



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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Agenda item 3 (c)

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

**Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Palau, Panama, Peru, Poland, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and United States of America: draft resolution**

### **Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters**

*The Commission on the Status of Women,*

*Bearing in mind* that natural disasters affect human lives and living conditions thereafter, and have a more direct and adverse impact on women and girls, as well as vulnerable persons within groups such as children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and that natural disasters have different impacts on men and women, owing to social exclusion, gender inequality, gender stereotypes, different family responsibilities, discrimination against women and poverty, as well as the lack of equal access to adequate services, information, economic opportunities, entitlements, justice and safety,

*Reaffirming* the commitments regarding women and girls affected by natural disasters in the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>1</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,<sup>2</sup> and reaffirming also that the outcomes stressed the need to incorporate a gender perspective into disaster risk reduction, response and recovery strategies,

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.



*Noting* that, during a natural disaster, pregnant or lactating women and adolescent girls, who constitute an average of 18 to 20 per cent of the female population, are more vulnerable to disasters because of their limited physical mobility and their increased needs for food and water and for access to reproductive health care and safe birthing facilities,

*Recognizing* that natural disasters can increase the likelihood of rape and sexual exploitation, domestic violence, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and complications regarding sexual and reproductive health, including for pregnant women, who face heightened risks from interrupted access to sexual and reproductive health care,

*Noting* that natural disasters can lead to widespread and prolonged displacement, which increases the vulnerability, in particular of women and girls, to gender-based violence and to negative coping strategies, creates barriers to their ability to access education, employment and health-care and other crucial services, and separates them from support networks,

*Recalling* its resolution 56/2 of 9 March 2012,<sup>3</sup> and mindful of the continuing need to further enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women,

*Recalling also* the agreed conclusions of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women of 15 March 2002,<sup>4</sup> Commission on the Status of Women resolution 49/5 of 11 March 2005,<sup>5</sup> as well as Commission resolution 55/1 of 4 March 2011 entitled “Mainstreaming gender equality and promoting empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies”,<sup>6</sup> the Hyogo Declaration<sup>7</sup> and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters<sup>8</sup> adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan from 18 to 22 January 2005, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, entitled “The future we want”,<sup>9</sup> as well as all the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolutions 68/102 and 68/103 of 13 December 2013 and 68/211 of 20 December 2013, and Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/6 of 17 July 2013,

*Noting* various processes leading up to 2015 and 2016, especially the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai City, Japan, in March 2015, and the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2016,

*Welcoming* the response and longer-term recovery efforts of the affected countries as well as the continued support and assistance given by the international community in the relief and recovery efforts for natural disasters in all parts of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2012, Supplement No. 7* (E/2012/27-E/CN.6/2012/16), chap. I, sect. D.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2002, *Supplement No. 7* (E/2002/27-E/CN.6/2002/13), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2005, *Supplement No. 7* and corrigendum (E/2005/27-E/CN.6/2005/11 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. D.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2011, *Supplement No. 7* (E/2011/27-E/CN.6/2011/12), chap. I, sect. D.

<sup>7</sup> A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, resolution 2.

<sup>9</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

world, including the deadly typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) that struck the Philippines on 8 November 2013 and the devastating earthquake that struck eastern Japan on 11 March 2011, and other recent natural disasters, including those addressed in recent humanitarian appeals, while stressing the importance of further efforts in these responses, including in gender-responsive disaster management,

*Recognizing* that incorporating a gender perspective into disaster response and longer-term recovery planning and implementation will cut recovery time, lead to greater efficiency and equity in the short- and longer-term recovery efforts and strengthen the resilience of entire communities,

*Recognizing also* that protection from gender-based violence in the context of natural disasters, including through early programme prevention and response, can reduce morbidity and mortality,

*Stressing* the importance of ensuring non-discriminatory participation and inclusion of women and girls, as well as vulnerable persons within groups such as children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, in every phase of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, through a people-centred and holistic approach that fully respects human rights, in order to build an inclusive society, supported by a social bond among people through community-based approaches, which promotes gender equality, the empowerment of women, social and economic inclusion and development, strengthens the resilience of communities and reduces social and economic vulnerabilities to disasters,

1. *Recognizes* that women play a vital role in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, including rehabilitation and reconstruction, and the need to enhance women's access, capacities and opportunities to effectively participate in prevention and preparedness efforts and in response to disasters;

2. *Also recognizes* that natural disasters and the ability to recover from them can affect men and women differently, and that a gender-responsive approach, including gender-sensitive needs assessments, during post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, has the potential to address underlying social issues that create vulnerability to disasters and prolong the time needed for economic and social reintegration and productivity;

3. *Further recognizes* that, in addition to focusing on physical infrastructure during the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, social and economic transformation in the areas of housing, income generation and agriculture and the informal sector, and health care, including psychosocial counselling, should also be taken into consideration in order to adequately address gender priorities;

4. *Urges* Governments and, where appropriate, United Nations entities, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and other stakeholders, to:

(a) Review national policies, strategies and plans and take action to integrate a gender perspective in policies, planning and funding for disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, considering the different impacts that natural disasters have on women and men;

(b) Facilitate and increase women's access to information and education, including in the area of science and technology, including information and communications technology, and economics, thus enhancing their knowledge, skills

and opportunities for participation and leadership in environmental decisions, including during natural disasters;

(c) Ensure equal opportunities for the leadership and participation of women and, as appropriate, girls, in decision-making, including with regard to the allocation of resources at all levels regarding disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

(d) Strengthen the capacities, awareness and cooperation of relevant authorities and institutions at all levels to apply a gender-responsive approach to disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

