



**Draft**

**Arab Declaration**

**Issued by the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting**

**for the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

***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***

Under the chairmanship of the Republic of Sudan, Chair of the Arab Women Committee (41<sup>st</sup> Session), and the leadership of the League of Arab States, we, ministers and representatives of women machineries in the Arab states have convened the Preparatory Meeting for the 66th Session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) virtually on Sunday, January 30, 2022.

The meeting aimed to coordinate and develop an approved regional position and identify key regional priorities in alignment with the issues set for discussion in the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) relating to “**Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs**”.

**Taking into account** climate change and the average temperature increase of 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels and the projected increases by 5°C in several regions around the world by the end of this decade. While the number of disasters has almost doubled since the 1980s globally, their average number in the Arab region has tripled in the same period.

**Taking into consideration** the growing risks that the Arab countries face due to environmental depletion, increased earthquake activity, degradation of the ecosystems, water scarcity and the lack of access to their resources, the challenges that food insecurity poses, and the implications of climate change such as the sea-level rise and the increased frequency and intensity of heatwaves which lead to the occurrence of floods, cyclones, as well as extended droughts and desertification.

**Recognizing** the frequent reoccurrence of natural disasters in the Arab region due to these increasing geological and climatic changes across the Arab region.

**Realizing** that such disasters directly impact lives, infrastructures, livelihoods, and the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Mindful of** the pre-existing gender inequalities, climate change's harmful effects and natural disasters that lead to women's and girls' loss of access to natural resources, clean water, food, transport, energy, sanitation, housing, and land. Recognizing that climate change leads to the erosion of women's and girls' physical, emotional, sexual safety and security; increases the burden of unpaid care work; and contributes to the marginalization of women in climate, environment, and natural disasters related decision-making.

**Noting** that economic and social activities of women and girls contribute less than those of men to greenhouse gas emissions in some communities; and acknowledging the invaluable social, economic, and household-level roles they play in agriculture, agricultural and non-agricultural manufacturing sectors, and service provision; in addition to their capacities as "frontline responders" during crises including climate change, disasters, and pandemics.

**Taking account** of ongoing armed conflicts and disputes in a number of Arab countries, and the Israeli occupation in Palestine, which increases the numbers of displaced persons and refugees in some countries of the region, most of whom are women and children whose human security is further eroded by the impacts of climate change, and COVID-19; we condemn the use of internationally prohibited weapons that led to the degradation of the soil and aquifers in Palestine, adversely impacting women's health.

**Emphasizing** what is mentioned in the "Rabat Declaration"<sup>1</sup> on promoting the effective participation of women and youth in leadership roles in all processes of designing and implementing strategies, policies, plans, and programs aimed at reducing disaster risks, by adopting approaches that aim to achieve gender equality, equal opportunities and empower women; and that take into account the needs of women, the

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<sup>1</sup> Issued by the Fifth Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held between 8 to 11 November 2021 in Rabat.

elderly, children, youth and persons with disabilities; and encourage volunteerism through strengthening and developing volunteer frameworks that can remain operational during disasters to help those affected.

**We commend** the efforts of the League of Arab States represented by the Arab Women’s Committee for its review of the “Cairo Declaration for Arab Women: the Development Agenda for Arab Women 2030,” adopted in 2017, in the mainstreaming of a gender-responsive lens that integrates gender equality, equal opportunities and women empowerment in environmental and climate action and disaster response, through the development of national and regional indicators linking between gender equality, equal opportunities, women empowerment and climate change, water, and food security and ecosystems in line with all aspects and objectives of the new development system.

**We value** the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s convening of the “Middle East Green Initiative Summit” on October 25, 2021, in Riyadh, to design a roadmap for conserving the environment and combating the challenges of climate change<sup>2</sup>;

**We applaud** the official choice of the Arab Republic of Egypt to host the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27) for the year 2022; we also commend the choice of the United Arab Emirates to host COP28 for the year 2023 and look forward to their outcomes;

**Recalling** the recommendations that emerged from the Arab Women's Committee meeting in its (41) relevant session;

**Reiterating** the commitments of the three Rio Conventions, the 2015 Paris Declaration, the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Marrakech Action Proclamation for Our Climate And Sustainable Development 2016<sup>3</sup>, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Girls (CEDAW), and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, Security and of 2000, the 2030

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<sup>2</sup> Link to the [Saudi Green Initiative](#)

<sup>3</sup> The "Marrakech Action Proclamation for Our Climate and Sustainable Development" was issued at the conclusion of the 22nd session of the United Nations Climate Conference COP22.

Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;

**Recalling also** the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030<sup>4</sup> and the Priority Action Plan 2021-2024 as a multi-sectoral strategy of the Economic and Social Council;

**Expressing** our concern and denouncing the continuing unfair practices of the Israeli occupation against women in the Occupied State of Palestine, which exacerbates the poor conditions of Palestinian women, especially in light of climate change and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. We, therefore, urge the international community to abide by UN resolutions and support the Palestinian people to create their state;

**Emphasizing** the necessity of the adequate consideration of the needs of women in designing policies and programs related to climate change and disasters on a global level;

**In the context of defining a unified Arab position in international fora, and agreeing at the regional level on the final conclusions document for the current session of the Committee on the Status of Women (66), and in light of the multiplier development threat that climate change presents to the Arab region, We agreed on the importance of working to mitigate the negative impacts on women and girls resulting from climate change and man-made and natural disasters, taking into account the specificity of the plans and directions of each country, through the following areas:**

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<sup>4</sup> The Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030 was adopted in line with the decision of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit level (S.Q.S. 733 D.C. 29 - C 3 - 15/04/2018) in Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on April 15, 2018.

