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## GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE FINANCE: PROGRESS AND ASPIRATIONS

Catherine Tinker and Renata Koch Alvarenga

### INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are recognized as a necessary part of action to combat global climate change. The 2015 Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) calls for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming and states in the Preamble:<sup>1</sup>

*Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights...as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and inter-generational equity....*<sup>2</sup>

The Paris Agreement also refers to the term “climate justice,” a human-centered approach to the unequal impact of the effects of climate change, seeking equality for those states and communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change who are also the least responsible for climate change.<sup>3</sup> They include small island developing states likely to disappear as sea levels rise; least developed countries that contributed few GHG emissions compared to industrialized countries; and populations including women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the poor, who most directly suffer from climate-induced drought, heat, flooding and the like. An important element of climate justice is the concept of gender justice, addressing the disparate impact on women and girls of the extreme effects of climate change and achieving gender equality in climate finance. This article explores the development of specific policies and action plans to bring gender considerations into financing for climate change plans and projects under three specific public climate change funds established under the UNFCCC: the Global Environment Facility of the World Bank; the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC; and the Green Climate Fund with its Gender Action Plan.<sup>4</sup>

Gender justice is “an important element of change in a world where degradation of resources.... drive[s] and exacerbate[s] gender inequalities,” according to Mary Robinson, former Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change and former President of Ireland.<sup>5</sup> She is the founder

and head of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, a non-profit organization addressing climate justice issues worldwide, whose work is based on “the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change... using the principles of human rights and combining issues of sustainable development with responsibility for climate change.”<sup>6</sup> Other non-governmental organizations and activist groups making the link between climate justice and gender justice include the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO); the UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency of civil society organizations; the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) with Both Ends; and GenderCC, all working to build capacity and knowledge to track, monitor and influence projects and financial flows of the climate funds.<sup>7</sup> These and many other NGOs and local community groups worldwide, private sector groups or companies, philanthropies, and regional organizations together with states and international organizations are working for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 13 on climate change.<sup>8</sup>

In *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Jeffrey Sachs defines sustainable development as a “normative” or ethical outlook on what a “good society” should be, one concerned about extreme poverty, inequality, social mobility, discrimination, and social cohesion.<sup>9</sup> Finding a balance among three systems – “the world economy, global society, and the Earth’s physical environment” – is the challenge of sustainable development. In the case of climate change, action involves both mitigation<sup>10</sup> and adaptation.<sup>11</sup>

*We will need not only to prevent future climate changes by decarbonizing the energy system...but also learn to live with at least some climate change as well.... A 2-degree Celsius rise [in global average temperature] will imply massive changes to the climate system, including more droughts, floods, heat waves, and extreme storms....*<sup>12</sup>

Climate disasters such as droughts and floods have worse impacts on women than on men due to ingrained stereotypical roles and discrimination towards females in society. This inequality limits women’s decision-making power politically, restricts their access to water and land in parts of the world, and provides fewer opportunities for an adequate standard of living for women and their families.<sup>13</sup> The narrative of women as victims of climate change, however, has begun to shift. Women’s voices, ideas, and lived experiences of how to manage resources effectively and how to respond to the global rise in temperatures are essential to changing human behavior and reaching long-term sustainability. Both as a practical necessity and from a

human rights perspective, achieving gender equality is now recognized as an inherent part of achieving sustainable development. According to a UN report in 2019, “There is simply no way that the world can achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals without also achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.”<sup>14</sup>

Since 1945, beginning with the UN Charter itself, the UN has affirmed the equal rights of women and men and prohibited discrimination as a matter of international law. Today this means supporting the use of strong gender criteria for climate-related project financing. However, there is still not enough policy space for women to sufficiently influence climate decisions or address the impacts of climate change on the livelihoods, daily activities, and security of women and girls of all ages, including the youngest and oldest in society.

Climate finance mechanisms of various types and funds created under the UNFCCC and implemented by international organizations like the World Bank or UN specialized agencies have long screened projects for environmental impact prior to project approval or funding. Similar screens for gender impact under criteria adopted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other climate funds under the UNFCCC, like the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and its Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan of 2017, are beginning to ensure that climate change projects involve women in project selection, implementation, and assessment, as well as addressing gender concerns. These programs and action plans are reviewed in this article.

