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**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”**

**Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly****Report of the Secretary-General\*\****Summary*

The present report, as mandated in Economic and Social Council resolution [2022/5](#), serves as a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It covers challenges with regard to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the part they can play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In its resolution [2022/5](#), the Economic and Social Council called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews in order to feed the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level into the global review.

\* [E/CN.6/2025/1](#).

\*\* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



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## I. Continued relevance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

### A. Introduction

*The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as the most comprehensive and visionary agenda for gender equality and women and girls' human rights, is key to unlocking progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals*

1. In 1995, 189 Governments unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as a groundbreaking and far-reaching framework for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls, as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. With 17,000 participants in attendance, Governments reached historic agreements and arrived at political consensus on the systemic change needed to realize women's and girls' human rights and gender equality across social, economic, political and environmental domains. The Platform for Action represents an unprecedented consensus on the actions needed to advance gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full realization of all their human rights.
2. The Platform for Action articulates a vision for a world based on the redistribution of power, where gender equality is recognized as foundational to achieving peace, security and development for all. The commitments made in the Platform for Action were forward-thinking at the time, and many of the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action remain pertinent for responding to the complex challenges of today.
3. With its focus on systemic change, the Platform for Action is also key to overcoming the bottlenecks and accelerating much needed progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as the end date of 2030 approaches. In the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations (General Assembly resolution [79/1](#) and annexes I and II thereto), Member States reaffirmed the aspirations set out in the Platform for Action and opened pathways to new possibilities and opportunities for gender equality. Respect for human rights, cultural diversity and gender equality are woven into all three agreements. Given the surge in misogyny and a rollback of women's human rights, Member States have explicitly committed to removing the legal, social and economic barriers that prevent women and girls from fulfilling their potential in every sphere. Furthermore, in the Pact for the Future, Member States recognized that sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development can only be realized when all women, adolescent girls and girls have their full human rights respected, protected and fulfilled.
4. Thirty years after its adoption, the Platform for Action continues to serve as a guide for governments at all levels, the United Nations, feminist and women's movements, civil society organizations, youth movements, private sector and philanthropy in their efforts to mobilize for the realization of women's human rights. In the 30-year review of the implementation of the Platform, over 150 States reported on their actions taken alongside several global and regional forums, providing a clear testament to the continued relevance and power of the Platform for Action.
5. The Platform for Action was adopted at a time of hope: democratic and human rights institutions were being strengthened; social movements were strong, supported and resourced; and trust in global institutions, multilateralism and the United Nations was high. Its thirtieth anniversary will be marked during a year in which Member

States will be called upon to continue to address the most pressing global challenges, including the climate crisis, armed conflict and humanitarian crises – all against the backdrop of economic uncertainty and a turbulent geopolitical climate.

*States have continued to take action to advance gender equality in the past five years*

6. Since the 2020 review of implementation of the Platform for Action (see [E/CN.6/2020/3](#)), on the basis of the survey responses and national reports received as input for the present report (see annex), States have increasingly adopted new laws, policies and programmes to advance gender equality. Globally, the top three priorities for action in the past five years reported by countries were in the areas of: eliminating violence against women and girls (88 per cent); ensuring equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice (48 per cent); and quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls (44 per cent). The areas least likely to be prioritized by States were gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building; basic services and infrastructure; and strengthening women's participation in ensuring environmental sustainability.

7. Progress and key new policy directions have emerged across all the critical areas of concern over the past five years:

(a) Addressing women's structural exclusion from the economy: 80 per cent of States reported passing laws and implementing policies that specifically prohibit gender-based discrimination in employment. Compared with 2019, more countries are taking steps to develop and strengthen integrated care systems that address the rights and needs of women as caregivers and care recipients. For example, the proportion of States that reported strengthening care services for older persons has increased from 46 per cent in 2019 to 66 per cent in 2024. Over the same period, the proportion of States reporting measures to promote decent work for paid care workers rose from 25 to 32 per cent;

(b) Reducing women's poverty: 79 per cent of States reported efforts to strengthen social protection systems, up from 70 per cent in 2019. An innovation in recent years has been new gender-responsive social protection policies and programmes in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent shocks and crises;

(c) Realizing the rights of the girl child: 77 per cent of States have focused action on combating violence against girls, up from 62 per cent in 2019; 70 per cent of States have focused action on girls' access to education, up from 61 per cent in 2019;

(d) Eliminating violence against women and girls: 90 per cent reported the introduction or strengthening of laws, their implementation and their enforcement, up from 83 per cent in 2019. National action plans have been introduced, updated or expanded by 79 per cent of States, up from 68 per cent in 2019. An area of innovation in recent years has been legal reform to address new forms of violence that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology, with 70 per cent of States reporting action in this area;

(e) Supporting women's participation in politics and public life: 38 per cent of States reported measures to prevent and investigate cases of violence against women in public life, end impunity and prosecute and punish perpetrators – more than double the percentage reported in the previous review period;

(f) Responding to the impacts of successive crises: 43 per cent of States reported adopting gender-responsive approaches to humanitarian action and crisis response, up from 40 per cent in 2019. A key innovation in recent years has been the growth of humanitarian response plans that integrate actions to promote women's

economic empowerment and their sexual and reproductive health and to eliminate violence against women and girls;

(g) Realizing women's rights in relation to the environment: the proportion of States reporting actions to advance gender equality and women's rights as part of their environmental sustainability, climate action and resilience strategies has increased significantly. For example, 48 per cent of States reported taking action to increase women's access to land, water, energy and other natural resources, an increase of 10 percentage points compared with 2019.

