

# European Call of Women's Organisations: For a just, transformative and gender-responsive climate agreement!

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that the world faces, and affects us all. However, men and women affect and are affected by environmental and climate change in different ways; they also contribute to climate justice through diverse strategies. In all countries, women and women's organisations play an important role, which has been recognised by the work programme on gender initiated at COP 20 in 2014 in Lima.

**Women are half of the world's population: it is obvious that the planet won't be saved without women's leadership and full participation.**

Ahead of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21, 30 Nov.-11 Dec. 2015, Paris), **the European Women's Lobby calls for women's human rights and gender equality to be fully integrated into the final COP21 agreement**, not only in the general principles, but in provisions concerning the implementation of policies and financial and technological mechanisms. More than two third of the 154 countries who made their contribution to COP21 did not include a women's rights perspective.

Despite the European Union's (EU) leading role in advancing international negotiations on climate change, the gender dimension has been largely absent from policy initiatives and debates at all levels. **The EWL calls on the EU and its member states to work towards the realisation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action on Women and the Environment**, as well as their own recent commitments on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Climate Change (Council Conclusions 2012 and 2015) and the concrete implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

*"The climate revolution won't happen without women!"*  
**Pascale Boistard, French Secretary of State for Women's Rights**

## ***Towards a just and transformative climate agreement***

**We support the following demands of organisations from different sectors:**

- Placing respect for all human rights at the centre of the climate agreement, including the right to a healthy environment, food and food sovereignty, and sexual and reproductive rights.
- Breaking with neo-liberal approaches and the belief that financial markets and institutions will solve the problems that they have created. The current GDP system does not integrate the impact of our lifestyle on the environment; we need to reinforce and respect the values that prioritise the protection of the Earth and people's wellbeing.
- Integrating agro-ecology and soil conservation in climate negotiations.
- Applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, via transfer payments to finance the mitigation of climate change and adaptation – a priority for poor countries, which are the most affected by the problem but least responsible for it.
- Redirecting subsidies and partnerships with polluting industries (fossil fuels, nuclear, arms etc.) toward sustainable practices (renewable energies, relocating production and consumption).



**#CommitAccelerateInvest**  
**#SystemChangeNOTClimateChange**  
**#FromWords2action**



## ***Women as agents of change for a sustainable and peaceful people-centred world***

**To reach a just, transformative and gender-responsive agreement, we demand:**

### **Reinforcing women's participation and a focus on gender equality!**

- Ensuring decision-making parity in all processes and structures involved in climate-related negotiations and mechanisms. Ensure the right of all women and girls to be heard on environmental issues in their regions.
- Enshrining the principles of women's rights and equality in all climate-related texts and mechanisms: mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions), adaptation to the effects of climate change, loss and damage, technologies etc.
- Integrating perspectives on gender and gender-sensitive budgeting in climate mechanisms and all strategies relating to climate and energy, sustainable development and Agenda 21.
- Integrating gender sensitive and climate sensitive mechanisms in international financial and economic exchanges.
- Implementing documented impact assessments of public and private women's rights initiatives (e.g. "Climate-Smart Agriculture", "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation" and "REDD+").
- Assess, disseminate and raise awareness on the impacts of environmental policies on women, by both public policies and public and private industries.

### **Making the connection between gender, climate, economics and natural resources!**

- Ensuring coherence between commitments on climate and those of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, and the United Nations resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

- Recognising that women, through their unpaid domestic and care work, subsidise the economy. Equal sharing of this work between men and women must be promoted and relevant public services must be funded.
- Prioritising women's equal access to and control of land, heritage, property, shared assets, credit and technical support; respecting the rights of indigenous communities.
- Protecting and supporting migrants and refugees, ensuring their fundamental rights.
- Promoting the local economy, collective management of resources, waste, recycling – often carried out by local women's organisations.

### **Funding gender equality and the gender approach!**

- In the context of the UNFCCC Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund, allocating a percentage of resources to women's organisations committed to environmental protection and sustainable economic activities, as well as to displaced persons and refugees from climate-related situations.
- Allocating resources to gather and make use of women's knowledge, expertise and local practices, and to encourage the transfer of skills.

### **Modes of production and consumption that incorporate gender!**

- Strengthening the guidance and training of women and girls in, and their access to, scientific and technical disciplines, jobs created by energy transition, landscape management and planification, and biodiversity conservation and agro-ecology activities.
- Supporting women's activities in economic and social sectors that contribute to transitioning modes of production & consumption & to environmental resilience: solidarity economics, urban and rural services, etc.
- Combating sexist stereotypes in consumer-related communication, advertising, and education.

## **Our demands towards the EU:**

We call on the EU to speed up the elaboration of an environment strategy based on biodiversity, sustainable development, quality of life and wellbeing, from an intergenerational and gender equality perspective.

We call on the EU to systematically include a women's rights and gender equality perspective in the definition, objectives, implementation and monitoring of environmental/climate/transport/energy policies at all levels, including research activities and data collection, and in both EU external (including development) and internal policies.

## ***Beijing Platform for Action Objectives "Women and the Environment"***

- *Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.*
- *Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.*
- *Strengthen or establish mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.*

# The reality of climate change for women in Europe

## Women's rights and climate change are interlinked:

when women's rights are not protected (including women's sexual and reproductive rights), women have fewer possibilities to explore their potential and act against climate change. Moreover, the more unequal a country is, the higher its per capita carbon emission.