The article concludes that all proposals for funding climate action through entities created under the UNFCCC should be screened according to the gender policies and plans of the climate funds, including the GEF and the GCF, and the results should be available publicly to provide transparency and build trust and accountability. Broader inclusion of women in decision-making and the requirement of evidence of a gender perspective prior to approving financing for climate change projects will contribute to the normative element of sustainable development and its implementation. The intersection of gender justice and climate justice in reducing the dangerous effects of climate change means allocating adequate financial resources to women leaders and projects generated and administered by women at international, regional, national and local levels, for large and small projects and programs alike.<sup>15</sup>

#### GENDER JUSTICE IN CLIMATE FINANCE

The momentum for gender equality and climate justice has become integrated into existing climate funds through the United Nations. Globally, research and literature shows that gender-responsiveness in climate finance results in better efficiency and effectiveness in projects for adaptation and mitigation.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, women must be acknowledged as a key stakeholder group in order to ensure the best result from climate finance mechanisms.<sup>17</sup>

The global climate finance architecture is quite complex. The financial interaction between developed countries and developing countries in terms of mitigating and adapting to climate change was first outlined at the UNFCCC in 1992, specifically in Article 4.3, which discusses compliance with the treaty. The treaty requires that “Developed country Parties ... shall provide new and additional financial resources to meet the agreed full costs incurred by developing country Parties.”<sup>18</sup>

When discussing climate finance, the UNFCCC focuses its actions on fund mobilization, fund administration and governance, and fund disbursement and implementation, which are tied to key principles that must be followed by the States Parties to the climate treaty. According to the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (hereinafter “the Foundation”), these principles include “transparency and accountability,” referring to the public disclosure of financial contributions, and “respective capability,” tying financial contributions for climate action to the existing national wealth of countries.<sup>19</sup>

A diagram (Figure 1) created by the Foundation illustrates the global financing system for climate action with three multilateral channels for climate finance created under the UNFCCC: the Global Environment Facility (which also administers the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund); the Adaptation Fund (established under the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC); and the Green Climate Fund (created under the Paris Agreement with specific language on gender and a Gender Action Plan in 2017).<sup>20</sup> The three climate finance mechanisms discussed in this article are identified in Figure 1 under the heading “UNFCCC Financial Mechanisms.”

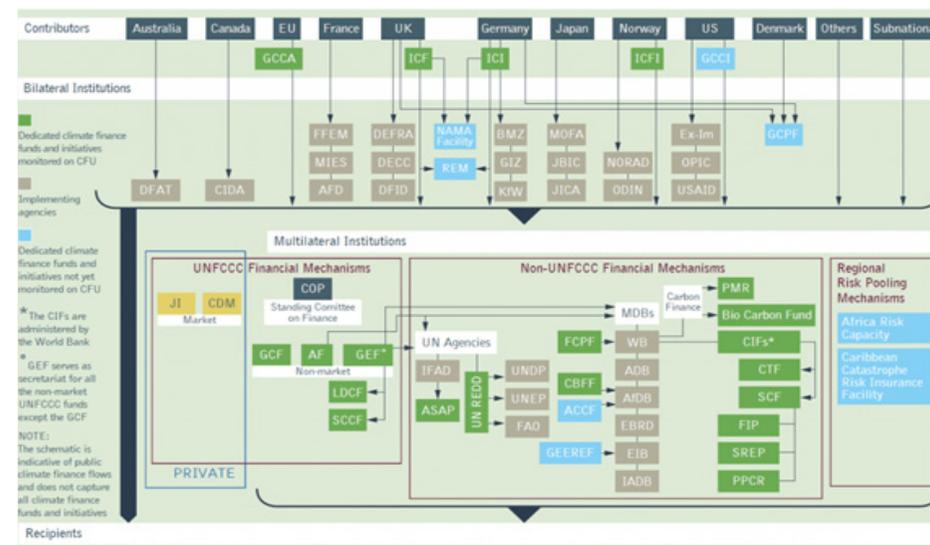


Figure 1<sup>21</sup>

### 1. *Global Environment Facility (GEF)*

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an active global climate fund, established in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit (UNCED) as the financing mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Since 1992, the GEF has given USD 18.1 billion in grants and has mobilized through co-financing another USD 94.2 billion for thousands of projects in 170 countries in six focal areas: climate change, biodiversity, international waters, chemicals and waste, forests, and land degradation.<sup>22</sup> Since the inclusion of gender equality as a factor in the policies of GEF began only in 2011, it is quite recent, considering that the Fund was created nearly 30 years ago.