8. The above-mentioned efforts have led to important progress. Education is the area in which the situation of girls and women has improved the most since 1995. Gender gaps have closed at all levels of education globally. At the time of writing, 122.4 million girls are out of school, down from 124.7 million in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Maternal mortality declined from 339 deaths to 223 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2000 and 2020. Since 1995, the proportion of women in parliaments has more than doubled, from 11 per cent to 27 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Countries have also steadily continued to remove discriminatory laws. Between 2019 and 2023, 56 positive legal reforms took place across the four areas measured by Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1 (overarching legal frameworks and public life; violence against women; employment and economic benefits; and marriage and family).<sup>3</sup>

*Limited progress on gender equality outcomes, with stagnation in most areas, putting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Goals, as well as the vision of the Platform for Action, out of reach*

9. As reported in *The Gender Snapshot 2024*, despite the above-mentioned efforts, some 9.8 per cent of women and girls live in extreme poverty. While this is a slight improvement since the height of the pandemic in 2020, at the current rate of progress it will take a further 137 years to eradicate extreme poverty for women and girls. The gender gap in labour force participation, around 30 per cent, has remained stagnant for 20 years, with 63 per cent of women in the labour force in 2022 and 92 per cent of men, compared with 64 per cent for women and 94 per cent for men in 2002. While maternal mortality has decreased over the past two decades, in recent years (2016–2020), the global annual reduction in maternal mortality was effectively zero. At the current rate of progress, gender parity in national parliaments will not be achieved before 2063.<sup>4</sup> Across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner.<sup>5</sup>

10. Progress for women and girls is slowest in conflict and crisis-affected countries. Women and girls in extremely fragile contexts are 7.7 times more likely to live in households below the poverty line of \$2.15 per day than those in non-fragile contexts.<sup>6</sup> The average incidence of child marriage in conflict-affected countries is

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024* (New York, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parline, Global Data on National Parliaments, available at <https://data.ipu.org/> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>3</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), *Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018: Global, Regional and National Prevalence Estimates for Intimate Partner Violence Against Women and Global and Regional Prevalence Estimates for Non-Partner Sexual Violence Against Women. Executive Summary* (Geneva, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023* (New York, 2023).

14.4 percentage points higher than in non-conflict settings.<sup>7</sup> The latest data show that over one third of maternal deaths occurred in 48 fragile and conflict-affected countries.<sup>8</sup>

11. The realization of gender equality and human rights for girls remains a challenge. Gender disparities in upper secondary education remain in several of the eight regions for which data are provided in the present report.<sup>9</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), upper secondary out-of-school rates were 48 per cent and 27 per cent for girls compared with 44 per cent and 22 per cent for boys. Girls from the poorest households are most disadvantaged in all regions. Among adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 globally, 69 per cent of new HIV infections occur in girls.<sup>10</sup> The rate of child marriage has declined from 24.1 per cent to 18.7 per cent since 2003, but at this rate, girls will continue to be married as children until 2092.<sup>11</sup> One study of 14,000 girls in 31 countries found that more than half of girls surveyed had been harassed and abused online.<sup>12</sup>

12. Discriminatory legal frameworks prevail in many parts of the world, particularly in matters concerning the family, and remain a major impediment to the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights.<sup>13</sup> In 18 per cent of countries, women do not have equal rights to confer citizenship to their spouses and their children.<sup>14</sup> Over half (54 per cent) of countries do not have laws that base the legal definition of rape on the lack of freely given consent. Legal reform to ensure equality and non-discrimination is an urgent priority, as data show that where comprehensive laws exist, they make a difference. Countries with domestic violence legislation have lower rates of intimate partner violence than those without legislation, with 9.5 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 experiencing intimate partner violence in the past 12 months in countries with domestic violence legislation, compared with 16.1 per cent in countries without legislation.<sup>15</sup>

13. Women and girls experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, including based on age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status have made the least progress. Globally, 84 per cent of multidimensionally poor people live in rural areas.<sup>16</sup> Exclusion from education and employment can be especially pronounced for young women with disabilities, who are significantly more likely to be out of employment, education or training than both

<sup>7</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>8</sup> UN-Women calculations based on WHO, “Trend in MMR”, Maternal Mortality: Levels and Trends 2000 to 2020 database. Available at <https://mmr2020.srhr.org/data> (accessed November 2024).

