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**Human Rights Council – 41st Session**

**Panel discussion on women’s rights and climate change: climate action, good practices and lessons learned**

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Let me convey the ILO’s gratitude for the opportunity to take part in this panel which addresses issues close to the heart of the ILO’s mandate. At a more personal level - what an honour to be invited to speak alongside most eminent women global leaders. Thanks to your leadership and testimony, next generations appreciate that women’s rights are a concern for ALL of us - and this will have to be our game changer in tackling gender-based discrimination and inequality which continue to be a critical challenge.

Despite strong recognition of women’s rights, women continue face significant obstacles in gaining access to decent work – in both rural and urban economies. Inequality between women and men persists in labour markets, in respect of opportunities, treatment and outcomes.

Climate change related risks to decent work include economic and welfare losses, damage to health and productivity, forced labour migration, and the interrelation between such risks. In sectors characterized by informality and decent work deficits, for instance agriculture, the vulnerabilities of workers are magnified by climate impacts, for instance by heat stress or loss of access to resources due to climate impacts. These risks have particular implications for women. Over 60 per cent of working women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa remain in agriculture, which is often rain fed. Their livelihoods depend directly on a stable environment.

Sectoral and occupational segregation also continues to contribute to gender gaps both in terms of the number and quality of jobs. ILO research shows that *large* employment gains are associated with the 2°C scenario. But they are likely to create jobs in currently male-dominated industries (renewables, manufacturing and construction). So climate change mitigation policies could bring down the share of women in total employment unless action is taken to reduce occupational segregation.

Furthermore, women are overrepresented in domestic and unpaid household work - Climate change related impacts can heighten women’s workload associated with care and household work, and also expose them to health and safety risks as well as productivity losses. Think of women having to walk longer distances to fetch water, for example.

Clearly, we need rights-based approaches for ensuring climate action is gender-responsive. And for this it is indispensable that gender equality is established, from the outset, as a specific goal and focus for climate action through a just transition. Only a just transition can ensure that negative effects of the transition to low-carbon economies are minimized, while the positive effects advance gender equality and decent work. A just transition can ensure that the process is participatory, particularly through social dialogue with workers, employers and governments, and the outcome is ambitious – one that achieves social justice for all and builds an equitable and empowering low-carbon economy.

Given the climate crises confronting us, it is extremely critical to recognize women as fundamental actors for climate action - decisive climate action rooted in just transition can be and must be a pathway towards empowerment. Such an approach presents an opportunity to ensure that sectoral and occupational segregation is not perpetuated, pay and skills gaps are eradicated, inclusive social dialogue is established, working conditions are improved, and social protection enhanced.

Transformations and redefinition of jobs and workplaces in the transition can further improve skills, and reduce health and safety risks, which are often worse for women. The creation of new labour market opportunities can facilitate the formalization of the informal economy jobs held by women – in rural and urban economies.

The development of green sectors for example – the energy sector or those related to the manufacturing of green products, has a significant potential for addressing gender inequalities and closing gaps. In the rural economy, grassroots women, including indigenous and tribal women, are already playing an important role in natural resource management, agriculture and forestry - sectors that are critical for both mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change.

A just transition and the creation of decent work provides an opportunity to transform gender norms, spur social investment towards infrastructure and services that take into account the situation of women, enhance social protection for women and men, and promote policies to recognize, reduce and redistribute household and care work – enabling women to participate in the labour market to build a low-carbon society.

Furthermore, ensuring respect for women’s rights as part and parcel of just transition increases resilience of communities and economies more broadly, while strengthening climate action with women workers, entrepreneurs, care providers, custodians of traditional knowledge as fundamental climate and economic actors.

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019,points to the reality of transformative change in the world of work driven by environmental and climate change, globalization, persistent inequalities, as well as technological innovations and demographic shifts. As articulated by the Declaration, these drivers have profound impacts on the nature and future of work, and on the place and dignity of people in it.  The Declaration’s call for a transformative agenda for gender equality provides a strong basis for ensuring respect for women’s rights at work in a world in which discrimination and inequality can no longer be allowed to be an obstacle for tackling complex global challenges such as climate change.