In 2011, the GEF’s Policy on Gender Mainstreaming was adopted to enhance the promotion of gender equality throughout GEF operations, mainstreaming gender by establishing policies, strategies, and action plans inclusive of gender as a condition of receiving financing for GEF projects.<sup>23</sup> There was a significant improvement in the inclusion of gender equality policies in climate finance mechanisms in 2014, when the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) of the GEF was approved. That plan served as a review and update of the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming of 2011, supporting its implementation.

In October 2017, the GEF replaced the 2011 Policy on Gender Main-

streaming with the “Policy on Gender Equality” in response to increasing global advocacy and the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2017 Policy on Gender Equality represents a shift by the GEF from a “gender-aware approach,” that focuses on ‘doing no harm’ to a “gender-responsive approach” that adopts a more proactive approach to achieving the goals of women’s equality and empowerment.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the GEF established its own Gender Focal Point position in the Fund’s Secretariat in order to screen gender-sensitive approaches in submitted proposals and encourage women’s empowerment through its network of partners.<sup>25</sup> When a proposal for a project is received, GEF staff analyze several factors to ensure that a project has succeeded in gender mainstreaming. Four factors, called “Gender Markers,” are examined: whether the entity has conducted a gender analysis, developed gender actions, specified budget allocations for those actions, and included gender indicators. A project can achieve a maximum rating of two by meeting all four criteria.<sup>26</sup> If a project does not meet any of the criteria established by the GEF, it gets a rating of zero, meaning the GEF will not fund the project. If it partially meets the criteria established in the Gender Markers, it receives a rating of one.<sup>27</sup>

By 2017-2018, GEF reported that 92% of funding proposals considered by the GEF Board contain gender assessments, and 83% contain project-level gender action plans.<sup>28</sup> The numbers are not broken down into proposals in the focal area of climate change alone, but indicate a high level of implementation of requirements for proposals to include both gender assessments and gender action plans when submitting requests for funding.

The GEF also works with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as the implementing agency to fund a “Small Grants Programme” which finances community-led initiatives to address global environmental and sustainable development issues, including climate change. Since 1992, grants under this program total USD 600 million for 22,000 projects in 125 countries.<sup>29</sup> As of 2017-2018, 93% of completed projects in the Small Grants Programme were counted as gender-responsive, and 34% of the projects were led by women; of these, 259 projects were for decarbonization and low-carbon energy transformation at community level.<sup>30</sup> The focal area distribution of financing under the GEF Small Grants Programme is 40% on biodiversity and 26% on climate change mitigation and adaptation.<sup>31</sup> Climate financing is overwhelmingly for mitigation rather than adaptation. The effect is priority for large infrastructure projects like dams and roads and energy efficiency programs rather than the community-level efforts to protect land and structures against devastation from the effects of climate change, such as extreme

weather events and increasing numbers of natural disasters.

## 2. *Adaptation Fund (AF)*

The Adaptation Fund (AF) is the climate finance mechanism established under the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC, proposed in 2001 and adopted in 2009.<sup>32</sup> It was created to finance adaptation projects in developing countries, mainly those particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The AF is functional to this date, having been included in the text of the Paris Agreement in 2015. Since 2010, it has committed USD 564 million in funding for 84 adaptation projects.<sup>33</sup>

In 2013, the Adaptation Fund adopted the Environmental and Social Policy (revised in 2016) with the goal of ensuring that the projects supported by the Fund do not result in any environmental and/or social harm to society.<sup>34</sup> Amid its environmental and social principles, the text mentions gender equality and women’s empowerment. It states that both men and women need to be included equally in opportunities to participate in the projects implemented, including the receipt of comparable social and economic benefits.