<sup>9</sup> The eight regions are: sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia, Central and Southern Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Northern America, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), “Adolescent HIV prevention: HIV/AIDS data”. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/hivaids/adolescents-young-people/>.

<sup>11</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>12</sup> Plan International, *State of the World’s Girls 2020: Free to be Online? Executive Summary* (Surrey, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Gladys Acosta Vargas and others, “Beijing+30: progress, gaps and challenges”, report for the virtual expert group meeting in preparation for the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, August 2024.

<sup>14</sup> UN-Women, “The crucial role of legal frameworks in achieving gender equality”, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023: unstacking global poverty – data for high impact action”, 2023.

young men with disabilities and young women without disabilities.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous and rural women and girls disproportionately suffer the effects of biodiversity loss.<sup>18</sup> Marginalized women, including Indigenous women and women with disabilities, as well as LGBTIQ+ persons, are at heightened risks of violence and harassment (see [A/HRC/50/26](#)).<sup>19</sup>

14. While there has been growing attention to the need to transform discriminatory social norms, they persist as an impediment to gender equality across the world. Discriminatory social norms remain deeply embedded across all social institutions – the State, market, religion, community and family – and contribute to the unequal status of women and men across all these areas.<sup>20</sup> Social norms reinforce the beliefs that men are the appropriate holders of power in political institutions, and that women are primarily responsible for unpaid care work and men are the heads of households. Narratives justifying gender discrimination on account of nature and merit, discriminatory restrictions in law and in accessing opportunities and services, as well as powerful and organized opposition to gender-equal norms and gender equality, continue to hold back progress.

*Lack of progress partly due to strong headwinds that Governments have faced over the past five years: the pandemic, food, fuel and financial crises, the escalating climate emergency and eruptions of conflict*

15. In recent years, repeated shocks have destabilized the world, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the food, fuel and financial crises and the growing number of conflicts. The pandemic resulted in devastating social and economic consequences for women, including an uptick in domestic and public violence against them.<sup>21</sup> Climate-related disasters and environmental crises continue to escalate, taking a disproportionate toll on the poorest countries and the most marginalized women and girls, even as they have contributed the least to those problems. In the worst-case climate scenario, an additional 158.3 million women and girls could be pushed into poverty by 2050.<sup>22</sup> Destabilizing long-term economic trends continue to exacerbate inequalities within and between countries, with prevailing development models failing to create decent jobs and livelihoods for many people, while concentrating wealth and power among the few. An ongoing cycle of economic crises, mounting debt and austerity prevents much-needed investment in social protection and public services. In 2023, more than 170 armed conflicts were recorded, and approximately 612 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of these conflicts, more than double the level in the 1990s (see [S/2024/671](#)). In 2023, as the number of civilians killed in conflict rose by 72 per cent in just one year, the proportion of women killed in 2023 doubled, compared with 2022 (see [S/2024/385](#)). While these crises can open up some new opportunities for women and girls, for example income generation or

<sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), “New ILO database highlights labour market challenges of persons with disabilities”, 13 June 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Díaz and others, *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (Bonn, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> See also Sophie West-Browne, *LGBTIQ+ Equality and Rights: Internal Resource Guide* (New York, UN-Women, 2022); and Mónica Miriam García-Cuellar and others, “The prevalence of intimate partner violence against women with disabilities: a systematic review of the literature”, *Disability and Rehabilitation*, vol. 45, No. 1 (2023).

<sup>20</sup> UN-Women, *Ideologies, Institutions and Power: Addressing Social Norms Implicated in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. A Framework for UN-Women* (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> Ramya Emandi and others, *Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19* (New York, UN-Women, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Audrey Pirzadeh and others, *Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty, Productivity and Food Insecurity* (New York, UN-Women and Frederick S. Pardee Centre for International Futures, 2023).



community leadership, crises largely have a disproportionate and negative impact on women and girls.

16. Against this background of successive crises, nearly all States (97 per cent) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the implementation of the Platform for Action. Over half of States (54 per cent) reported that the climate crisis had affected the implementation of the Platform for Action, while more than a quarter of States (27 per cent) noted food and fuel crises as a challenge. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) pointed to a backlash with respect to gender equality as a factor that had undermined implementation.

