



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

29 February 2016

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: ORAL INTERVENTION
Half-day general discussion on "gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change"

Madam Chairperson and Committee members,

Amnesty International welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the half-day of general discussion with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the gendered-dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change.

This Committee is the first UN human rights treaty body to substantially engage on the issue of climate change, and we welcome its pioneering leadership in this area. We appreciate the provision of a Concept Note that helps focus the discussions.

According to the Inter-governmental Panel on climate change, even if the global temperature rises no more than 2 degrees Celsius, one in seven people in the world will face a severe reduction in water resources. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by disasters and climate change, as compared to men and boys, due to pre-existing discrimination. Yet world leaders have so far made national commitments that, if implemented, would keep the temperature rise to only 2.7 degrees. Climate change is likely to hamper, and some contexts potentially reverse, progress towards achieving substantive gender equality and the protection of women and girl's rights. Amnesty International recommends that the General Recommendation elaborate the obligations of States under Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention concerning the necessary steps within their power to mitigate against climate change because of its disproportionate and negative gender-based impact.

The Convention is relevant not only to the extent to which we mitigate climate change, but also the manner in which this objective is achieved. For example, in transitioning away from fossil fuels, States must assess the implications of such measures, such as energy subsidy schemes and provision of sustainable energy, from a gender-based perspective and carry out such transition in a manner that maximises gender equality.

All prevention, relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts should include a gendered analysis to ensure that the rights of women and girls, and others who face gender-based or intersectional discrimination, are protected and receive appropriate support. For example, administrative requirements to access relief assistance must be designed so they do not create barriers for women and girls that lack necessary documentation of residence.

States and humanitarian organisations and agencies should also take into consideration the pre-existing patterns of gender inequalities and social exclusion and mitigate their negative impact on the relief process. Disaster risk reduction and response should be seen as an opportunity to correct existing gender imbalances in terms of access to rights and should guard against further entrenching patterns of gender discrimination.

During and following disasters, States should give particular attention to the health needs of women, including pregnant women and breast-feeding women, including in determining the provision of food, water, sanitation, shelter and health care. This should include access to sexual and reproductive health services and information and facilities for safe births.

During and in the aftermath of a disaster, States have a duty to protect against all forms of gender-based violence and provide remedies, including mental and physical health care, they should also carry out a gendered analysis of the relief efforts to identify potential threats to women's and girl's security and mitigate against these, for example by ensuring adequate lighting and that toilets are accessible in the immediate vicinity of each residence.

The General Recommendation should also address transgender and other gender non-conforming individuals and those who might be discriminated against in times of disasters because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is further critical that the General Recommendation includes obligations of states in regard to both natural disasters as well as human-made disasters. The effects that human-made disasters have in the lives of individuals and its impacts on human rights are very similar to those caused by natural disasters, and there is greater scope for States to prevent them, as well as reduce their impact.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.