Although there had been some progress toward addressing gender in the AF, it was not until 2015 that the Board of the Fund seriously considered a review of gender in the projects and programs of the AF. This resulted in the Adaptation Fund Gender Policy, which expands the key principles already outlined in the Adaptation Fund Environmental and Social Policy. The principle of *gender equity and women’s empowerment*, “which is process-oriented and often subjectively contextualized,” was changed to *gender equality*, which is easier to measure and thus to manage.<sup>35</sup>

This shift in the terminology of the AF Gender Policy is important because, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (“OHCHR”), the term “gender equity” could be interpreted in a way that perpetuates existent stereotypes about women and their role in society. Instead, the OHCHR recommends the use of “gender equality,” as it is the legal terminology used under international human rights instruments.<sup>36</sup> UN Women, an inter-agency coordinating group within the UN System, also uses the term “gender equality” in addressing financing and budgeting for sustainable development that empowers women and girls and ensures their equal participation in decision-making.<sup>37</sup>

According to the AF Gender Policy itself, while gender equity is the process of being fair to men and women, gender equality is about ensuring equal rights between men and women, which leads to the achievement of human

rights. This strengthens the relevance of the Fund's Gender Policy, which is human rights-based and refers to various international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund is based on the following set of principles: commitment, comprehensiveness in scope and coverage, accountability, competencies, resource allocation, knowledge generation and communication, and review and revisions. One of its objectives is to "provide women and men with an equal opportunity to build resilience, address their differentiated vulnerability, and increase their capability to adapt to climate change impacts."<sup>38</sup>

In 2017, the AF approved a Medium-Term Strategy to guide its work in the next five years (2018-2022). The Strategy stated that activities performed by the Fund are designed to empower vulnerable communities and advance gender equality, with the goal of supporting vulnerable developing countries in adaptation.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. *Green Climate Fund (GCF)*

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created in 2010 at the UNFCCC COP16 in Cancun, with the goal of supporting developing countries financially in their efforts to combat climate change.<sup>40</sup> GCF projects are intended to help in reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adaptation to climate change impacts, with the aim of providing equal amounts of financing to mitigation and adaptation. The GCF is an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC (along with the GEF), a role recognized in the Paris Agreement. The Fund is specifically concerned about the nations that are most vulnerable to climate change, such as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), African States, and LDCs.<sup>41</sup>

The GCF started mobilizing resources in 2014 with pledges from more than 40 countries, mostly developed ones, and funded its first projects in 2015. It has collected USD 10.3 billion as of May 2018.<sup>42</sup> The Paris Agreement urges developed countries who are party to the agreement to collectively provide USD 100 billion per year, starting in 2020, in order to fund mitigation and adaptation projects. Hence, many more contributions to the GCF are required to achieve this goal by 2020 and each year thereafter.

The GCF was the first global climate finance mechanism to include gender in its founding principles in 2010. Thus, the GCF is distinct from other environmental funds available for climate change projects like the GEF,

which has added policies and criteria to address the gender perspective in climate finance. The concrete Gender Policy and Action Plan of the GCF was adopted in March of 2015 by GCF/B.08/19 after extensive lobbying by civil society organizations (CSOs).<sup>43</sup> The Gender Policy and Action Plan has six main elements: "commitment; comprehensiveness in scope and coverage; accountability; country ownership; competencies; and resource allocation. The principle of resource allocation raises an important point about possible targeted funding for women's activities, which ensures that funds are properly allocated to projects that really do emphasize gender equality and women's empowerment.

This gender policy on climate finance in the GCF is different from other climate funds because gender assessments and the application of the gender perspective are actual *requirements* for GCF-funded projects. Furthermore, the Fund commits resources for adaptation and mitigation projects that specifically contribute to women's empowerment and ensures that GCF programs successfully benefit women and men equally in financial measures.

In addition to the effect of the Gender Policy and Action Plan of the GCF in applying gender criteria to proposed projects, gender has been integrated throughout the operational policies of the Fund in recent years. One example is the accreditation process for all public and private applicants to the GCF to qualify for this status, enabling them to apply for financing from GCF. The Fund expects gender competency to be shown by all entities wishing to be accredited, which is evaluated by checking the record of the entity on efforts to achieve gender equality internally or externally, and whether there is a gender action plan in place for the proposed project.<sup>44</sup> In addition, to aid sub-national groups, civil society organizations and others to become accredited and apply for projects, the GCF has adopted a simplified application process (SAP), which include gender requirements.

