

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPERT GROUP MEETING

Tackling global challenges to equality and inclusion through the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Spotlight on SDGs 10, 13 and 16



27-28 FEBRUARY 2019, VIENNA



United Nations
Climate Change



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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development carries huge transformative potential. Its vision of putting people and planet first, focusing on sustaining peace, putting gender equality at its center and rallying to leave no one behind, holds great promise for the realization of the human rights norms and global policy frameworks forming its backbone.

The theme of the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” invites debate on barriers to as well as strategies for transformative and lasting change. As a direct contribution to the HLPF and to discussions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda more broadly, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations International Development Organization (UNIDO) organized an Expert Group Meeting in Vienna from 27 to 28 February 2019 on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda with a specific focus on three of the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries; Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The meeting, which brought together experts from governments, academia, and civil society, had three broad objectives:

A. Assess progress on the three goals and consider the interlinkages between them from a gender perspective as a contribution to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019 and related policy processes in the lead up to 2020. Demonstrate how strategies and approaches for addressing

inequalities, tackling climate change and fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies are made more effective when gender equality is at the center of implementation;

B. Discuss the latest evidence and identify good practices, implementation challenges, as well as research and data gaps, to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in policies and practices at all levels, including ensuring the principle of leaving no one behind;

C. Put forward a set of catalytic and actionable recommendations to support the achievement of sustainable and resilient societies through the accelerated and gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as related UN priorities on prevention and sustaining peace.

2. REDUCING INEQUALITIES, TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND PROMOTING PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES – THE OVERALL CONTEXT

The sense of urgency that led countries to adopt international frameworks for peaceful, inclusive and sustainable development has not resulted in lasting impacts on the ground as inequalities within and among countries and global risks of climate change and conflicts continue to rise.

Unless actions to realize global commitments are accelerated within countries, extreme poverty will persist and spread while the majority of global wealth is controlled by a small group of individuals, and injustice and inequalities are exacerbated by armed conflicts and scarcity of natural resources. Women and girls, especially those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, are most likely to suffer if current trends continue.

Inequalities in wealth and income lead to a cascade of consequential social inequalities in a range of areas such as housing, work, energy, connectivity, health care, education, and related social benefits. Gender, age, class, ethnic identity, geography and other categories often intersect to aggravate and reinforce relative disadvantage and deprivation. For example, a girl who is born into a poor household and forced into early marriage is more likely to drop out of school,

give birth at an early age, suffer complications during childbirth, and experience violence, than a girl from a higher-income household who marries after reaching the age of adulthood.

The increase in greenhouse gases linked to industrialization, deforestation, and large-scale agriculture has led to climate change and environmental degradation. Increasing scarcity of critical resources such as water, energy and land leads to instability and inequality and drives conflict and displacement, which all have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Rapid and far-reaching changes are required at all levels of society to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, or else the risks of long-lasting or irreversible impacts, such as ecosystem loss, are likely to increase.¹

¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

BOX 1

Global trends that threaten the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Over the past 25 years, the average daily income of the world's poorest 20 per cent has risen by a significantly smaller margin [\$0.79] than that of the other 80 per cent [\$8.91].²
- In 2018, the wealth of the world's billionaires increased by \$2.5 billion a day, while the poorest half of the world (3.8 billion people) saw a decline in 11 per cent in wealth.³
- Two billion people are affected by fragility, conflict and violence.⁴
- For the fifth year in a row, wars, violence and persecution drove forced displacement worldwide to a new high: 68.5 million people were displaced at the end of 2017.⁵
- In 2018, approximately 136 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including an estimated 34 million women of reproductive age.⁶
- Direct economic losses from disasters have increased by over 150 per cent over the past twenty years, with losses disproportionately borne by vulnerable developing countries.⁷
- Globally, less than 15 per cent of all landholders are women. The distribution of women landholders ranges from 5 per cent in Middle East and North Africa to 18 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁸

In addition, austerity policies and a shift towards exclusionary and fear-based politics have deepened societal divisions, breeding conflict and instability, as well as renewed resistance to women's rights. Many hard-won gender equality achievements are under threat, women's human rights defenders are increasingly targeted and civil society space is shrinking.⁹

The signs of erosion in commitment to multilateral cooperation are equally worrisome.

It is imperative that comprehensive actions are taken with the utmost urgency by governments and other influential actors to address growing inequalities, which hamper progress on poverty reduction and the realization of human rights, threaten social and political stability, fuel unrest and conflict, and limit climate actions. The 2030 Agenda is firmly rooted in human rights principles and the principle of leaving no one behind and implies that every strategy must address the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. Yet, the situation is bleak, particularly in conflict affected countries indicating that much stronger emphasis should be placed on preventing conflict and building and sustaining peace as a core strategy for

2 Background paper by UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP to the 2018 Joint meeting of the Executive Boards, "Overcoming inequalities among and within countries, including gender inequality, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – reaching the poorest and most vulnerable populations first" <http://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/documents/2018/joint-meeting-of-the-executive-boards>

3 Oxfam (2019). "Public good or private wealth?". Available at <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/public-good-or-private-wealth>.

4 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflict>

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