Human Rights Council side event
Women’s Rights in the Context of Climate Change
Thursday 21 June, 15:00-16:30**
Palais des Nations, Room XXVII

It is now clear that the impacts of climate change are not gender neutral. The effects of climate change are, and will be, felt most acutely by those segments of the population that are already in vulnerable situations. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Fifth Assessment report noted: ‘People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses.’ Women are frequently more vulnerable due to pre-existing, intersecting discrimination and gendered roles and stereotypes. Women will suffer the impacts disproportionately - more frequently and more severely than men - in part because they make up the majority of the world’s poor, they are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change, they have unequal access to resources and decision-making processes and often have limited mobility.

We also know that women are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of disasters, which will become more and more frequent as a consequence of climate change. In climate-induced disasters, such as tropical storms, flooding, heatwaves and fires, women were more likely to die than men. Further, both the World Bank and the UN Development Program have warned that development and poverty reduction efforts will be seriously undermined as a consequence of unabated climate change. Thus climate change risks undoing hard-won development gains which have targeted women and gender equality.

The CEDAW Committee has also highlighted the disproportionate impacts on women in its new General Recommendation on ‘the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change’:

‘Women, girls, men and boys are affected differently by climate change and disasters, with many women and girls experiencing greater risks, burdens and impacts. Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and compound the intersecting forms of discrimination against, among others, women living in poverty, indigenous women, women belonging to ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minority groups, women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women, internally displaced, stateless and migrant women, rural women, unmarried women, adolescents and older women, who are often disproportionately affected compared with men or other women.’

‘gender inequalities limit the control that women and girls have over decisions governing their lives, as well as their access to resources such as food, water, agricultural input, land, credit, energy, technology, education, health services, adequate housing, social protection and employment. As a result of those inequalities, women and girls are more likely to be exposed to disaster-induced risks...’
and losses relating to their livelihoods, and they are less able to adapt to changes in climatic conditions.’

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has also recognised the importance of a gender perspective in its work with the establishment of the Lima Work Programme on Gender in 2014 and the adoption of the Gender Action Plan in 2017.

This side event will discuss women’s rights in the context of climate change, including the gendered dimensions of climate change impacts and the importance of a gender perspective in climate actions and in participation in policy-making at the local, national and international levels. The discussion also aims to highlight the work of other institutions addressing the women’s rights implications of climate change, including UN Women, CEDAW’s recent General Recommendation and the UNFCCC’s Gender Action Plan and to highlight the importance of the work of women human rights defenders in the context of climate change. The side event will seek to identify opportunities for the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner to complement and further support these initiatives.

**Speakers:**

H.E. Ambassador Nazhat Khan, Permanent Representative of Fiji to UNOG

Ms. Christine Löw, Director, UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva

Ms. Nahla Haidar, CEDAW Committee (video message)

Mr. Benjamin Schachter, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Co-sponsors:**

- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Fiji to UNOG
- Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN in Geneva
- Center for International Environmental Law
- Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Geneva Climate Change Consultative Group

Light refreshments will be provided.

**NOTE: Please allow more time to travel to the Palais des Nations on the 21st of June due to the visit of Pope Francis in Geneva on this day**