*Widening accountability gap for gender equality, with democratic erosions and threats to women's human rights defenders on the rise*

17. Cascading crises and persistent shocks, continuing economic instability and growing inequalities between and within countries, have given rise to the growing erosion of trust in mainstream political parties, democratic processes and institutions, resulting in the global erosion of democracy or “democratic backsliding”.<sup>23</sup> Globally, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in 2023 continued to decline. Over the past five years, more countries have seen decreases in democratic performance than improvements. In 2023 specifically, 82 out of 173 countries (47 per cent) recorded a decline in their democratic performance compared with their levels in 2018, while less than a third (52) made progress.<sup>24</sup> The past five years have seen the States affected by democratic backsliding increasingly employing misogyny and gender inequality as a governing strategy, promoting legal and policy reform with narrow definitions of traditional families, limiting the use of the concept of gender in policy documents, legislation and academic research; and curtailing reproductive rights, the rights of sexual minorities and legal protections against domestic violence (see [A/HRC/56/51](#)). Attacks against minority communities have increasingly been a feature of democratic backsliding (see [A/HRC/46/57](#)).

18. At the same time, space for civic activism through which women and girls can hold their elected leaders to account has been shrinking rapidly, with restrictions on civic action and civic actors criminalized in some countries ([A/76/258](#)). Increased attacks on human rights defenders are a concern. Between May 2022 and April 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 140 incidents of reprisals and intimidation against individuals over their cooperation with the United Nations, affecting at least 108 women and girls ([UNW/2024/2](#), para. 71). In 2022, OHCHR verified 34 cases of the killing of women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries, a number that is likely an underestimate ([S/2023/725](#)). As of January 2022, almost a quarter of at least 3,545 socio-environmental conflicts worldwide visibly involved women environmental defenders, who routinely faced deadly violence.<sup>25</sup>

19. Without addressing these broader democratic deficits, accountability gaps and bottlenecks, the vision of the Platform for Action will remain out of reach. Accountability compels those in power to listen to and answer the claims of all rights holders, particularly those of historically marginalized people. When it functions effectively, accountability enables women not only to see their rights and demands

<sup>23</sup> Murat Somer, Jennifer L. McCoy and Russell E. Luke, “Pernicious polarization, autocratization and opposition strategies”, *Democratization*, vol. 28, No. 5 (2021).

<sup>24</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *The Global State of Democracy 2024: Strengthening the Legitimacy of Elections in a Time of Radical Uncertainty* (Stockholm, 2024).

<sup>25</sup> Laura Turquet and others, *Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action* (New York, UN-Women, 2023).

addressed in policy decisions, but also to track government performance, provide feedback and hold those in power accountable by seeking explanations or corrective action when needed.<sup>26</sup>

*Growing backlash paired with the hollowing out of policy mechanisms, institutions and processes tasked with advancing gender equality*

20. Growing opposition to gender equality can feed into “policy backsliding” on gender equality at the international, national and subnational levels.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, backsliding on gender equality policies has at times been explicit, where normative commitments have been removed. More often, however, it has been implicit, where a subtle erosion of commitments takes place, “hollowing out” policies without changing legislation or policy. Such measures can include discrediting gender equality as a legitimate goal; reframing existing policies, such as on education or health, in ways that restrict women’s rights; undermining institutional mechanisms, including national gender equality machineries; and limiting accountability and inclusion mechanisms for women’s rights organizations. Whether explicit or implicit, such rollbacks violate human rights commitments and the principle of non-retrogression.

21. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality, such as national gender equality machineries (also referred to as national women’s machineries), are crucial drivers of policy advancements for gender equality and important for democracy broadly. Data for 70 countries from 1975 to 2005 show a significant positive association between the presence of a national women’s machinery and the level of democracy.<sup>28</sup> In the past five years, national gender equality machineries have been the target of efforts to defund, undermine, rename and redirect them (see sect. V). In the present review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, only half (52 per cent) of States reported that their gender machineries were provided with adequate financial resources and staff capacity to fulfil their mandates. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality continue to play a key role by setting the overall direction of gender policy and coordinating across sectors, but they need authority, capacity and resources to drive accelerated progress, as envisioned in the Platform for Action.

*Progress also held back by inadequate investment in gender equality and effective solutions, exacerbated by the debt crisis*

22. Progress on gender equality has also been stymied by a lack of investment and decades of economic policies that resulted in shrinking resources for public services and infrastructure, particularly for developing countries in the context of successive crises. Data from 48 developing economies show that achieving gender equality, as represented by eight sex-disaggregated Sustainable Development Goal indicators, is projected to cost \$6.4 trillion annually from 2023 to 2030, equal to 20.5 per cent of their collective gross domestic product (GDP). This represents a funding gap of \$360 billion a year.<sup>29</sup> In 2023, a record 54 developing countries, equivalent to 38 per

<sup>26</sup> UN-Women, *Progress of the World’s Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women?* (New York, 2008); and Turquet and others, *Feminist Climate Justice*.

<sup>27</sup> Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsán, “Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women’s rights: understanding the current challenges for feminist politics”, Discussion Paper, No. 35 (New York, UN-Women, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> S. Laurel Weldon, “State feminism, global feminist waves and democratic backsliding: global and cross-regional perspectives”, *French Politics*, vol. 22, No. 3 (2024).

