international environmental organizations or United Nations system agencies, which then distribute funding to others, and women’s organizations are often at the end of this line.

Given the above and as stated by Williams (2015) women’s groups will need access to increasing flows of climate finance at global, regional and national levels. However, given the complex nature of climate change fund instruments and their cumbersome processes, women and communities may have difficulty accessing them. For this reason, a technical training process may be necessary to ensure access to this type of financing. Funds are directed in the first instance to large-scale, capital-heavy technology projects, which often do not adequately support adaptation strategies that are important to men and women equally. Secondly, the application processes for these funds often act as a disincentive and an access barrier for women and communities.

The following recommendations may be made at the regional and national levels to ensure that public and private climate finance flow are devoted to and invested in gender-responsive climate solutions:

At the regional level

- Ensure that post-COVID-19 recovery and reconstruction work²⁶ focuses on building resilience through the following actions:
 - Lobby multilateral, regional, subregional, and national development banks to play a key role in spearheading recovery efforts through increased capitalization and more flexible lending standards. To this end, a significant percentage of the loan portfolio should be channelled into green investments and climate change projects. This involves supporting both subregional and national development banks in terms of access to low-cost funding, long-term capital and technical capacity to access funds and design projects
 - Link the green economy to emergency job programmes based on ecosystems restoration and stimulus to use nature-based solutions (NBS). This may be pursued through the protection, restoration or management of natural forests and wetlands in watersheds to maintain a protective barrier for coastal communities against flooding; the creation of a major programme to pay for the unemployed or vulnerable communities to restore landscapes; and urban revegetation, urban agriculture and nature-based tourism. In the same vein, Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows—which should be provided on the basis of criteria other than per capita GDP— should be allocated in the main (at least in 50% of the total) towards the transformation of the productive matrix (renewable energy) and the accumulation of human capital (education).
 - Develop and support the adoption of gender equality and women’s empowerment criteria in policies and initiatives related to the green transition in Latin America.
 - Prioritize investment in the care economy, recognizing it as a dynamic sector that can generate multiplier effects on well-being, the redistribution of time and income, labour market participation and sustainable growth.
 - Recognize the knowledge and practices of indigenous, first nation and Afrodescendent peoples—and seek to finance their expansion and scaling-up— for individual and collective resilience.
 - Promote resilience through initiatives such as the Caribbean Resilience Fund, in order to attract large-scale, low-cost finance to invest in green sectors, reduce debt through debt swap for climate adaptation initiatives, and support investment in resilience-building projects.

²⁶ Based on ECLAC (2021g).

At the regional and national levels

- Promote the development of a set of complementary financing mechanisms, through consultation processes and a programmatic agenda based on seven points:²⁷
 - (i) Clarifying and explaining the concepts and instruments of climate change financing.
 - (ii) Emphasizing the added value of gender-responsive and women's autonomy outreach. This can be done through education focused on women's groups, climate change activist groups, women's machineries, legislative bodies and institutions responsible for implementing financing initiatives.
 - (iii) A comprehensive, regional assessment and monitoring project to track climate finance flows and distribution through the various multilateral and bilateral instruments and modalities, to identify their impacts on poor women and men within communities.
 - (iv) Information and training on techniques and operations to expand knowledge and practices on projects and programmes for gender-sensitive climate finance in both the public and private sectors.
 - (v) Programmes to act as catalysts among women's organizations, both urban and rural, to implement and manage climate change initiatives at the national and regional levels.
 - (vi) Develop interculturally and intergenerationally relevant, innovative and transformative projects on gender and climate change, designed specifically by and for women to have an impact on reducing gender gaps and boosting the empowerment of women in their full diversity.
 - (vii) A participatory research agenda, geared towards generating evidence on the impact of climate finance mechanisms on the status of women (e.g. gender audits for financing projects, gender impact assessments and steps towards developing gender-sensitive climate finance indicators, including both ex ante and ex post mechanisms).