Furthermore, efforts toward gender equality by the GCF can be seen through the six investment criteria indicators outlined by the Fund in 2018, which must be present in any new proposal submitted to the GCF going forward. They are: "impact potential, paradigm shift potential, sustainable development potential, needs of the recipient, country ownership, and efficiency and effectiveness." The Fund's sustainable development potential is the most important investment criterion for gender equality, because it requires proposals to identify at least one positive co-benefit related to any of the 17 SDGs, whether primarily environmental, social, or economic, in addition to "gender empowerment co-benefits outlining how the project will reduce gender inequality."<sup>45</sup> Co-benefits may be aligned with achievement of the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which include gender equality

and the empowerment of women and girls throughout and in the stand-alone SDG 5.

#### GREEN CLIMATE FUND'S GENDER ACTION PLAN

The Parties to the UNFCCC adopted the Gender Action Plan (GAP) at the UNFCCC COP23 in Bonn, 2017.<sup>46</sup> The GAP was created to assist in the implementation of decisions related to gender under the Climate Change Convention. The Plan acknowledges that women have to be represented in all UNFCCC processes as a condition to making activities of the Convention more effective. The Gender Action Plan assists in the development of gender-sensitive policies for all areas of climate policy, such as finance, technology, development and transfer of technology and capacity-building, in addition to climate finance.<sup>47</sup>

Among its priorities, two are related to climate finance. First, the GAP invites the Standing Committee on Finance to initiate a dialogue with relevant stakeholders on including gender in its work as a way to integrate gender-responsive policies in finance and climate action; this dialogue is to be conducted by 2019. Second, the GAP also calls on the Parties, United Nations entities, the Financial Mechanism and other stakeholders to strengthen the capacity-building of gender mechanisms for a gender-focused approach of budgeting into climate finance by 2018, for future implementation.<sup>48</sup>

The first GCF projects were funded only in 2015 and results have not yet been reported on achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women through GCF financing. "Mainstreaming Gender in GCF Activities," a 2017 publication by GCF with UN Women, provides chapters on a Performance Measurement Framework and a checklist for Project Appraisal, as well as two annexes to the report with examples of gender assessments Gender Action Plans, and indicators.<sup>49</sup> Therefore future grants will apply these standards in the approval and evaluation phases.

Financing in the amount of USD 267 million was approved for climate action at the July 9, 2019 meeting of the GCF Board.<sup>50</sup> Total GCF financing committed to date is USD 5.26 billion, of which nearly 50% is under implementation, according to the GCF. This represents financing for 111 projects resulting in 1.5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents avoided and 310.3 million people with increased resilience.<sup>51</sup> These figures do not count explicit progress in gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in climate action but may demonstrate co-benefits which affect women worldwide. More needs to be done to disaggregate the data for accountability on gender equality in climate action and specifically in climate financing. Continuing progress will,

of course, depend on the replenishment of the GCF as states pledged in the Paris Agreement, beginning with the full contribution of USD 100 billion by 2020, a sum to be renewed annually. One open issue is the question of who exactly is responsible for making the contributions, since the total of USD 100 billion is to be reached each year "collectively" – whether all or only some states party to the UNFCCC, private sector stakeholders, philanthropies, or some combination of donors.

Updating the GCF Gender Action Plan is being discussed. The GCF Board in its Decision GCF/B.23/23 of July 2019 requested the GCF Secretariat to present an assessment of implementation considerations, including cost-benefit analysis, and of capacity to implement the GAP.<sup>52</sup> The matter is scheduled to be revisited at the November 2019 Board meeting, in line with consultations that have taken place and will continue on updating the Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan. This process is a positive sign. However, data from within the GCF's Independent Evaluation Unit in a report on GCF "environmental and social safeguards" is still "forthcoming."<sup>53</sup>

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's perspective may improve the goals, construction, management and assessment of climate action projects, whether small scale adaptation efforts in local communities or large-scale infrastructure mitigation programs. The Global Environment Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and most explicitly, the Green Climate Fund have made efforts to be gender-responsive in climate finance decisions and programs, but there are still opportunities for improvement and greater transparency.