<sup>29</sup> See <https://unctad.org/sdg-costing/gender-equality>.

cent of the total, allocated 10 per cent or more of government revenues to interest payments, crowding out the public investments needed to advance gender equality.<sup>30</sup>

23. Shortcomings in the global financial architecture, including an inadequate financial safety net, are hindering developing countries from protecting the fundamental rights of women and girls during times of crisis, even though they are disproportionately affected by such crises. International tax cooperation remains insufficient to curb corporate tax evasion, avoidance and abuse, all of which reduce the fiscal space for gender-responsive policies. Approximately 36 per cent of multinational profits are shifted to tax havens globally. If these shifted profits were reallocated to their countries of origin, domestic profits in developing nations would increase by 5 per cent,<sup>31</sup> which could create fiscal space for necessary gender-responsive policies.

24. In 2021–2022, 42 per cent of bilateral allocable official development assistance (ODA) from members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had gender equality as a policy objective (\$60.4 billion out of \$143 billion screened against the gender equality policy marker). Although the volume increased slightly from \$57 billion in 2019–2020, the share decreased from 45 per cent. Further, only 4 per cent of total bilateral allocable aid was dedicated to programmes with gender equality as the principal objective, a similar share to the previous period. The lowest shares of aid with gender equality as an objective were in the humanitarian and energy sectors, which is a concern given the successive crises in recent years. ODA to support women’s rights organizations and movements, as well as government institutions, dropped to \$596 million on average per year in 2021–2022, from \$867 million in 2019–2020, a decline of one third.<sup>32</sup>

25. Against this background, the Sustainable Development Goal stimulus is a global call to action to offset the challenging market conditions faced by developing countries and accelerate progress towards the Goals, including gender equality commitments. It calls for urgent action to tackle the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress, scale up affordable long-term financing for development and expand contingency financing to countries in need.<sup>33</sup>

*Technological advances hold enormous promise for gender equality, but are not currently geared towards achieving this goal, while the new risks they create go largely unchecked*

26. Rapid technological change has been a key feature of the past five years, particularly the recent growth of generative artificial intelligence. As recognized in the Global Digital Compact, there is a significant opportunity to harness technological developments to advance gender equality, for example by speeding up the delivery of health, social protection and public services to women and girls during crises and for the prevention and response to violence against women and girls. There are some emerging examples of such approaches. However, the full potential of technology to advance gender equality has not been realized, while new risks for the physical safety and well-being of all women and girls remain inadequately managed. Further, persistent gender digital gaps mean that many remain excluded from the benefits of

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), “A world of debt: a growing burden to global prosperity”, 2024.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Tørsløv, Ludvig Wier and Gabriel Zucman, “The missing profits of nations”, *Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 90, No. 3 (May 2023).

<sup>32</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024* (Paris, 2024).

<sup>33</sup> See [www.un.org/en/sdg-stimulus](http://www.un.org/en/sdg-stimulus).

new technology, and these gaps risk being exacerbated with the growth of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, especially for the most marginalized groups.

27. Without specific interventions, new technological trends risk further entrenching existing inequalities and gendered power dynamics, threatening individual rights and enabling new forms of surveillance by governments and corporations.<sup>34</sup> Such technological advances are also facilitating new forms of violence and abuse, as well as enabling anti-feminist actors to spread misinformation, disinformation and abuse, allowing misogynistic and hate-based rhetoric to spread largely unchecked.<sup>35</sup> Young women and girls also experience greater risks to their safety online. Further, artificial intelligence can replicate and amplify gender biases that entrench gender inequalities, for example in workplace hiring and promotion procedures.<sup>36</sup>

*Demographic shifts also present challenges for gender equality*

28. Major demographic trends also have significant implications for gender equality. In most of sub-Saharan Africa, and in parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, the share of the working age population (25–64 years) is high and will continue to increase more rapidly than the total population in years to come, providing an opportunity to accelerate sustainable development.<sup>37</sup> However, reaping this demographic dividend requires much stronger job creation, along with substantial investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure. In many contexts, significant cohorts of highly educated young people are facing labour market challenges, particularly in the absence of decent work opportunities, with young women particularly affected by unemployment. Such demographic trends also mean that there is an increasing demand for public services, affordable housing and a greater need for family planning and sexual and reproductive health services, which are already stretched in most contexts.

29. Rapid population ageing in many parts of the world, in turn, is putting additional strain on already fragile labour markets, social protection, health and long-term care systems. As the majority of the world's older persons, women are most impacted by these trends, particularly as they have carried a disproportionate responsibility for caring over their life course, with potentially adverse implications for their income security in old age.<sup>38</sup> In old age, women continue to provide unpaid care for ageing spouses as well as grandchildren, enabling their parents to engage in paid work or taking their place as primary caregivers when children are orphaned or left behind owing to migration. Older women are also more likely to report chronic illness and disabilities than men because they tend to live longer.<sup>39</sup>

*Accelerating the achievement of the Goals requires “all hands on deck” and a recommitment to the Platform for Action*

30. With a world in trouble with conflict, climate chaos, inequalities and economic uncertainty, and the Goals in peril, recommitting to the Platform for Action and

<sup>34</sup> Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Amnesty International, “Crowdsourced Twitter study reveals shocking scale of online abuse against women”, 18 December 2018.

