

Committee: United Nations Environment Programme

Issue: Gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable development

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Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, delegates! My name is Eleni Papanikolaou, I am a 17-year-old high school student and I will have the honour of serving as the Deputy President of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Should you have any questions concerning our committee or the topic in question, I will be at your disposal at elpapan489@gmail.com.

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. . In comparison to men, a very small percentage of women have a place in political leadership, even in MEDCs (more economically developed countries), and in several LEDCs (less economically developed countries) like Saudi Arabia and Qatar even though women are legally allowed to cast a vote and put themselves for a position in parliament, they are often discouraged by men and even the government itself to do so, due to the deeply fermented gender based social divide.

A large number of women work 'informally', without any protection and under terrible conditions without knowing their labor rights. In India, for example, about 120 million women (around 95% of women in paid labor) work 'informally', as do around 12 million women in Mexico (around 60% of employed women). Furthermore, many girls are denied basic education based on their gender and archaic stereotypes, such that of the "woman child breeder".

The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing, needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society.

All too often, development is driven by one particular need, without fully considering the wider or future impacts. We are already seeing the damage this kind of approach can cause, from large-scale financial crises caused by irresponsible banking, to changes in global climate resulting from our dependence on fossil fuel-based energy sources. The longer we pursue unsustainable development, the more frequent and severe its consequences are likely to become, which is why we need to take action now.

The focus of sustainable development is far broader than just the environment. It's also about ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity.

Achieving sustainable development has been one of the biggest issues humanity has yet to face. Building up the economic and social pillars of sustainability while neglecting the environment degrades the natural capital needed for growth. But are people able to solve the various social and environmental crises without gender equality?

Economic, environmental and social development is relevant to discussions of gender equality. Studies show that gender inequalities are extracting high economic costs and leading to social inequities and environmental degradation around the world.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Gender Equality

Gender equality is defined as: “The state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender”.¹

Empowerment Sustainable development

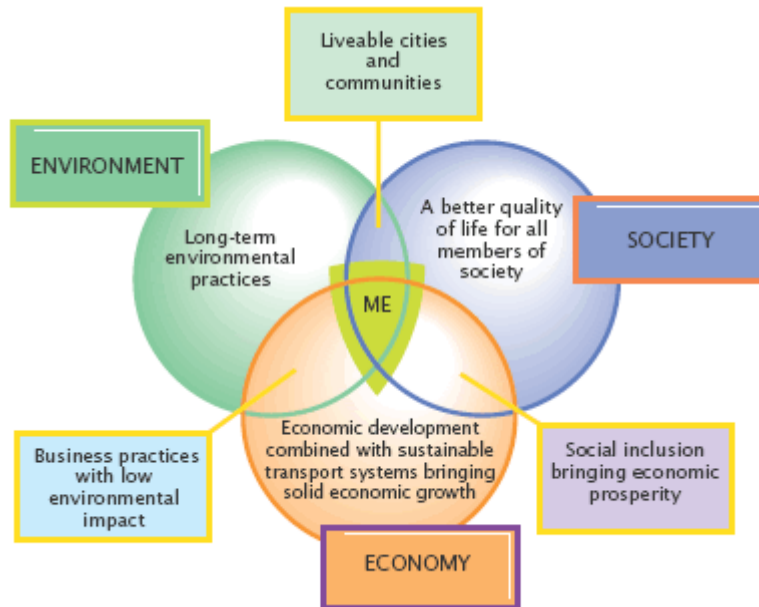
Empowerment is defined as: “Authority or power given to someone to do something”.²

¹ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gender_equality

² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/empowerment>

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is defined as: “Economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources”³



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women have been facing gender-based discrimination ever since the beginning of time. The first real change in their position in society took place at the end of the 19th century when they were finally given the right to vote after many years of suffrage; more specifically, New Zealand was the first to do so in 1893. Ever since, all sovereign states followed New Zealand’s example, with Saudi Arabia being the last country to grant women the right to vote in 2011. Voting in elections gave some power to women as they were finally given the chance to take part in politics.

