

## CSW66 Report (UN Side Event – 25 March 2022)

By Sahar Gamal, GWI Representative



**Date:** 25 March 2022.

**Time:** 9:00-10:30 AM EST.

**Title:** “Inclusive, Gender Responsive and Climate Informed Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: Opportunities and Lessons from UN Field Presence and Civil Society in the Horn of Africa”.

**Organizer:** United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), UN Climate Security Mechanism and The Permanent Missions of Denmark and Kenya to UN.

**Topics:** - Promoting Women’s and Girls’ Participation and Leadership.

- Impact of Climate and Environmental Crises and Disasters on Women and Girls.
- Violence against Women and Girls in Context of Climate and Environmental Crises and Disasters.

**Other Topic:** Women, Peace and Security, and Climate Security.

**Moderator:** Director of Policy and Mediation Division in the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

### **Event’s Summary:**

This CSW66 UN Side Event is dedicated to connect the dots between climate changes, security/peace sustainability and the gender dimensions with the purpose of integrating comprehensive solutions. The three hosts, as well as the four speakers, explained the situation in the Horn of Africa, shared experiences and suggested different approaches to integrate the climate and gender dimensions in conflict prevention and peace building. This webinar relates directly to GWI with its rich experience in the CSW and the NGO Committee on Human Rights. In addition to that, GWI can work with and through its affiliated NFAs in the concerned countries to fulfill its lifelong mission of educating and empowering women and girls. Four of its NFAs are located in this region (Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda). GWI can partner with the concerned institutions and aid in the process as mentioned below in this report.

**Policy and Mediation Director at DPPA, Teresa Whitfield, (host)**, explained that their role in preventing deadly conflicts and building sustainable peace is at risk because the impact of climate change is a risk multiplier and an obstacle to conflict prevention and peace sustainability. This required a deeper understanding and responding to climate security risks. So she invited a number of speakers who had practical experiences and were able to shed light on different dimensions affecting the situation. She moderated the discussion and, later, provided a link to a free self-paced course on the linkages between climate change, peace and security from a gender perspective that was launched by DPPA during CSW66

(<https://unccelearn.org/course/view.php?id=118&page=overview>), in addition to a link of a related article (<https://dppa.medium.com/promoting-peace-by-addressing-the-linkages-between-gender-climate-change-and-security-d0c5ae94d70b>).

**Deputy Permanent Representative of Denmark, Ambassador Marie-Louise Wegter, (host)**, drew the attention to the very clear, yet unexplored, correlation between climate vulnerability, gender inequality and insecurity. Of the 10 most climate vulnerable countries in the world 8 are considered fragile conflict affected by the World Bank and also ranked in the 20% of the Global index of Women inclusion, justice and security. She emphasized that understanding the gender dimension of climate-related security risk is a key to decreasing vulnerabilities as well as finding new entry points to advance gender equality, improve climate resilience and sustain peace. The gender perspective shows that Women and girls, particularly in Africa, are the most affected by climate insecurity risks. At the same time they can be agents of change. To achieve that, there is a need of a more comprehensive analysis and more data to the gender and climate security perspectives. The solution has to be evidence-based, main-streamed and institutionalized. She also emphasized that Denmark strongly supports the UN's role in analyzing and responding to climate-related security risks in a way that acknowledges that gender, climate and security are inextricably interlinked.

**Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Martha Pobe, (host)**, stated some climate related factors that have negative impacts on women and on security. She explained how rising temperatures, unpredictable rain fall, more severe and frequent extreme weather events are affecting the lives and livelihood of people globally. Combined with socio-economic inequalities and gender-based discrimination against women and girls, climate change can undermine institutions, social structures and even stability. Climate change impact on food and water sources can force women and girls to venture further from home and, in conflict affected contexts, longer distances expose them to greater risks of violence, sexual exploitation and abduction. Degrading livelihoods and natural resources can also make it difficult for men and women to live up to their prescribed gender roles. Men are thus forced to turn to armed groups to ensure a steady income. This in turn leads to erosion of security, social peace and stability. Gender considerations are not only critical to understanding the destabilizing effects of climate change, but also to leverage opportunities for environmental peace building. The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that risks to peace are reduced by supporting climate sensitive economic activities and even more so by advancing women's empowerment. The leadership of women and girls in defending the environment and promoting women's rights can be an entry point to advance an inclusive and sustainable peace as evidenced by the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. DPPADPO set three priorities to address the situation. The first, as part of multi-dimensional risk approaches, is integrating climate change and gender consideration into their analysis, conflict prevention, mediation, and peace-building strategies. The joint UN project in Blue Nile State in Sudan is an example of how to address tension related to managing natural resources while promoting women's leadership in conflict resolution. The

second priority is promoting women's participation in peace making and peace building. The third is enhancing efforts to engage with communities to learn from those who experienced the effect of climate change on their security. Thus operating missions in the region will be investing on local and people-centered assessments.

**Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of UNMISS, Nicholas Haysom, (speaker)**, explained that the Security Council's mandate 2625 recognized the adversity of climate change on stability in South Sudan and requested the UNMISS to extend their work with the local government to undertake risk assessment and decide on risk management strategies. They were also requested to support women's meaningful participation in decision making. He affirmed that South Sudan is among the most vulnerable countries in the world facing recurring and unpredictable climate events that increase risks to peace and security. In addition to the already existing humanitarian crisis, food insecurity, intercommunal conflicts, covid-19 and unprecedented rising in food costs; climate-related events such as erratic rainfall, flooding, draught, locusts' infestation are conflict drivers. 95% of the population depends on climate-sensitive livelihoods like agriculture, forestry and fishery. These climate challenges increase their vulnerability. For example, female-headed households that depend on agriculture and natural resources are particularly affected. Women and girls, as in many parts of the Horn, are forced to venture further away from home to seek fire-woods and portable water. This, inevitably, subjects them to health implications and gender-based forms of violence. Another example is that shrinking dry lands forced cattle owners to move to crowded cattle camps where chances of conflicts and cross-borders migration are increasing. All these factors combined delayed the return of refugees and of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

**Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia (UNSOM), Anita Kiki Gbeho, (speaker)**, explained that the context in Somalia is very similar to South Sudan in many areas. Somalia is going through its fourth consecutive year of draught. From 5.2 million people in need of humanitarian support in 2020 to 7.7 million in 2022 which is about half of the population with women representing a minimum of 50% of them. Temperatures rise and warming environment will potentially lead to disasters and conflicts if actions are not taken. Again women and girls are the most affected. Traditional roles of women have left them vulnerable. According to UNFPA, women and children represent 95% of survivors who have reported incidents of GBV in 2021. 75% of them at least were from displaced communities. Women are left out of decision making forums at the community level as well as where policy and laws are decided. Even when decision makers provide women with the opportunity to lead, real life situations prevent them from having a true and meaningful participation. Lack of resources is another obstacle. Very little climate change adaptation-financing goes towards communities. Around 10% only goes directly to communities. The green climate financing, for example, does not allow the money to go directly to the community level. Still opportunities for improvements present themselves when the local government realized that climate change is directly linked to a prosperous future for them and when UN bodies are well integrated in Somalia where they work with the government as well as civil society. Just like South Sudan, Mandate 2592 recognized the diverse effects of climate change and extended Somalia Mission which allowed them to have, may be for the first time, an "Environment and Climate Security Advisor". It allowed them also to place women in the forefront of climate action as far as natural resources management and peace building are concerned. Through a UK funding, they were able to implement a project that focuses on nature-based solutions to embankment breakages and flooding. Female farmers are trained on flood prevention and fixing embankments. A second example is a program for sustainable charcoal production and the reduction and alternative use of livelihood. Women became key actors in protecting tree nurseries

which is a natural resource that has been severely degraded through charcoal production. In conclusion, she drew attention to the importance of having mandates that focus on environment and climate change to guide the UN missions and the importance of convincing donors to direct funding to local level (the bottom up approach).

**International Alert (IA) Country Director of Kenya and the Horn of Africa, Rabindra Gurung, (speaker)**, stated that IA has been working to build positive peace and reduce violence for over thirty years. They are pioneers in working on climate security and gender. The situation in Kenya is very much like Somalia and South Sudan. But IA is particularly interested in supporting conflict sensitive governance of natural resources and increasing inclusion in Kenya. Kenya has declared national emergency to deal with the famine, draught, floods, locusts and related crises. Because of all of that the state's focus on security and rapid development created conflicts between communities and between communities and the state. The capacity of the state to deliver services became low. Thus weak governance became a negative factor in distributing resources, managing conflicts and providing resilience support to the communities. Age, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and ideology decide who will be at the table to control the resources, who can access them and who cannot. International Alert suggests five entry points to improve the situation. The first is that peace building and conflict prevention programs should be more gender sensitive and climate informed. The second is that climate adaptation and resilience programs should be conflict sensitive or have peace building components in them. The third is the importance of conducting gender and conflict analysis locally because in many cases programs are designed at the national capital or at the donors' far away from the location where they are implemented not recognizing the local realities. So they don't usually include sound conflict-context or gender-relational analysis strategies. The fourth is the importance of including local voices in designing the programs. Climate change affects people differently and so the "one size fits all" solution does not work. The fifth entry point concerns the quality of gender inclusion. It is not the number of them but the efficiency and the true representation of their community. It is crucial that they are actually heard and are truly participatory in decision making.

**The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)'s Regional Director, Hala AlKarib, (speaker)**, draws the attention that countries in the Horn of Africa like Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, despite their poverty, are rich with profitable natural resources. They thus become sites of resources extraction that are concerned with profit regardless of human rights abuses and environmental damages that are caused in order to facilitate the extraction. Because the region has struggled with conflicts for decades, there is no room for sensitivity to civil society, human rights, climate change, environmental degradation and particularly on issues of women's human rights. There is a lack of regional and subregional mechanisms that should have been there to prevent abuses. Based on her experience in Sudan, particularly the areas of Darfur and the Blue Nile, she warns against the presence of militias working on extracting profitable natural resources such as gold and chrome. According to her, they are using sexual and gender based violence like mass rape as a means of sustaining control and evacuation people from their lands. Such displaced communities who originally depended on their lands and subsistence farming are completely separated from their livelihoods. Displaced women are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and being forced into dangerous working environments due to lack of alternative options and the pressing need to sustain themselves as well as their families. Even if the mining stops there will often be residual contamination of the soil and water resources. She urges that armed groups should be accountable for gender and environmental abuses and should not be able to access natural resources.

**Reference to GWI:** When asked how an NGO like GWI can practically help, Ms. AlKarib stated that there is a need for focus research. There is a massive gap in research about the issue of mining and extracting natural resources and their impact on women in terms of migration, depriving them of their means of livelihoods, forcing them to engage in dangerous work and subjecting them to negative health implications. Global women organizations like GWI who have access to resources, to funding for research and the capabilities to do so are more than welcome to cooperate with local organizations that work with grassroots organizations from the ground. Global organizations are also urged to come up with modalities for capacity building and for making the connection of issues that are strongly interconnected as socioeconomic rights for women; particularly violence against women, sexual and gender based violence and environmental degradation.

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