<sup>36</sup> UN-Women, “Artificial intelligence and gender equality”, 22 May 2024.

<sup>37</sup> *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2024).

<sup>38</sup> Silke Staab, Georgina Veitch and Ramya Emandi, “Caring for carers: recognizing the rights and contributions of older women”, 27 October 2023.

<sup>39</sup> *World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World* (United Nations publication, 2023), chap. 2.

accelerating implementation is critical. With just five years to go until 2030, progress on gender equality will have an outsized, catalytic and multiplier effect across all the Goals. Gender equality also underpins the integrated approaches needed across the six transitions proposed by the Secretary-General to accelerate progress on the Goals on (a) food systems; (b) energy access and affordability; (c) digital connectivity; (d) education; (e) jobs and social protection; and (f) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution (see [E/2024/52](#)).

31. As outlined in the sections of the present report, women are a driving force of food system transformation (see sects. II and VII); they have a powerful role to play in extending access to sustainable energy (see sect. VII); closing the gender digital divide can unlock the benefits of digital connectivity and transformation (see sect. II), while at the same time, the regulation of technology is key to women's and girls' safety (see sect. IV); reaping the full benefits of women's and girls' education holds the key to all dimensions of sustainable development (see sect. III); ensuring women's access to decent work and social protection is at the heart of poverty eradication and economic prosperity (see sects. II and III); and women's participation is central in decision-making to effectively address climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as well as achieving lasting and sustainable peace (see sects. V, VI and VII).

32. The achievement of global commitments depends on all actors playing their part. The provision of support to feminist movements and women's rights organizations that are diverse and inclusive of all women and girls is central. These groups often play critical roles as essential service providers, advocates and watchdogs, and they step up their support, at great personal cost, in the context of crises. Girls and young women have a critical role to play as the next generation of change-makers and are indeed increasingly at the forefront of social, economic and environmental change. By harnessing the collective power of women's organizations, engaging new generations and embedding intersectionality and cross-movement solidarity, feminist movements can continue to drive forward the vision of the Platform for Action and demand accountability for action. Yet, women's rights organizations remain severely underfunded, and the policies and actions to advance gender equality are underresourced by Governments ([E/CN.6/2024/3](#)). Supporting women's organizations and feminist movements also requires strengthening participatory processes and institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality and expanding space for civil society to meaningfully inform policy and hold decision makers to account.

33. Men and boys also play a key role in supporting feminist movements and transforming patriarchal social norms. Men in leadership positions across the public and private sectors, and in cultural and religious leadership roles, have a role to play in challenging discrimination, unequal power distribution between women and men and the discriminatory narratives that promote male dominance, as well as in advocating in favour of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full realization of their rights. In this respect, recent years have seen more pro-feminist men's organizations stand together with women's rights movements and organizations seeking to transform patriarchal masculinities.<sup>40</sup>

34. Governments, as primary duty bearers, remain responsible for the implementation of global norms and commitments. They also have the responsibility to ensure that all actors, including the private sector, are accountable for protecting, respecting and fulfilling the human rights of women and girls. Achieving the vision

<sup>40</sup> MenEngage Alliance, Comotion and LDH Consulting, "MenEngage Alliance evaluation", July 2024.

of the Platform for Action requires all actors – governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations – to work collaboratively across sectors and regions.

35. The United Nations system must play its part in advancing gender equality, as outlined in the Platform for Action 30 years ago. In this respect, in the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, the Secretary-General calls for system-wide action to transform power dynamics within the United Nations, change leadership approaches, reshape strategies and structures and enhance accountability to ensure the United Nations system delivers on gender equality and women's and girls' human rights.

36. Central to progress is also a strong multilateral system that can bring Member States together to reignite the spirit of the Platform for Action as a consensus agenda, one that works to advance gender equality and the empowerment and rights of all women and girls for the benefit of all. As recognized in the Pact for the Future, this requires a new beginning in multilateralism and a commitment to gender equality across the areas of sustainable development and financing; peace and security; technology; youth; and governance. This includes the revitalization of the Commission on the Status of Women to promote the full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action. The year 2025 provides a momentous opportunity to place gender equality at the centre of global deliberations and discussions with the convergence of the thirtieth anniversary of the Platform for Action, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the thirtieth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations Food System Summit +4 Stocktaking Moment and the Second World Summit for Social Development.