Furthermore a factor that puts a halt on progress and limits the empowerment of women is extreme poverty. In many countries, especially in LEDCs, women don’t have access to education because a large percentage of the lower classes are not often able to afford to provide their children with education. Also, many families don’t send their girls to school because of the very small number of schools in some regions. In most cases, the closest school to some families is miles away and children will have to walk very long distances, and often in dangerous climates, to get to school. Therefore, many families

³ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sustainable_development

⁴ <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/232357661994792306/>

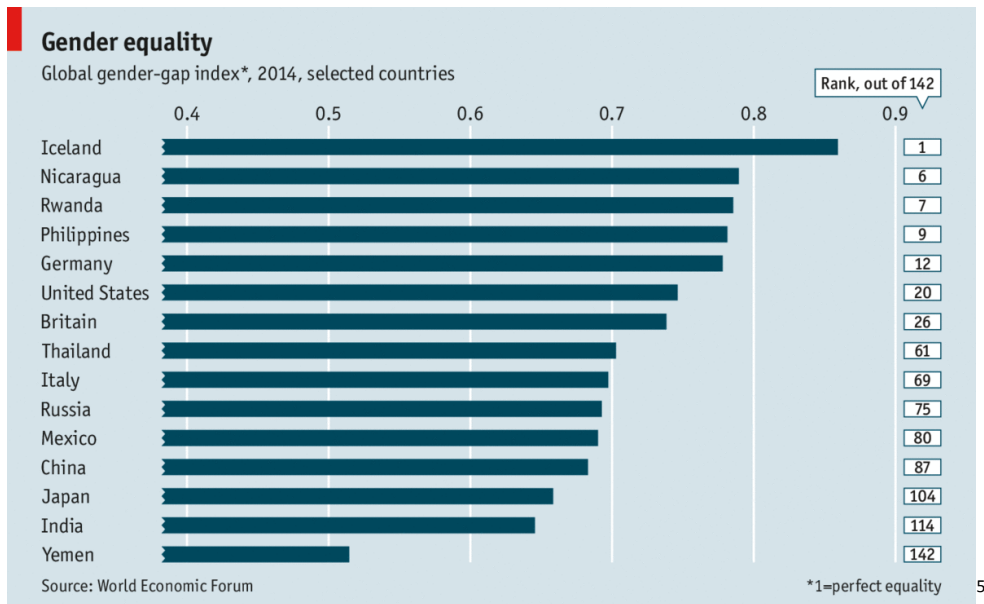
will prefer to keep their children and mostly the girls at home to prevent them from being exposed to danger and sometimes because they prove to be more useful at home taking care of chores.

UN Women

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created “UN Women”. UN Women is an organization dedicated to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programs and services needed to ensure that set standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It operates on a global scale to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women’s equal participation in all aspects of life. It focuses on four strategic priorities: Women becoming leaders, participating in and benefiting equally from governance systems, women having income security, decent work and economic autonomy, all women and girls being able to live a life free from all forms of violence, as well as women and girls contributing to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.

Gender equality is a right. Fulfilling this right is the best chance we have in meeting some of the most pressing challenges of our time—from economic crisis and lack of health care, to climate change, violence against women and escalating conflicts. Women are directly affected by these problems and are more than capable of finding solutions to them. However the gender gap continues to keep both them and the world behind.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind.



Women summit and earth summit

In the 1990's, two major United Nations conferences provided the initial impetus for the discussion of the role of women in climate change. Those were the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the Fourth World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing in 1995. At the Earth Summit in 1992, delegates and representatives of a wide range of countries and NGOs discussed various topics related to the environment and sustainable development. Besides important achievement as an agreement on the Climate Change Convention, which led to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the conference also resulted in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. For the first time, a high level political document officially recognized the centrality of women's agency, their voice, their participation and leadership in environment-related issues. On that note, principle 20 of the Rio Declaration states that "Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development." 48 At the Fourth World Conference on Women, global leaders adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which commits governments to mainstream a gender equality perspective in to the preparations for, implementation and follow-up to all major UN Conference and summits. One of the 12 Critical areas of concern pinpointed by the Beijing Platform for Action was gender in equalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment. The Platform identified three

⁵ <https://romneymanassa.wordpress.com/2014/11/04/chart-gender-equality-around-the-world/>

strategic objectives for government action on the environment. These include involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels, integrating their concerns and perspectives in policies and programs for sustainable development, as well as strengthening and establishing ways to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women at all levels. 49 Although both aforementioned documents merely speak about women and the environment and not yet climate change, and although both are rather vague, they turned out to be of crucial importance for gender mainstreaming in the area of climate change. Especially the review mechanisms installed by both conferences resulted in a clearer understanding of the gaps and challenges remaining.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Norway