**1- Enhancing Women’s Economic Empowerment and resilience in the context of climate change response**

- a- Strengthen regional cooperation through examining the possibility of the Arab League’s adoption of a joint regional initiative with UN Women on empowering women’s participation in green and blue economies<sup>5</sup> and climate-resilient agriculture within the framework of “the Arab Network for Economic Empowerment on Women (Khadija).”<sup>6</sup>
  
- b- Develop and strengthen integrated and participatory national strategies and frameworks among relevant ministries, sectors, and national machineries (e.g., ministries of environment, agriculture, industry, labor, women’s affairs, planning/finance) that address women’s economic priorities in the context of climate change and disasters.
  
- c- Ensure the participation of women in climate action decision making and in formulating gender-responsive policies that promote decent job opportunities for women in green and blue economies: energy, transportation, sanitation, water, and care work, with particular attention to women who are low-income earners and with disabilities and those displaced as a result of disasters and women in rural and remote areas in Arab countries.
  
- d- Entrench and promote women's rights across laws and legislations to enable her to own and control resources and enhance their access to tangible and intangible assets such as the right to access finance, green technology, markets, information, training and extension services, and digital learning, in rural and urban areas; and eliminating the obstacles to women's right in ownership and disposition, and mainstreaming gender equality in all legislations pertaining the environment.

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<sup>5</sup> The UN Environment Programme defines Green Economy as "one (economy) that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. and “blue economy” refers to "the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs and ocean ecosystem health" as per the World Bank.

<sup>6</sup> launched by the General Secretariat in 2015, the “Khadija Network for Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Arab Region” is the first regional network for economic empowerment in the Arab region. Work is underway to develop a regional strategy for the network.

- e- Call upon the United Nations to issue a UN resolution on protecting women during disasters and crises and under the Israeli occupation against the backdrop of climate change, especially women in fragile societies.
- f- Support the adoption of an Arab strategy to support women during disasters and crises in the context of climate change.

**2- Ensuring social protection for women and girls and food security in the context of climate change and disasters:**

- a- Take the necessary measures to ensure that women have access to adequate housing, water, sanitation facilities, and sufficient food, especially in situations of scarcity, disasters, and climate change, with particular attention to economically underserved women, women who live in remote and rural areas, refugee, migrant and displaced women (as a result of climate change) taking into account the specifics of each member states.
- b- Work towards allocating budgets for the provision of adequate and disaster-resistant housing for all women to reduce the number of women displaced in some countries as a consequence of the occurrence of disasters while ensuring that social housing programs prioritize destitute, displaced, and immigrant and refugee women, as well as women with disabilities.
- c- Support women's participation in environmental conservation and mitigation of climate change by ensuring their participation in decision-making across all sectors and capacity and awareness building activities to sustain pro-environmental behaviors, especially in rural areas.

### **3- Achieving Peace and Security in the Context of Climate Change.**

- a- Promote the incorporation of climate change into national action plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325 in the Arab region, taking into consideration the particular context of each country in order to accelerate and facilitate response to natural disasters and pandemics, including COVID-19, climate change, and the consequences of the Israeli occupation in Palestine, ensuring the participation of women in preparation of these plans.
- b- Consider the integration of mechanisms that promote gender equality, equal opportunities and women empowerment, in general, and integrate women's needs, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically in conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation efforts related to land and water resources to sustain peace.
- c- Build capacity within governments and member states and among key stakeholders to address the gender dimensions of climate-related security risks as part of peacebuilding programming in conflict-affected Arab countries.

### **4- Protecting women and girls from all forms of violence in the context of climate change and disasters**

- a- Follow up on the development and implementation of national legislation and policies to fill the gaps necessary to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls in all areas in line with international and regional conventions on human rights ratified by Arab countries, taking into account the particularities of each country.
- b- Proceed with the necessary measures to protect women and girls from all forms of violence which exacerbates during crises and pandemics in many countries, including the provision of effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms and ensuring the availability of the financial resources necessary for their implementation.

- c- Emphasize the importance of using *The Arab Strategy and Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to All Forms of Violence in Asylum Context, especially Sexual Violence against Women and Girls*, when developing national action plans and policies in this regard in countries suffering from conflicts and instability.

**5- Research, studies and data provision on climate change and women's empowerment**

- a- Conduct further research and studies to ensure a better understanding of the linkages between climate change, conflict dynamics (including violent extremism), and gender in the region and how they affect women empowerment in the region;
- b- Emphasize the necessity of developing national mechanisms to systemically measure, collect and analyze data from their official and trusted sources, disaggregated by sex (male/female) and age groups, to monitor and analyze the political, economic, social and environmental impacts of disasters and climate change on women and girls.