37. In the current global context of uncertainty, a recommitment to fully implementing the Platform for Action and enhancing accountability at all levels is urgent and overdue. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has invited all States, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders to work collaboratively towards transformative and lasting improvements in the lives of all women and girls, proposing a focus on six high-impact measures that would deliver tangible results for all women and girls and drive large-scale progress to accelerate efforts to achieve the Goals. The proposed high-impact measures are set out below:

(a) Drive accountability for the women and peace and security agenda and gender-responsive humanitarian action by adopting fully financed national plans and funding local women's organizations that are leading responses to crises and conflicts;

(b) Centre women's and girls' rights, including from rural and Indigenous communities, as economies and societies transition to environmental sustainability, including by prioritizing women and girls in terms of developing new skills and gaining access to green jobs and ensuring that women's access to productive assets and land rights are secured;

(c) Accelerate the achievement women's full and equal decision-making power in private and public domains, and at all levels of government, including by applying temporary special measures and enabling the meaningful participation of young women and girls at all levels;

(d) Bridge the gender digital gap by providing women with equal access to technology and its benefits, including mobile phones and the Internet, as articulated in the Global Digital Compact;

(e) Transform the care economy to recognize and redistribute care work and to support women's economic and social empowerment by increasing national budgets for equitable, quality public care services;

(f) Strengthen and implement legislation to end violence against women and girls through the adoption and funding of legislation and national action plans and through the provision of support to, and coordination with, community-led mechanisms to extend the reach of services.

38. Prioritizing young people, particularly women and girls, at the heart of these efforts through investments in their education and health and by shifting discriminatory social norms is essential to accelerate gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the realization of their rights, and to break the cycle of exclusion and deepen sustainability and leadership for the next generation.

## **B. Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action**

39. In 2000, at its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly conducted a five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action, as part of which Member States recommitted to implementing the Platform for Action and agreed on further actions and initiatives to advance the achievement of gender equality.

40. At its forty-ninth, fifty-fourth, fifty-ninth and sixty-fourth sessions, held in 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020, respectively, the Commission on the Status of Women carried out the 10-, 15-, 20- and 25-year reviews and appraisals of implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In those four reviews, Governments noted the limited progress made and committed to full and accelerated implementation.

41. In its resolution [2022/5](#), the Economic and Social Council decided that the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women would undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The review will assess the current challenges affecting the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality, and the rights and empowerment of all women and girls, and their contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda with a gender perspective.

42. In the resolution, the Council called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could feed into the global review.

43. The present report provides a review of implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, at the national level. It is informed by the responses to a guidance note and online survey provided by UN-Women and the regional commissions to all Member States and observer States in their respective regions.<sup>41</sup> By 25 November 2024, 156 Member

<sup>41</sup> This report provides a review of global trends in implementation of the Platform for Action, rather than an assessment of specific national policies, laws and programmes. The national review reports which have informed this global review report can be found here along with the



States had responded to the guidance note with a national report and 145 had completed the online survey. An overview of responses received, by region, is available in the annex to the present report.

44. As at the end of December 2024, all five regional review processes had been completed.<sup>42</sup> Findings from the regional reviews, where available, have been reflected in the present report:

- The Economic Commission for Africa held the Africa regional review of 30 years of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, from 30 October to 2 November 2024 in Addis Ababa, under the auspices of the African Union ninth Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. A common position document was adopted.
- The Economic Commission for Europe held the Beijing+30 Regional Review Meeting, on 21 and 22 October 2024 in Geneva. The outcome of the meeting was presented in a Co-Chairs' summary.
- The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review, from 19 to 21 November 2024 in Bangkok. The outcome of the meeting was presented in a Chair's summary.
- The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held a high-level meeting on progress made in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 30 years, on 9 December in Muscat. Priorities for future action were set out in an outcome document.
- The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held a regional consultation at its sixty-sixth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Santiago on 4 and 5 December 2024. Priorities for future action are expected to be set out in an outcome document.

45. There has also been significant mobilization of diverse civil society organizations around the 30-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action across the world. In order to monitor and assess State actions in implementing the Platform for Action, civil society organizations have gathered in regional consultations, forums and expert group meetings and prepared reports, outcome documents and calls for action reflecting priorities and recommendations for action. An expert group meeting was held to inform the global review of implementation, on the theme "Emerging issues and future directions for gender equality and women's rights".<sup>43</sup> Some States reported that they had consulted with civil society organizations as part of national reviews and in some cases, civil society organizations have prepared parallel reports to the State party reports.

46. The United Nations system also continues to play a key role in implementing the Platform for Action (see box I). Further, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality is preparing a compendium of promising practices on gender mainstreaming in the context of the Platform for Action's 12 critical areas of concern. A key outcome from the 25-year review of the Platform for Action was the launch of

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guidance note, see [www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations](https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations).

<sup>42</sup> Reports for the regional reviews and the outcome documents of intergovernmental meetings at the regional level will be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women, see [www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations](https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations).

<sup>43</sup> See [www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations/expert-group-meeting](https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women/csw69-2025/preparations/expert-group-meeting).



