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**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**



Call for Inputs

# Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

**“Women, Girls and the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment”**

*The exclusion of half of society from effectively helping to shape policies, including those which respond to climate and environmental harms, means that those policies are likely to be less responsive to the specific damage being caused; less effective in protecting communities; and may even deepen the harm being done.*

*Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights*

The Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, David Boyd, is preparing a report on women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a right recognized in 2021 by UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13. For that purpose, he is seeking inputs on the topic from States, rightsholders, and other stakeholders through responses to the brief questionnaire below.

Your replies will inform the Special Rapporteur’s analysis and contribute to his report, which will be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2023.

# Questionnaire

The Special Rapporteur invites and welcomes your answers to the following questions:

1. How are the climate, pollution, and biodiversity crises adversely impacting women and girls? What are the principal barriers facing these rightsholders’ realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a right that includes: clean air; a safe climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably produced food; non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play; healthy biodiversity and ecosystems; access to environmental and climate information;

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participation in environmental and climate decision-making processes; access to justice and an affective remedy when the aforementioned rights are violated.

*Melisa Akkuş, an defender of environmental rights, has been conducting studies and activities related to the climate crisis for about five years. Young climate activist Melisa Akkuş, one of the International Child Rights Envoys Association and Climate Pioneers platforms, works in the fields of climate justice, gender equality and social justice. Akkuş and her friends organize the climate strikes in Istanbul, provide support for the organization of strikes in different cities in Turkey, and also conduct a campaign for the inclusion of gender equality in the education curriculum.*

1. What are the specific obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of adopting a gender-responsive approach to protecting (for States) and respecting (for businesses) women’s and girls’ rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? Please provide specific examples of constitutional provisions, legislation, institutions, regulations, standards, jurisprudence, policies and programs that apply a gender-responsive approach to ensuring the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

*Girls who have to work in the field of agriculture and farming due to the climate crisis do not have access to information and the right to read, so they do not continue their education. However, girls who complete their education participate more in working life and can reach senior management levels. Girls can have a career by studying, and therefore they can make a difference in their own and social life by taking part in decision mechanisms. In addition, girls who take an active role in working life by completing their education instead of girls who lead a male-dominated working life as a role model, work on the land during the day and have to serve their father and elders at home in the evening will positively affect both themselves and the lives of the generations that will grow up after them. they can change.*

*Examples:*

*Between 30 May – 6 June 2020, in partnership with the Canadian Embassy in Turkey, Ladik Municipality, Ladik District Directorate of National Education, TOÇEV Education Foundation for Children Willing to Read Tuvana, Samsun Avdan Energy, TAGES, UN SDSN Turkey and Turkish Voice of Canada.*

*Empowerment as Sustainability and Environmental Ambassadors” project was carried out. The Project of Empowering Girls as Sustainability Ambassadors aimed to localize the Global Goals in Ladik, and to train 12-13 year old female students who will extend from Ladik to the global movement as "Sustainability and Environment Ambassadors" in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the principle of gender equality, the project contributes to the development of girls as responsible citizens who are sensitive to the environment and society; aimed to train the entrepreneurial female leaders of the future. In the light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the project participants were provided with an awareness of the current problems in their neighborhoods, cities, countries and the world, and a roadmap was presented for them to find a solution.*

1. If your State is one of the 156 UN Member States that recognizes the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in law, has this right been recognized and/or interpreted in a way that clarifies the state’s obligations or businesses’ responsibilities with respect to the realization of rights with no discrimination based on sex and gender and other grounds?
2. What steps has your State, business, and/or organization taken to employ a gender-responsive, rights-based approach to addressing the impacts of the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises and to accelerate gender equality related to environmental decision-making processes, benefit-sharing processes, and outcomes? Please identify specific challenges that your Government, business, or organization has faced in these endeavors.
3. Please identify specific ways in which the rights of particularly marginalized or vulnerable women and/or LGBTI persons are (or should be) recognized and protected to enable the realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment without discrimination based on sex or gender. "Marginalized women" include

girls; women and girls in Indigenous local community, Afro-descendant and peasant communities, older women; women and girls with disabilities, LGBTI women and girls, migrant, displaced, and refuge women and girls, unmarried, informally married and widowed women and women and girls living in protracted armed conflict. How can these populations be empowered to increase their impact as agents of positive environmental transformation?