Reports addressing public climate finance flows from developed to developing countries have been issued by two organizations, the Biennial Assessment of the GEF Standing Committee on Finance and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>54</sup> As pointed out by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, figures from 2018 in the GEF Biennial Assessment showed "some reference to the intended gender impact of investments and how this correlates to tracing public climate finance. In contrast, the OECD report did not."<sup>55</sup> As long ago as 2008, the OECD included a section on women and climate change in its publication entitled *Gender and Sustainable Development, Maximising the Economic, Social and Environmental Role of Women*.<sup>56</sup> More granular data on achievement of gender equality and empowerment in climate finance from the climate funds themselves and from the OECD is needed, with annual reporting widely accessible to the public.

Overall, greater public accountability, analysis and publication of disag-

gregated data and the direct involvement of women in all phases of climate project design, execution and evaluation are needed. Specific reporting on application of gender-responsive policies in climate finance in line with the GCF's Gender Action Plan, and measurement of increases in the number of women on boards of public climate funds and staff in policy- and decision-making positions, are needed on a regular basis. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the boards of various climate funds – especially the newest one, the Green Climate Fund – are constantly reviewing their policies on gender equality to ensure that gender responsiveness is properly addressed in the strategic plans the funds implement over subsequent years and in the budgets they adopt. Measuring the effectiveness of policies, identifying best practices and analyzing compliance failures will contribute to more success in achieving gender justice in climate projects and more effective action to fight against climate change.

Accountability and transparency are principles that need to inform the practice of the boards of climate funds like GCF, AF and GEF to ensure that any projects currently receiving funding are required to submit an adequate gender assessment and a gender action plan as part of their interim reports and final project evaluation. GCF requirements that all proposals for new financing include an adequate gender assessment and gender action plan before being awarded financial assistance need to be enforced, and similar practices adopted, enforced and updated in the GEF and AF. Reporting on the number of projects in compliance or denied financing for failure to meet the gender assessment and gender action plan standards should be made publicly available on an annual basis, ideally disaggregated by type, size and location of project, with reasons for denial of financing or positive examples of compliance provided as models.

In the United Nations, a strong coalition of Member States, private sector representatives, NGOs, civil society organizations, UN Secretariat staff, and other organizations and agencies must press harder to achieve equality of women and men and the empowerment of women and girls in climate action everywhere. Annual UN meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, the High-Level Political Forum, and special events like the SDG Summit and Climate Action Summit in September 2019 with heads of state offer an opportunity to focus on gender justice in climate change.<sup>57</sup> The Summit on Climate Action under the auspices of the UN General Assembly and convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and his Special Envoy Luis Alfonso de Alba has been planned to “focus on the sectors that create the greatest emissions and the areas where building resilience could make the biggest difference.”<sup>58</sup> The Conference of the Parties to the UNFC-

CC regularly meets as well (next in Chile in December 2019 at COP25), and the treaty Secretariat, headed by Patricia Espinosa, works closely with UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations like the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).<sup>59</sup> Meetings such as these need to explicitly articulate the need for gender policies, assessments and action plans like the GCF's throughout climate action plans and turn a spotlight on implementation of gender-responsive climate financing.

All stakeholders need to contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as UN member states have agreed to do in their national programs, policies and regulations. Member states need to see how inclusion of gender responsive budgeting and climate finance at the national level contributes to their ability to meet the targets for the SDGs overall, and in particular SDG 5 and SDG 13, and their pledges (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Gender-just criteria need to be applied throughout UN agencies, programs, agendas, treaties and funds, as well as in the private sector, governments, and civil society organizations. Meaningful measurement and reporting on climate projects must include adequate and verifiable gender assessments and gender action plans, using models now available from the GCF, and the quality of these documents in each proposal or project needs to be reviewed and improved. Gender specialists need to be hired in climate funds, with adequate budgets and organizational authority to carry out the work. Gender focal points in the climate funds are needed for communications with non-state groups like cities or NGOs interested in applying for financing, whether in the form of loans, grants or guarantees that might lead to additional funding from other sources for climate projects, especially in developing countries. In the process, climate funds need to balance support for adaptation strategies and mitigation strategies to reflect needs and priorities of women and girls around the world and their capacity to contribute solutions.