Norway is one of the countries where the two genders are almost equal. The fundamental aim of Norway's gender equality efforts is to increase the opportunities available to women and girls, promote their right to self-determination, and further their empowerment. This is crucial if girls, boys, women and men are to have equal rights and equal opportunities. Norway has a long tradition of working for women's rights and gender equality. If we are to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality must be at the heart of the international agenda. Norway will work to promote: 1.inclusive and equitable equality education for all girls and boys 2.women's equal participation in political life 3.full economic rights for women and equal opportunities for women to participate in the labor market 4.the elimination of violence and harmful practices against girls and women 5.sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women.

Finland

Finland is in many ways a pioneer when it comes to gender equality. Finnish women have been actively participating in working life and political decision-making for a long time. The Government has undertaken active measures to promote the reconciliation of work and family life and gender equality at various levels of decision-making. In recent years, increasing attention has also been given to social problems related to the status of men.

Gender equality is being promoted through a dual strategy. This includes both specific actions to remove obstacles to gender equality and mainstreaming the gender

perspective in all decision making and its preparations. Finland is committed to promoting gender equality through both legislation and gender equality policy. The European Union, international conventions and international gender equality policy also oblige the Finnish government to pursue gender equality actively. Good practices in other countries have helped find new ways for promoting gender equality.

Morocco

In Morocco over 75% of girls between the ages of 12 and 14 are no longer in formal schooling in the country's rural areas. The government has recently started to implement policies that better integrate women into the economy, but more still needs to be done to help young girls achieve their dreams. Morocco is currently losing a significant share of income because of gender gaps in the market. The IMF study states that gender segregation currently costs the Kingdom 46% of income per capita compared to countries where women are more present in the labor force market and entrepreneurship participation. A previous study by the UN indicated that Morocco is ranked 117th out of 155 countries in the MENAP region in terms of gender inequality.

Turkey

Though there had been a progress on the elimination of gender inequality in Turkey especially after the beginning of 2000, the statistics still reflect the grim reality. According to the Gender Gap Index (2015) of World Economic Forum, Turkey is the 130th country out of 145 countries. In other words Turkey which is the 17th biggest economy in the world is the 15th last country in terms of gender equality.

China

China is a developing country with the largest population in the world. Therefore, the promotion of gender equality and the overall development of women is not only of great significance for China's development, it also has a special influence on the efforts for the advancement of mankind. It has always been a basic state policy of China to promote equality between men and women. Since New China was founded in 1949, especially since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, and along with the continuous growth of China's economy and the overall progress of its society, women are being given more guarantees of enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities with men and the development of women is being given unprecedented opportunities.

In recent years, the Chinese government has made fairness and justice, with gender equality included, an important part of efforts to build a harmonious socialist society, and has utilized economic, legal, administrative, public opinion and other measures to ensure that women enjoy equal rights with men in terms of politics, economy, culture, and social and family life, and continuously pushes forward women's development in an all-round way.

World Watch Institute

Through research and outreach that inspire action, the Worldwatch Institute works to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world that meets human needs. The Institute’s top mission objectives are universal access to renewable energy and nutritious food, expansion of environmentally sound jobs and development, transformation of cultures from consumerism to sustainability, and an early end to population growth through healthy and intentional childbearing.

South Korea

Women in South Korea have experienced significant improvements for social changes in recent years compared to previous years. In today's society, the economy of South Korea has tremendously improved due to urbanization, industrialization, military authoritarianism, democratic reform, and social liberalization since the late 1960s. Thus, gender roles and gender identities eventually have been modified as a result to changing modernity. More than the half of Korean women are employed and to elaborate more, more 25% of married women are employed as full-time workers. In politics, although there are not as many female politicians as male politicians, the female politicians have been recently participating actively compared to the past. For instance, in National Assembly, women occupy 20 of the 299 seats. The Prime Minister and leaders of parties are all females. The government has also began to punish factories that have mistreated women.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Country	Description of event
1893	New Zealand	The first country to give women the right to an electoral vote
1900	Egypt	A school for female teachers is founded in Cairo.