1. What kinds of socioeconomic, cultural, legal, and/or institutional

transformations would be required within your States’ national context to achieve gender parity that most directly impact environmental decision-making processes, benefit-sharing processes, and outcomes?

1. To what extent do the environmental ministries, nationally determined contributions, and national biodiversity strategies and action plans of your State include gender action plans, gender-responsive budgets or budgets specifically devoted to gender equality? At the global level, what changes to climate and biodiversity finance mechanisms are needed to ensure that these are gender-responsive and equitably inclusive of female beneficiaries?
2. How can businesses best contribute to the realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, based on sex and gender? What policies or practices are already in place to ensure that business activities identify, assess, prevent, cease, mitigate, and effectively remedy adverse impacts to women’s and girls’ rights to

a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as articulated in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

1. Please share any good practices for: i) protecting women’s and girl’s rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; ii) empowering women and girls to act as positive agents of environmental justice; and iii) encouraging men and boys to act as allies in these endeavors. In addition, please highlight the work of any women or girl environmental defenders? Good practices may occur at the international, regional, national, sub-national or local levels, and may include: the implementation of measures to ensure women’s participation in environmental decision-making processes; efforts to support women environmental defenders; measures to facilitate women’s access to climate or biodiversity finance; gender-responsive legislation, regulations, standards,

jurisprudence, plans and policies; and initiatives to increase women’s access to and control over productive resources including land, forest resources, freshwater, credit, loans, and extension services. Examples that treat girls distinctly from adult women would be particularly appreciated.

*The climate crisis is one of the most important problems of our time. If the necessary measures are not taken urgently, the world is moving towards an inevitable end. Farming and nature-based production are among the most important production areas heavily affected by the climate crisis. The climate crisis directly means drought, thirst and pollution and loss of agricultural lands. The biodiversity crisis that develops due to the climate crisis leads to the loss of plant and animal species, that is, to the destruction of natural production opportunities.*

*Climate, pollution and biodiversity crises affect women and, accordingly, girls much more deeply and more. Because, especially in rural areas, women's livelihoods are intertwined with nature, such as natural production, agriculture and farming. (According to United Nations data, women farmers account for 45-80% of food production in developing countries.) Women and underage girls in agriculture and farming, especially in heavy production stages, are carried out in families that still make a living with male-dominated production methods in the world and in Turkey. is being run. Increasing soil fertility due to drought causes women to work longer hours. The vast majority of women and girls working in this field are employed without social security. Women and girls working in agriculture and farming, where the heaviest production processes are operating, continue their lives without health insurance. This also poses an obstacle to the right of women and girls working in agriculture and farming to access healthy food.*

*Since women and girls engaged in agriculture and farming are employed on the land instead of being sent to school, they also have problems in reading and accessing information. Access to information also means disseminating the acquired knowledge, thus consciously processing and protecting nature. Women who are deprived of their right to read cannot reach the career they can achieve by reading, therefore they cannot be in decision-making mechanisms. This also affects their participation in climate decision-making processes. In addition, especially in Istanbul and all over Turkey, major investment projects and energy projects are carried out in the regions where agricultural lands are located, which leads to usurping the right of women and young girls working as agricultural workers to access clean air and their right to work in a safe climate environment. Women who have to work without any security and social rights in agriculture do housework in their spare time and take care of children and elderly people at home.*

*For girls, the situation is even more negative. As a role model, girls who grow up with their mothers who are insecure and deprived of all kinds of social rights, and even forced to work with her, lead a life away from the right of access to school and therefore information. they are forced to "serve" their elders and father, thus behaving like an adult of age to play. This is one of the main obstacles to the right of girls, who are the women of the future, to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.*

*In addition, problems in rural areas such as thirst and loss of land due to the climate crisis force people to migrate. The poverty that comes with migration also causes an increase in domestic violence, and the most affected segments of domestic violence are women and girls.*