At the national level

- Ensure direct access to financial resources:
 - Study the possibility of having national machineries for the advancement of women recognized as implementing agencies of international public funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, in order to afford direct access to funds.
 - Support women's organizations in becoming accredited as direct access entities (DAE) in the Green Climate Fund.
 - Develop dissemination campaigns for feminist and women's organizations and female-led grass-roots and rural organizations, as well as indigenous and Afrodescendent women's organizations, in order to raise awareness of mechanisms for access to national and international climate funds.
 - Organize arenas in which feminist and women's organizations and financial mechanisms can share knowledge, strategies and skills that enable women and their organizations at the national and subnational levels to access financing.
 - Establish procedures to ensure that fund mandates regarding national gender-responsive projects or initiatives are made operational in practice.
 - Ensure that national machineries for the advancement of women and representatives of women's organizations are included in decision-making spheres for the prioritization and development of initiatives and projects (e.g. national climate change committees and ministries of planning).

²⁷ These recommendations have been adapted from Williams (2015).

- Design and formally establish a system whereby national machineries for the advancement of women, in line with the framework and scope of their mandates, participate in, review and monitor projects developed to ensure compliance with the gender equality guidelines and requirements of financing mechanisms.
- Include resources for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender considerations in project budgets, as well as training and awareness-raising on the link between gender and climate change.
- Provide national machineries for the advancement of women with adequate human and financial resources to ensure that climate change policies, programmes and projects promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the full participation of women in their diversity.

V. Final remarks

The Latin American and Caribbean region—especially the Caribbean and Central America—is highly sensitive to the effects of climate change. Moreover, the region continues to be the most unequal in the world and the one whose development has been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women is taking place in a context of growing urgency and demands at the global level to face the climate crisis, as well as the loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation and pollution. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these calls to action are being raised in a context of profound inequalities, where persistent gender inequality has long been a structural hallmark of the region and environmental activists face serious threats in the defence of their territories against the prevailing development pattern based on extractive industries and the exploitation of life.

In this context, the impacts of climate change are also uneven and related to the structural challenges of gender inequality: socioeconomic inequality and poverty in the context of exclusionary growth; patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns; the sexual division of labor and the unfair social organization of care; and the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere. These challenges exacerbate each other and generate complex socioeconomic, cultural and belief systems that hinder and reduce the scope of policies on gender equality and women's autonomy, including actions against climate change and environmental policies.

Although there is a robust international and regional normative framework on gender equality and women's autonomy in relation to climate change, many efforts to address this issue are limited to measures that, when it comes to implementation, have failed to break down unequal power structures or to have a structural impact on closing gender gaps or promoting the enjoyment of women's rights. Gender inequalities thus continue to hinder sustainable development and manifest themselves in different areas and sectors, and initiatives concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation are no exception.

Climate action can, therefore, reinforce, exacerbate or even generate new inequalities, or it can deliberately aim to overcome them and accelerate progress towards gender equality. As countries and communities review their policy, physical, economic, and sociocultural structures in response to climate change, they have an opportunity to identify and address long-standing gender inequalities.

Amid this reality, Latin America and the Caribbean, as the only region in the world that has driven a deep, ambitious and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda for over four decades, and which has produced the first regional binding agreement on the environment —the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean— has the potential to become a region that transforms and promotes gender equality and women's autonomy in decision-making spaces at the international level and in the adoption of measures and financing linked to the environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction and management, and sustainable development.

It is also crucial to continue to mainstream gender in environmental and climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, initiatives and programmes, strengthening the full and effective participation of women in all their diversity, the effective protection of human rights defenders, and coordinated work between machineries for the advancement of women and the governing bodies of environmental policies, and between the different levels and powers of the State, in order to promote climate action in line with gender-equality obligations.

This reference document and its recommendations, compiled as part of the preparations for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, within the framework of the sixty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, seeks not only to advance towards the achievement of gender equality and sustainable development in the region, but also to offer innovative and transformative contributions to the global arena from Latin America and the Caribbean.

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This document was prepared —within the framework of the sixty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean— as part of the preparations for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, whose priority theme was “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”. The purpose of this document and the recommendations it contains is not only to advance towards the achievement of gender equality and sustainable development in the region, but also to offer innovative and transformative contributions from Latin America and the Caribbean, placing gender equality and women’s autonomy at the centre of the process.

