**Half Day of Discussion**

**on**

**Gender related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change -**

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Statement by

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to speak at this Half Day of Discussion of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Gender related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change.

In light of recent international agreements a debate on climate-resilient livelihoods and gender inequalities regarding the distribution of rights, resources and power that constrain many women’s’ capacities to adapt to climate change and disaster is now particularly timely.

The 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015 resulted in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030. The framework acknowledges climate change as “one of the drivers of disaster risk” and says it should be tackled across inter-governmental processes while respecting the mandate of the U.N. body that runs the separate climate change negotiations.

The Post-2015 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed upon in September of last year, outlines a universal sustainability agenda that addresses causes of poverty and inequality. Goal 5 of the SDG Agenda has been dedicated to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

And the recent Paris agreement reached at COP21 is rightly considered a historic outcome for climate change. This is the first time that international legal recognition of climate change and its impacts are being realized on a grand scale and will thus serve at the core of future climate change policies.

**Climate change and gender**

Climate change will affect people differently depending on their economic, environmental, cultural, and social situations and contexts. Essentially, climate change is an issue of justice.

The idea of justice and injustice becomes more easily understood when we think about issues affecting women in the face of a dramatically changing climate – the lack of water, reduction in agriculture, and the crisis we face now in mosquito-borne diseases and invasive species. While climate change is undoubtedly an issue of pollution its consequences are more far-reaching and are accompanied by immense effects in the social sector, in health, education and agriculture.

Agriculture is a fundamental part of women’s livelihoods globally, most markedly in least developed countries, where four-fifths of economically active women report agriculture as their primary economic activity. More women are moving into agriculture as men move elsewhere for seasonal or paid labor. However, while women produce 60–80% of the food in developing countries, worldwide they only own 10–20% of agricultural land. Thus, women farmer enjoy limited participation in decision-making processes and have less access to inputs and resources fundamental to adaptation to climate change.

However, women should not be viewed only as victims; they have valuable skills and knowledge that contribute to successful adaptation and play a key role in ensuring the food and nutrition security of their households and communities. They’re finding solutions to the way they do agriculture in order to keep food at home and are involved in leading responses at a community level which is where climate change hits the hardest, where it’s best understood and can best be prevented.

Lasting solutions will only work with gender equality, inclusive dialogue, and promoting more resilient communities in the context of climate change and disaster.

**Gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction**

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that climate change is “very likely to increase the occurrence and vary the location of some physical events”, leading to an increase is disaster risk while the U.N. Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) estimates that [close to 90 percent of disasters](http://www.wcdrr.org/news?id=42862) are caused by weather and climate extremes. As the impact of climate change create more emergencies and erode people’s ability to cope, the livelihoods and health of men and women are differently affected. An example might be the devastation faced by women who live near coastal regions, since they generally have less mobility. People can live insular lives in the household and may, for instance, not receive crucial information they need to avoid a storm.

A gender sensitive approach to disasters and emergencies is so far is often inconsistent. For slow-onset disasters such as sea-level rise in particular, which incidentally constitute a high proportion of climate-change impacts, systematic information on the relationship between gender inequality and disaster impact is still lacking. Responding to the gender dynamics present in each individual context provides the greatest chance of avoid gender stereotyping and increase resilience.

**CEDAW Committee**

The work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on a General Recommendation on gender dimensions of climate change and disaster risk reduction is therefore crucial in shaping future work on climate change of civil society and policy makers alike. The General Recommendation currently in work will be used in the UN state reporting procedure to inform concluding observations and more broadly as an advocacy tool for civil society for a gender sensitive approach to disaster risk reduction and climate change and thus help increase resilience of local communities and women alike.