*When the right of women and girls to live in a clean and healthy environment is violated, the most effective method should be the constitutional regulations of the states. If the constitutions and domestic legal systems of the states are not effective, it will be very difficult to resolve these rights violations quickly. Non-governmental organizations will be the institutions that will identify the missing domestic law methods and ensure that these gaps are filled by the states. NGOs, which will ensure the regulation of legal regulations on the right of women and girls to live in a healthy environment and nature by pressure and lobbying the states on related issues, will teach the next generations that it is important to struggle to live in a healthy environment with the continuity of the struggle. In recent years, women living in rural areas in developing countries such as Turkey have become an important part of the social struggle to defend their right to live in a clean and healthy environment. It takes an active role in local organizations to defend the lands they cultivate, clean air and forest areas that provide livelihood, and natural areas, and is at the forefront of activist actions. This reveals the importance of civil organization in defending the rights of women/girls, which are excluded from decision-making processes.*

1. What are the potential benefits of respecting, protecting and fulfilling women’s and girl’s rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? Examples that treat girls distinctly from adult women would be particularly appreciated.

*Women and girls are disadvantaged as those who have to work in the field of nature. For this reason, the social rights and guarantees of women should be protected by the states and private enterprises while they work and lead their lives. At the same time, the right of access to information, living in a healthy nature, and access to healthy food are also the responsibility of states and states should fulfill these obligations.*

*In the Environment Law published in the Official Gazette dated 11.08.1983 in Turkey, the right of the society to live in a healthy environment was emphasized. The first article of the Law states: “The purpose of this Law is to ensure that the environment, which is the common property of all living things, is protected in line with the principles of sustainable environment and sustainable development.”*

*The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was prepared and opened for signature by the UN in 1979, was opened for signature by 145 countries in 1998. The Convention has a privileged place in terms of bringing women's human rights and the concepts of gender-based discrimination into discussion not only at a legal but also at a concrete level.*

*The Istanbul Convention, signed by 45 countries, including Turkey, and the EU, on August 1, 2014, mentions the protection measures regarding women's exposure to domestic violence. In addition, it was emphasized that there should be no discrimination in the case of gender and immigration in cases related to the difficulties faced by women while working. However, Turkey has withdrawn its signature from the Istanbul Convention last year. Withdrawing from this treaty, which is important for the world, leads to the usurpation of the rights of all women of the world and the future women of girls.*

*In addition, according to the Committee, which is the authorized interpretation body of the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, states parties should respect women's right to health by avoiding imposing discriminatory practices regarding their health status and needs. Accordingly, states should also ensure that harmful social or traditional practices do not hinder access to antenatal and postnatal care and family planning; prevent third parties from forcing women to traditional practices, for example female genital mutilation; It should include measures to protect all at-risk segments of society, especially women, children, youth and the elderly, and taking into account acts of gender-based violence. States must also eliminate barriers to third parties' access to health-related information and services.*

*In addition, the Covenant of Mayors Europe-CoM, which was initiated by the European Commission in 2008 with the aim of participating and supporting the mayors to achieve the climate and energy targets of the European Union, is a group that is voluntarily committed to implementing the climate and energy targets. It brings together thousands of cities and regions. Many municipalities in the world and in Turkey, which have signed the European Agreement of Mayors for Climate and Energy, have announced that they will participate in the action plan regarding the climate crisis.*

*The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, includes the following articles on the right of children to live in a healthy environment:*

*- Combating disease and malnutrition, within the framework of primary health care and, inter alia, through the use of readily available techniques and the provision of nutritious food and clean drinking water, and taking into account the dangers and harms of environmental pollution;*

*- Assisting all segments of society, especially parents and children, to obtain and use basic information on child health and nutrition, the benefits of breastfeeding, community and environmental health, and accident prevention;*

*- Developing respect for the natural environment.*

# Submission of responses

Please send your responses to the questionnaire **in Word format** by email to hrc-sr-environment@un.org.

However, submissions will also be accepted via regular mail at the following address:

UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division UNOG-OHCHR

CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

# We kindly request that your submission be concise and limited to a maximum of 5 pages (or 2,000 words) and welcome the inclusion of links to online documents.

Due to a limited capacity for translation, we also request that your inputs be submitted in English, French, or Spanish.

To avoid unnecessary duplication: if you have recently replied to other questionnaires from UN human rights mechanisms (or other international bodies, such as the High- Level Political Forum) with information that would be relevant to this request as well, we welcome your directing us to those replies.

# The deadline for submission is 14 October 2022.

All submissions will be made publicly available and posted on the Special Rapporteur’s homepage at the OHCHR website.

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