



***RE: The 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (Priority theme: 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; Review theme: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work)***

## **Written Statement from the Anglican Consultative Council, March 2022**

The Anglican Communion is the world's third largest Christian communion, comprised of forty-two provinces across 165 countries representing 85 million members, all working in various capacities to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence, pursue peace and reconciliation, safeguard creation and act in loving service. The Anglican Consultative Council welcomes the theme of the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women as a fundamental goal for the continued survival and flourishing of our planet.

Women and girls, particularly indigenous women and women of colour, bear the brunt of climate change and its consequences. Research shows that climate change and environmental impacts impact women's access to adequate land, housing, food, healthcare, and education and are increasing violence against women and girls including domestic abuse, child marriage and sexual assault. If we continue to neglect the bold climate action needed, we risk the loss of gains in gender equality from the last several decades.

Despite these obstacles, women are leading efforts to address the climate emergency through disaster risk reduction, adaptation, and mitigation efforts as well as awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy efforts. As a Christian organization, gender equality, gender justice, and the empowerment of women and girls is central to our mission. The Anglican Consultative Council remains committed to gender justice, elevating women's leadership in climate action, and acknowledging the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls. This work is central to our support for the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

We submit the following priorities and recommendations to the Commission:

### **Faith Communities as Reliable Partners in Addressing Climate Change**

Churches and other faith actors have deep experience in addressing the needs of marginalized groups and leveraging their moral and social capital for positive change as they are deeply rooted in communities. Churches also play an important role in shifting messaging, behaviors, attitudes, and action on environmental issues. In programming and educational campaigns, they work to shift from climate vulnerability to climate resilience and therefore have valuable expertise to contribute to global efforts to tackle climate change. In particular, women in leadership in their churches champion initiatives that enhance community resilience and mitigate the impacts of climate change on their communities.

From planting trees to disaster preparedness training, adopting green protocols or advocating for policy change, Anglicans are putting their faith into action. As a globally-connected body, churches play a significant role in being part of the solution--inspiring new ways of identifying problems, solutions and advocacy opportunities. Anglicans are present in more than 165 countries and networks of Anglican churches, together with Anglican development agencies, are some of the first responders in the face of climate-related humanitarian emergencies. Whether in communities devastated by cyclones in Vanuatu, or those flooded out of their homes in Sri Lanka, the Church is present with them. Faith alone may not protect communities from challenges, but it does give hope and motivation to adapt and build resilience.

### **Women, Climate Change and the World of Work**

The rapid advancement of climate change has increased the pre-existing vulnerabilities of women, especially indigenous women, women of colour and women living in poverty. It has impacted all areas of life including access to stable housing, healthcare, education, sustainable livelihoods, safety and security. Women and girls are increasingly relied on for a greater share of household income despite facing higher rates of job insecurity and lower wages. Due to climate-related vulnerabilities exacerbated by COVID-19, these conditions have only worsened for women. Women are at a heightened risk of poverty, discrimination, and violence like domestic abuse, survival sex, rape, sexual harassment, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

In rural areas, women face a greater risk of food insecurity than men as they are highly dependent on local ecosystems that are vulnerable to climate-related impacts and experience unequal land ownership rights. The impact of climate change on sectors dominated by women, such as rain-fed agriculture, disproportionately affects their livelihoods and security while men have greater access to technology and capital that enhances their resilience. In countries heavily impacted by climate-related weather changes, and where agriculture is a common source of income, thousands of women are pushed below the poverty line each year, leading them to resort to other means of subsistence which are less stable and may further compromise their safety.

Churches across the Anglican Communion have long been invested in creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs. In the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil, the Ascension Parish in Rio Grande do Sul has set up the Organic and Cultural Ascension Expo that serves as a place where local producers can sell organic food, handicrafts and art, creating new means of income for the whole community. Tackling gender inequality in the face of climate volatility requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the economic disempowerment of women and includes women and their concerns in the solutions.

### **Empowering Women in Leadership Roles**

In climate- and disaster-vulnerable areas, women and girls are finding ways to adapt to an uncertain future, investing in mitigation, disaster response and preparedness, resilience and advocacy. Marginalized communities, and particularly women within these groups, historically have been left out of key policy

and decision-making spaces, meaning that their needs go unrecognized. Indigenous women in particular are left out of critical government decisions regarding measures taken in their own communities despite holding essential knowledge on sustainable use of planetary resources.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change recognizes that “women can (and do) play a critical role in response to climate change due to their local knowledge and leadership.” Additionally, it states that “If policies or projects are implemented without women’s meaningful participation, it can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness.” Women and girls at the forefront of the climate crisis must be included in formal and informal decision-making power processes. It is also critical to enhance sustainable financing that supports community-led climate action and shifts resources into the hands of women leaders.

As part of their disaster preparedness program, the Anglican Church of Melanesia works collaboratively with other community organizations to complete a mapping of areas most vulnerable to coastal degradation, utilizing Global Positioning System technology and led by women and girls. This mapping includes assessing existing facilities that may be used during an emergency. If the facilities do not reach suitable standards, they are improved to include ramps for differently-abled community members, safe spaces for women, girls and children, and ensuring safe access to water and toilets.

## **Recommendations**

In the light of the complex and compounding needs of women and girls affected and impacted by environmental degradation, decreased biodiversity and climate change, the Anglican Consultative Council makes the following recommendations to the Member States, United Nations agencies, and civil society:

1. Recognise the strategic importance and assets of local churches and other faith-based organisations, who are integral parts of local communities, through building partnerships and joint programming, including in disaster preparedness, resilience and response.
2. Ensure that all environmental and climate-related interventions are gender transformative by applying a gender lens to all responses, policy design and programmes, ensuring full inclusion and participation of women and girls of all ages, and addressing the specific risks associated with sexual and gender based violence.
3. Recognise the difficulty faced by people who experience multiple climate disasters, noting the disproportionate impacts on women and girls, and create funding and reporting mechanisms that are flexible, adaptive, and gender-responsive.

4. Fulfill existing financial and international commitments and allocate additional funding to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and preparedness initiatives, and re-building efforts in countries that are most impacted by climate disasters, assuring the provision and maintenance of safe and adequate housing, healthcare, education, safety and security.
5. Act on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's call to strengthen land tenure policies especially for indigenous communities, including recognition of customary tenure, community mapping, redistribution, decentralisation, and co-management, that can provide both security and flexibility in the response to climate change.
6. Invest in localised capacity building for resilience, disaster response, disaster preparedness and adaptation, including local practitioners in policy and other decision-making spaces, ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women.
7. Implement special measures, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data, and preferential financing to support women and girls particularly vulnerable to climate change, including in Small Island Developing States, by providing social protection systems, education, employment opportunities, and training in adaptation and mitigation.
8. Ensure systematic follow up on the implementation of the 5-year Gender Action Plan which was adopted at COP25 to support the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates in the Convention.