In part, the effectiveness of gender-responsive criteria in climate financing in the GCF will depend on whether the Green Climate Fund is replenished according to schedule by 2020 for the initial contributions and annually thereafter; pledges by states collectively in the amount of USD 100 billion to date have resulted in approximately USD 10 billion having been received by the GCF by mid-2019, well short of the target.<sup>60</sup> This ambitious goal was calculated as necessary to achieve climate goals worldwide. How these funds will be applied, and whether they are received in full each year by the GCF, remain to be seen.

The Gender Action Plan's investment criteria on sustainable development potential, requiring proposals to identify how the project will advance

gender equality, is a meaningful step toward a more equal allocation of resources in climate finance. Nevertheless, the GAP, adopted in 2017, needs to be regularly reviewed by the GCF Board and updated as experience is gained, and conditions change. Screening of proposals or projects for sustainability or environmental impact by the climate funds considered here needs to be matched by screening for gender responsiveness in climate financing. The gender criteria need to be applied strictly to deny grants or loans from public funds if the criteria are not met. Efforts need to be made to increase access to information by women's groups at different levels (local, national, regional or international) about available climate financing. Training and capacity building for the application or accreditation processes in the various funds need to be offered by the funds themselves to achieve gender goals.

The use of gender-responsive criteria to achieve gender equality in climate financing has advanced through the three public climate financing funds discussed in this article: the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund with its Gender Action Plan, all under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Yet there remains much to do to implement the aspirations in the policies and programs of the funds to achieve gender equality in climate finance. The urgency of finding solutions to the global climate emergency in the short period of years before the damage to the planet becomes irreversible is a clear reason for supporting leadership and ideas from women as well as men. Climate finance is thus one of the key areas that requires a gender-responsive approach to decision-making, participation and budgeting.

In conclusion, when designing, implementing, monitoring and assessing climate policies, it is manifestly unwise to exclude the skills and innovations of half the planet.<sup>61</sup> The challenges ahead include action needed to conserve non-renewable natural resources and ecosystems, make the transition to clean energy sources, mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases worldwide, restore forests, and build resilience in local communities to adapt to climate change. These challenges require the skills, insights, energy and commitment of the world's women. Achieving gender equality in climate finance is crucial to ensure the well-being of future generations, and to safeguard a sustainable future for all of us everywhere.

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## NOTES

1 Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (hereinafter "Paris Agreement."), [http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf). The Paris Agreement, signed in December 2015, at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, is based on individual pledges by states to make concrete reductions of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions needed to limit global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels, with an effort to reach no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming. This is based on global scientific consensus of actions required to avert planetary catastrophe within the coming decades. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5° C*, 2018, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

2 Paris Agreement, note 1, p. 1. Recent UN documents on gender and climate change from the latest Conference of the Parties to the climate change treaty (UNFCCC COP24) in December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, include the draft report of the Chair of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Implementation ("SBI") of 6 December 2018, <https://unfccc.int/documents/184822>, and the addendum to the Chair's draft report of the same date. These documents will be considered for adoption by UNFCCC COP25 in November 2019 in Santiago, Chile.

3 Paris Agreement, n. 1.

4 Extreme weather events and natural disasters exacerbated by global warming bring deprivation, desperation, disruption of family life and social support systems and deepening inequality around the globe. Global warming is leading to shortages of water which affect food production in certain regions; sea level rise in other regions as glaciers melt, threatening the world's coastal cities; and changes in major ocean currents as the seas warm, affecting shipping and migration of fish and marine mammals.

5 Mary Robinson, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 9, 78.

6 Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice, <https://www.mrfcj.org>.

7 The UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency: <http://womensgenderclimate.org/>; WEDO: [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org); Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA), a partnership with grass roots women's organizations, an NGO called Both Ends, and the Dutch Foreign Ministry: <http://annualreport.bothends.org/gagga/>; GenderCC: [www.gendercc.net](http://www.gendercc.net); and other feminist and women's rights organizations worldwide on global, regional, national and local levels.

8 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org>.