## The impact of gender stereotypes

Gender-differentiated roles and responsibilities in families and households, as well as gender segregated labour market and income gap, cause differentiated vulnerabilities of women to the effects of climate change. They include more casualties among women during extreme weather events and stressful experiences of recovering from disasters.

Economic disparities lead to differences in adaptive capacity. Women's capabilities to adapt to climate change are shaped by education, gender roles, division of labour in the household and income. For example, in Europe, women tend to spend more time indoors as they more often have care responsibilities in the family, and thus depend to a greater extent on space heating. In terms of mobility, women depend on access to public transport to a larger degree. Owing to their lower incomes and to the gender-neutral taxation systems, they have greater risk of energy poverty than men, especially because of their predominance in single parent families.

## Impact on health

Environmental policies impact directly on the health and living standards of individuals. Care work may increase due to health impacts of climate change or due to natural disasters, putting additional burden on women who are mainly responsible for caring.

Privatisation of water (despite the EU Water Framework Directive) and public services, including public transports, can threaten the access of women and men to these fundamental resources and services. In certain regions of the EU, access to safe water and quality sanitation (such as public or school toilets) is still not guaranteed. In particular, women from discriminated groups or living in isolated areas (like homeless women or rural women) or women refugees have lower access to safe water and sanitation. There is insufficient research and data collection on exposure to chemicals (for example cleaning products, pesticides, industrial and farming products, consumer products) and their impact on women's and men's health (including cancers, pregnancies, and sexual and reproductive health).

## Women and gas emissions

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), women, on average, generate less gas emissions than men, in particular in the transport sector. Women tend to travel in a more sustainable way than men. In Europe the overall number of women driving (40%) is smaller than the overall number of men (62.2%). This situation is of course also linked to the patriarchal structures of society, which leads women to take jobs within walking distance from their homes, so that they could cope with their care and domestic work, even if these jobs are less attractive or less paid.

In the area of nutrition, women's daily meat consumption tends to be lower, and we know that raising livestock contributes to agricultural gas emissions.

## Women's attitudes towards climate change

In terms of attitudes towards climate change, women are more likely than men to reject nuclear power, and to be in favour of policy measures to reduce energy consumption.

## Women in environmental decision-making

The proportion of women in climate change decision-making bodies at the national, European and international level is still low. The percentage of women in high-level positions dealing with climate change in national ministries competent for environment is 33.9%, for transport 20.2% and for energy 17.3%. The average percentage of women in relevant high-level positions in the European Commission is 26.9%. And even though in DG Climate action it is 40% and in DG Environment 37.5%, in DG Energy it is 20% and in DG Mobility and Transport 12.5%. This situation can be explained by gender stereotypes and education that define technology and science as masculine. EIGE Beijing+20 study indeed shows that women are less likely to choose scientific and technological fields relevant to climate change for their education or work.

## Women climate activists

The 2014 Summit on Women and Climate Change in Bali brought together women's and environmental rights leaders. It gave visibility to a reality often neglected when it comes to climate change: the action of grassroots women is making concrete change at local level. However, in different parts of the world, women climate activists are threatened of criminalisation and pervasive forms of violence, including rape.

## ***Climate change in Europe:***

Anthropogenic or human-induced climate change, caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest challenges of our time. The expected impacts of climate change in the EU include more frequent extreme weather events, high temperatures, and drought (in particular in Southern Europe), retreat of glaciers and reduced snow cover. The EP has acknowledged, in September 2015, that the combined effects of human activity and climate change mean that the whole of the EU's Mediterranean region and some Central European regions are now classified as water-scarce, semi-desert regions.

Consequences of climate change in Europe will include increased risk of flash floods and coastal flooding, increased erosion, more frequent wildfires, extensive species loss and move of species and decreases to the Northern part of the continent, rise of the sea level, air pollution, reduced water availability and crop productivity. These geo-physical impacts will result in socio-economic impacts such as effects on human health and pressure on economic activities such as tourism (Source: EIGE).

## **Women and the Environment and the European Union**

Since 2012, the issue is high on the political agenda in the EU. Firstly, in 2012, the EU Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of Ministers (EPSCO) adopted conclusions on gender equality and climate change, highlighting that more women are needed in climate change decision-making to respond to climate change effectively. This recommendation has been transformed into a concrete objective of the European Commission (EC) in its commitments on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020".

In 2012, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) introduced the first indicators to measure the progress of gender equality in the area of women and the environment, showing that to develop and maintain a sustainable and effective response to climate change, a gender approach and gender-sensitive indicators must be an integral part of all policies and actions at all levels. However, EU indicators on women and the environment focus mainly on decision-making, and should include other quantitative and qualitative indicators on the direct and indirect impact of climate change on women, like its links with women's rights.

The 2012 European Parliament (EP) resolution on women and climate change explains that climate change is not gender-neutral, that there will not be any climate justice without true gender equality, and that climate change exacerbates gender discrimination. The EP calls for the implementation of a gender dimension in all aspects of policies on climate change (including adaptation, mitigation and financing). The 2012 EP resolution on women and the green economy makes proposals to support more women in this new form of sustainable economy. The 2015 EP resolution on the citizens' initiative Right2Water highlights that women and girls suffer most from the lack of access to adequate and decent sanitation, which often limits their access to education and makes them more vulnerable to diseases.

*The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation for women's rights and gender equality in Europe.*

[www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org)

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