



66th Session of the Committee on the Status of Women
Priority Theme: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes
New York, 17 March 2022
Statement by H.E. Permanent Representative Andreas Hadjichrysanthou

Madam Chair,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the European Union. I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

At the outset, I wish to express Cyprus' full solidarity with all women and girls living in conflict as we speak, but also those who have suffered violence in countless conflict situations and have seen no justice. We stand in solidarity with women and girls in Ukraine, who are showing resilience and courage in the face of aggression, and we are particularly appalled by reports of sexual and gender-based violence.

The theme of gender and climate change is one that we welcome. Not only because climate change is an existential issue for Cyprus but because of its potential to compound existing threats and to set back achievements on gender equality. Women are not only the thread that keeps the social fabric intact, particularly in times of trouble, they are the first to be adversely affected by any crisis, over and above the deep-rooted inequalities they face on a daily basis. This signifies a need to insulate women from crises, including the risks entailed in the climate crisis.

The climate crisis is a multitude of threats rolled into one. The duality of this year's theme presents a significant challenge: how to prevent increased inequality as a result of climate change and disasters on the one hand, and how to use such crises as opportunities to enhance equality, on the other.

The status of women cannot be addressed in an isolated or piecemeal manner. We can put emergency measures in place to address vulnerabilities, but unless we achieve real equality, in law and in fact, the effects of any crisis will continue to disproportionately affect women. We must opt for structural impact through the development of a strategy to eliminate constitutional, legal, administrative, cultural, behavioural, social and economic obstacles to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the climate change and all other spheres.

For that to happen, we need a policy of zero tolerance towards inequality, unequal pay, discrimination, violence against women, and bias in public discourse and we need to tackle more decisively the patriarchal stereotypes we perpetuate from generation to generation. We need more women in leadership roles and more women public figures as role models, in addition to more women policy-makers in order to develop gender transformative and balanced socio-economic policies.

This overarching strategy will enable us to more effectively approach specific challenges like those induced by climate change. Beyond the obvious need for a solid legal framework that guarantees full equality before the law, including the continued protection of rights irrespective of circumstances, measures can be taken to empower women, not only when faced with disaster, but in enabling them to prevent, adapt and mitigate climate risks in their communities. Also key is the involvement of women in developing emergency responses and capabilities in their localities, as well as contingency plans in cases where the magnitude of a disaster disables critical infrastructure or renders an area uninhabitable.

The endeavor of using crises as opportunities to enhance equality is a more complicated one. Climate change and large-scale disasters have the capacity to destroy a country's entire GDP or fundamentally change its socioeconomic landscape, a landscape which in many cases fails to harness women as drivers of economic growth and social development. The fundamental change of circumstances that any one of our countries may be faced with from now on, provides us with an opportunity to plan for a future based on the rightful place of women and not the current status of women.

We would single out equal opportunities to influence and benefit from the investments made to address climate change, including access to climate finance, technologies and knowledge, as well as management and protection of natural resources. To achieve these goals, we need to increase opportunities for women and girls in education and training, including in STEM and other fields related to climate change.

The development of learning modules and tailor-made training on gender equality and climate change, including specialized material and training manuals, online courses and virtual spaces created for the exchange of knowledge, are but a few examples of steps that can be taken in the immediate future. At the local and national levels, capacity building for gender mainstreaming in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of climate change policies, plans, strategies and measures should be pursued.

Madam Chair,

Cyprus has an unwavering commitment to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are also committed to international conventions to address climate change.

Not immune to the effects of either gender inequality or climate change, Cyprus has made considerable progress over the years towards the advancement of women's rights, as well as towards social protection systems and ways to address the impact of climate change both in society and the environment. National Action Plans and Strategies have been put in place that include provisions, among others, for the participation of women both in the development and implementation of climate action plans, as well as the integration of the gender dimension in adaptation and mitigation efforts. Furthermore, specific measures have been put in place towards the empowerment of women in rural areas, including through increased access to services, education and training and by actions fostering self-employed women in sectors affected by climate change, among others.

Madame Chair,

Nearly two centuries since the first women's rights movement, a lot remains to be done until the achievement of complete and universal gender equality, in order to effectively address the elemental issue plaguing our societies and the global community as a whole. We cannot achieve our full human potential, until all barriers are lifted and we all are equal.