(e) Ensure the full enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights in every phase of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

(f) Make the utmost efforts to secure equal access to disaster relief assistance for women, girls, boys and men, and provide disaster response and support for recovery and development that is fully responsive to the needs and respects the views and enjoyment of all human rights of women and girls, with special attention paid to the needs of pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, families with infants or older persons, single-headed households and persons with disabilities and widows, such as in the context of the provision of food and supplies, water and sanitation, the set-up and management of shelter, safety and security, and the provision of physical, psychological and emergency health care, including for sexual and reproductive health, and counselling services for survivors of gender-based violence, while encouraging the involvement of women professionals and gender balance among field workers;

(g) Require implementing partners to utilize a gender marker system and to report on associated gender commitments throughout the humanitarian programme cycle;

(h) Ensure that, in every phase of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, special attention is given to the prevention of various forms of gender-based exploitation and abuse, including the risk of trafficking and the particular vulnerability of girls, unaccompanied children and orphans, and women and children with disabilities;

(i) Also ensure, in every phase of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery, the provision of protection, care and support to the victims of gender-based violence and, as appropriate, the provision of legal, medical, psychosocial and other relevant services for survivors of gender-based violence to aid, inter alia, in the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual and gender-based violence, taking into account survivors' needs in order to avoid their re-victimization;

(j) Design, implement and evaluate gender-responsive economic relief and longer-term recovery projects, including vocational and technical skills training measures, in order to help ensure equal economic opportunities for men and women, paying attention to eliminating obstacles to women's rapid integration or reintegration into the formal employment sector, owing to their role in the social and economic process, and taking into account the rural and urban migration that natural disasters may provoke;

(k) Promote and involve women in designing income-generating activities and employment opportunities for women affected by natural disasters, particularly

rural women, including by supporting community-based and home-based businesses through such instruments as local procurement of food and services, the establishment of necessary social services, and access to market, credit, cash transfers, social safety nets and other financial services, involving women in their design and taking into account the additional burden on women's time in the post-disaster phase for tasks such as securing supplies of food, water and fuel and caring for children whose schools have closed;

(l) Ensure equal access for women and men to, and their equal participation in, natural hazard early warning systems, promote disaster risk reduction planning at the national, subnational and community levels, taking into account the specific needs, views and all human rights of women, girls, boys and men, and raise public awareness and provide training at all levels on gender-responsive approaches to disaster risk reduction, including in the areas of science and technology;

(m) Ensure equal access to and use of information, training and formal and informal education on disaster risk reduction for women and girls, in order to enhance their voices and participation in processes relating to disaster risk reduction;

(n) Systematically collect, analyse and utilize demographic and socioeconomic data and information disaggregated by sex, age and disability, among other factors, for the purpose of contextual social and gender analysis and for identifying and addressing the differing coping strategies, needs, capacities, knowledge and priorities and vulnerabilities of women, girls, boys and men, continue to develop gender indicators and analyse gender differences, including through gender-responsive needs assessment, participatory planning processes and methodologies, and integrate this information into disaster risk reduction and management policies and programmes in order to ensure programme and policy effectiveness and reduce the loss of life and livelihoods;

(o) Document and assess disaster risk reduction activities and disaster and recovery responses from a gender perspective, and widely disseminate, nationally, regionally and internationally, information on good practices, lessons learned and tools, including technologies in support of disaster risk reduction, in order to promote and ensure their integration into disaster risk reduction planning;

(p) Recognize and further promote the role of civil society, including community-based organizations, women's and adolescent girls' organizations and volunteers, in disaster risk reduction planning and management and in promoting the building of an inclusive, disaster-resilient society that ensures women's full participation;

(q) Recognize also the important role played by women professionals and volunteers, inter alia, in meeting the needs of women and girls, and further encourage their participation in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

(r) Forge constructive partnerships among all stakeholders, including Governments, United Nations entities and other relevant actors, such as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in order to strengthen a gender perspective in all aspects of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

5. *Commends* those donors who use a gender marker system in their funding decisions, and encourages Governments and, where appropriate, United Nations entities, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and other stakeholders, to use such a system;

6. *Encourages* Governments, local authorities, the United Nations system and regional organizations, and invites donors and other assisting countries, to address the vulnerabilities and capacities of women and girls through gender-responsive programming and the allocation of resources in their disaster risk reduction, response and recovery efforts in coordination with the Governments of affected countries;

7. *Requests* all relevant United Nations entities, according to their mandates, to ensure that a gender perspective continues to be mainstreamed into all aspects of disaster risk reduction, response and recovery and to report systematically on progress towards such mainstreaming under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women;

8. *Stresses* the importance of mainstreaming gender and disability perspectives in disaster risk management prior to disasters, in order to strengthen the resilience of communities and reduce social vulnerabilities to disasters, and recognizes the need for the inclusive participation and contribution of women, as well as vulnerable persons within groups such as children, older persons and persons with disabilities, to various processes, including the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and its preparatory process;

9. *Calls upon* Governments to promote the strategic goals for risk reduction and resilience-building in the framework for disaster risk reduction beyond 2015, including indicators for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery;

10. *Requests* the United Nations system, Member States and other stakeholders to continue to promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in their activities, international negotiation processes and consultations as they relate to natural disasters, especially in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

11. *Requests* Governments, United Nations entities, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and other stakeholders, to share their gender perspective in the preparatory processes towards the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in 2016, on the basis of their experiences and lessons learned from past humanitarian action, thus mainstreaming the gender perspective in the themes of the summit.