

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Distinguished guests,

It fills my heart with immense pride and joy to speak at the opening of this important event on Women's Leadership in Environmental Matters in the Mediterranean Region.

UNEP, in collaboration with our Member States, partners and friends like you, is intensifying efforts to enhance women's leadership and encourage their proactive participation in environmental management and governance and sustainable development. This is not just about fairness and equality; it's about making our efforts more effective and efficient.

We stand at a pivotal moment in our transition to a green economy. The "Decent Work in Nature-Based Solutions" report by UNEP, ILO, and IUCN in 2022 estimates that around 100 million jobs could be created by 2030 through a green transition.

Yet, women currently hold only about a third of jobs in the renewable energy sector, and they lag behind men in leadership and technical roles. This gap matters because when women are included in decision-making, companies are 20% more likely to innovate in sustainability, according to the UN Global Compact.

Women's everyday choices, like recycling and buying eco-friendly products, are also vital in driving sustainable consumption and production.

The urgency of integrating gender perspectives becomes even more pronounced when we look at wealth distribution and climate change. The World Economic Forum reports a significant economic participation gap between men and women, which may take centuries to close if unchecked.

This gap is crucial; women tend to reinvest more of their earnings into their families and communities, promoting more equitable wealth distribution.

Furthermore, with 80% of people displaced by climate change being women, their involvement in climate action is not only necessary but leads to more ambitious and effective strategies. Research shows that climate commitments are stronger when women are part of their formulation.

Empowering women and girls help expand economic growth, promote social development and establish more stable and just societies. In fact, studies show

that women and men participating equally in the economy could add a further US\$28 trillion to global annual gross domestic product (GDP) by 2025, according to UN Women.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore women's empowerment as an important development objective, in and of itself, and highlight the relevance of gender equality to addressing a wide range of global challenges.

As we face a triple environmental crisis, it's essential to remember the influential roles each one of us plays. Despite the many challenges, we, as global, regional, and national leaders, have the power to enact meaningful change.

UNEP recognises the need for gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches in our work on sustainable production and consumption, the green economy, healthy ecosystem, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

We aim to leverage women's engagement in environmentally friendly behaviours and decision-making. We advocate for policies ensuring equal access for women to the opportunities arising in the green economy, including job training, support for female entrepreneurship, and gender diversity in leadership roles. In addressing climate change, the involvement of women, especially from developing countries, is crucial.

In closing, I urge all leaders to champion gender equality as a cornerstone for effective environmental and economic policies. This approach leverages the unique strengths and perspectives of women, driving us towards a more balanced and resilient world. Your actions and influence as role models can shape a better future for the next generation.

Thank you.