	Tunisia	The first public elementary school for girls
	Germany	Universities open to women
1901	China	Girls are included in the educational system
1905	USA	Nora Stanton Blatch Barney is the first woman to gain a degree in civil engineering
1907	Sudan	The first school open to Muslim girls is established.
	Iran	Compulsory primary education for females
1908	Korea	Secondary education for females through the foundation of the Capital School for Girl's Higher Education
1911	Luxembourg	A new educational law gives women access to higher education, and two secondary education schools open to females
1917	Greece	The first public secondary educational school for girls open
	Nicaragua	The first female obtains a university degree
1920	Portugal	Secondary school open to women
1921	Thailand	Compulsory elementary education for both girls and boys
1923	Egypt	Compulsory education for both sexes
1927	Afghanistan	The monarch introduces compulsory education for the daughters of officials
1929	Greece	Secondary education for females is made equal to that of males
1930	Turkey	Equal right to university education for both men and women
1937	Kuwait	The first public schools open to females
1943	Iran	Compulsory primary education for both males

		and females
1945	-	Gender equality enshrined in the United Nations Charter
1955	Qatar	First public school for girls
1964	Afghanistan	States the equal right of women to education
1975	-	UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City
1980	USA	Women and men enrolled in American colleges in equal number
2010	-	Creation of UN WOMEN
2011	Saudi Arabia	Gives Women the right to vote

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- On 1945 gender equality is enshrined in the United Nations Charter
- On 1975 the first Un World Conference on Women is held in Mexico City
- On 6 January 2010 the resolution (A/64/588) <<http://undocs.org/A/64/588>> was adopted by the General Assembly for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women
- On 14 September 2009 the resolution (A/RES/63/311) <<http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/63/311>> was adopted by the General Assembly
- On 22 December 2015 the Resolution (A/RES/70/219) <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_219.pdf> was adopted by the General Assembly and has made a great effort in order to empower women.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

United Nations

In July 2010, the UN General Assembly established the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), replacing four underfunded UN offices devoted to gender equality. The new office's goals are to eliminate discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men. In order to achieve these goals, the new office will support inter-governmental bodies, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms; help member states to implement these standards; and, hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality.

UN Women was established after four years of negotiations that nearly ended in gridlock after UN member states split on its mission. What emerged was an office – not a more powerful UN agency – with an operational responsibility to run programs on the ground when countries want them, and a policymaking arm to ensure women sit at the center of the UN's work.

European Union

EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020(GAP II), adopted in September 2015 and endorsed by the Member States, has begun in full. The GAP II has the overarching objective of supporting gender equality through external actions. Several initiatives were put in place in order to enhance capacity building of EU staff. A guidance note was widely disseminated, a support desk was set up and two seminars have been organized to train and assist EU Delegations with the implementation and the reporting. A key element of the GAP II is indeed the requirement for the EU Delegations to produce a gender analysis that will feed into their programming. So far, approximately 40 Delegations have fulfilled this requirement, with much more making progress in this area.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Developed Countries

Developed Countries have made a lot of progress in gender equality in the most recent years, but still there is a lot of thing that have to be done to close the gender gap. First of all a systemic change has to be made, which means contributions to changes in laws/regulations, funding levels, discourse, legitimacy of an issue and content of national-

level dialogue processes. Project results show that, contributions to changes in the position/empowerment of women and girls, as well as community and community leaders' attitudes and behaviors related to gender equality. Organizational change has to be done. That will contribute to changes to partner capacities to work on women's rights and gender equality, including those of government agencies, non-governmental/civil society organizations, UN agencies, private enterprises and twinning partners. Furthermore educating managers ought to be fair and provide mentorship to strong talent. Children have to be provided with healthy gender ideas from kindergarten. Also a system has to be established that will provide scholarships to girls that cannot afford higher education.

Developing Countries

Even in recent years millions of women in developing countries are far from equal from their fellow male citizens. However there are some steps that developing countries could follow to enhance gender equality. Firstly, an enhanced monitoring as in the Nordic countries is needed in order to attain the gender equality police goals. Moreover monitoring of gender equality policy should be clarified, and suitable indications need to be found. The family code should be revised to expand the rights of women in marriage, guardianship, child custody, and access to divorce. A constitutional guarantee has to be adopted for equality. In addition, women must be provided with maternity leave of at least 14 weeks at full salary. Structure is crucial in order to ensure implementation and coordination of equality police. Also gaps have to be closed in productivity and earnings. Lastly the governments should invest in youth to break intergenerational cycles of gender inequality.

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