9 Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*, (Columbia University Press, 2017), 1-3. Two UN experts, Professors Jeffrey Sachs and Philip Alston, have warned of the risk of seeking financing for sustainable development that favors private investors' profits without respecting the ethical or moral underpinnings of the concept of sustainable development. They favor a value system that addresses inequality and inclusion, and respects planetary boundaries and the needs of future generations. Professor Alston made this point at the Civil Society Forum during the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Social Development in February 2019, available on UN Web TV at [www.un.webtv.org](http://www.un.webtv.org), 15 February 2019. Professor Sachs has documented the scientific basis for predictions of inevitable dire consequences of continued rise in global temperatures if planetary boundaries are exceeded in the next few decades by continued global warming. *The Age of Sustainable Development*, Ch. 12, "Climate Change," pp. 394-445.

10 Mitigation refers to the reduction of human emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide by transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like wind and solar, achieving more energy efficient forms of transportation, buildings, and production, and reducing consumption of non-renewable products. Key terms are avoiding waste, reuse and recycling of materials.

11 Adaptation refers to preparing for the possible consequences of climate change and environmental disasters, by retrofitting buildings, reinforcing infrastructure, restoring wetlands or other efforts undertaken to protect shorelines, homes and services prior to recurring natural disasters. Key terms are resilience and disaster risk reduction.

12 N. 10, Sachs, at 434.

13 Another NGO coalition organized specifically to address gender and climate change is the Gender Global Climate Alliance (GGCA). A GGCA report reviews the literature on the particular vulnerabilities of women to the effects of climate change in Global Gender and Climate Alliance, *Gender and Climate Change, A Closer Look at Existing Evidence*, 2016, available at <https://wedo.org/gender-and-climate-change-a-closer-look-at-existing-evidence-ggca/>. A 2017 policy debrief by GGCA and UNDP on gender and climate finance can be found at <https://wedo.org/gender-climate-finance/>.

14 United Nations Economic and Social Council. "Special edition: progress towards

the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary-General," <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>. This document is referred to as the "Secretary-General's Progress Report," and was addressed during the ECOSOC session of the High-Level Political Forum at the United Nations from 9-18 July, 2019. <https://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>.

15 Among many other examples of gender-just climate solutions, see the list of local projects on the website of the UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency at <http://womensgenderclimate.org/gender-just-climate-solutions/>.

16 According to Julie Dekens, of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), "a gender-responsive approach goes beyond sensitivity to gender differences. It seeks to actively promote equality—this often involves specific actions to empower women in their households, in their communities and in their societies as well as in broader political and planning processes." <https://www.iisd.org/story/gender-responsive-climate-action/>.

17 Liane Schalatek and Smita Nakhoda. "Gender and Climate Finance," 2016, Climate Funds Update, [https://us.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/11/cff10\\_2016\\_gender\\_english.pdf](https://us.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/11/cff10_2016_gender_english.pdf).

18 "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change," Conclusion Date: May 9, 1992, <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>.

19 The foundation is a think tank and policy advocate on environmental issues, including climate change and gender, with offices worldwide, independent of but affiliated with the German Green Party.

20 The diagram reproduced here includes other specialized international, regional and national channels for targeted climate funds. These may be part of national overseas development assistance (ODA) packages (such as the International Climate Fund of the United Kingdom, for example) or programs of UN agencies, development banks, or other multilateral or regional programs. These types of climate finance programs may or may not contain specific gender equality criteria for funding and are not analyzed in this article. According to a short "Climate Finance Guide" from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, in 2016 approximately 2/3 of climate finance was from private sources and 33% was from public financing, of a total of 410 billion USD a year. <https://us.boell.org/2016/11/07/climate-finance-fundamentals>. How much of this funding is new and additional funds is not identified, nor is whether the funds are grants or loans. An article from the Foundation in 2019 elaborates critiques and gaps in actual climate financing. <https://us.boell.org/2019/06/12/why-green-climate-fund-must-be-replenished-remain-central-multilateral-channel-collective>.

21 Smita Nakhoda, Charlene Watson and Liane Schalatek, "The Global Climate Finance Architecture," 2016, Climate Funds Update, [https://us.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/11/cff2\\_2016\\_architecture\\_english.pdf](https://us.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2016/11/cff2_2016_architecture_english.pdf).

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31 Ibid.

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