Generation Equality, which has been a key multi-stakeholder process for implementing the Platform for Action over the past five years (see box II).

#### Box I

#### **Strengthening the United Nations system for gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of all women and girls**

The Platform for Action recognized that, alongside States and civil society, the United Nations system has an important role to play.<sup>a</sup>

Since 1995, there have been extensive normative advances on gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls, spearheaded by the human rights treaty body system. The Commission on the Status of Women has continued to build consensus and promote good practices on gender equality and women's empowerment through its agreed conclusions.

The United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women was established in 1996, just after the adoption of the Platform for Action. It has disbursed \$241,767,742 in grants to 706 initiatives in 140 countries and territories to date (see [A/HRC/59/21-E/CN.6/2025/6](#)). Administered by UN-Women, it stands as a model of inter-agency collaboration across the United Nations system.

The creation of UN-Women in 2010 was a triumph of both multilateralism and the power of women's movements to demand greater accountability, bringing together existing entities within the United Nations system to create a new entity to drive gender equality. In 2012, spearheaded by UN-Women, as part of its tripartite mandate, the United Nations agreed on the landmark United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to coordinate and galvanize the system. The gender equality marker, introduced in 2012, is a critical tool to track finances and increase accountability. At the country level, the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard was established in 2018 to support more gender-responsive programming, and the United Nations country team gender equality marker captures how they are allocating resources collectively towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

In order to ensure that the United Nations system fully benefits from women's leadership, the system-wide strategy on gender parity was launched in 2017<sup>b</sup> and parity in senior leadership was achieved in 2020. The number of United Nations entities that have reached parity increased from only 5 in 2017 to 28 in 2024. Today, women make up 48.8 per cent of the overall workforce of the United Nations, 50.3 per cent of international staff in the Professional and higher categories<sup>c</sup> and 51.3 per cent of those serving in headquarters locations.<sup>d</sup>

Notwithstanding such progress, there is more work to do. Women's rights and gender equality units in United Nations agencies are important for effective mainstreaming, but according to data reported by 74 United Nations entities in 2023 in the framework of the System-wide Action Plan, while 40 entities had gender units, 25 of them reported the expansion of their remits to address other cross-cutting issues; in almost half of these cases, the expanded mandate was not matched by an increase in financial and human resources.

In March 2024, as part of Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality

Acceleration Plan to spur progress on gender equality across the United Nations system. Alongside plans to revitalize the Commission on the Status of Women as outlined in the Pact for the Future, the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan is aimed at redoubling efforts to ensure that the United Nations system lives up to the expectations outlined in the Platform for Action 30 years ago.

<sup>a</sup> United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome (New York, UN-Women, 2014).

<sup>b</sup> United Nations, “System-wide strategy on gender parity”, 6 October 2017.

<sup>c</sup> United Nations, UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, available at [www.un.org/gender/content/un-secretariat-gender-parity-dashboard](http://www.un.org/gender/content/un-secretariat-gender-parity-dashboard) (accessed December 2024).

<sup>d</sup> UN-Women, “Representation of women in the UN system”, 2023.

## Box II

### **Generation Equality to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action**

Generation Equality emerged from the 25-year review of the Platform for Action as a dynamic multi-stakeholder partnership that revitalized efforts towards the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Convened by UN-Women, with the Governments of France and Mexico, as well as civil society, the six thematic action coalitions and the Compact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action bring together Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, young people, the private sector and philanthropists to unlock political will, increase investment and promote the implementation of gender equality commitments through collective action.

Evidence from the *Generation Equality Accountability Reports* for 2023 and 2024<sup>a</sup> showcases the Generation Equality model of intergenerational and multi-stakeholder partnerships and solidarity, and the creation of such global platforms as the Alliance for Feminist Movements and the Global Alliance for Care. Supported by UN-Women, Generation Equality stakeholders partnered with national stakeholders to uphold progressive gender equality laws, mainstreamed gender equality in the development of the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, strengthened accountability for commitments (71 per cent of all commitments were reported on by stakeholders in 2024), and empowered youth and adolescents to lead efforts to advance gender equality in intergovernmental spaces. The *Generation Equality Accountability Report 2024* highlights the fact that almost all commitment makers support scaling up Generation Equality beyond 2026 as an accelerator for the 2030 Agenda.

Driven by shared priorities and a commitment to working together, Generation Equality stakeholders are delivering high-quality results on a grand scale: \$50 billion pledged; \$40 billion secured; and close to 2,000 policies, 4,500 programmes and 5,700 advocacy initiatives implemented. Signatories of the Compact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action reached at least 24.8 million women and girls and spent close to \$1.5 billion in 2023. These actions are improving the lives of millions of women and girls globally and

substantially contributing to achieving the Platform for Action. Future efforts will focus on meaningful youth engagement.

<sup>a</sup> Papa Seck and others, *Generation Equality Accountability Report 2023* (New York, UN-Women, 2023); and Maureen Gitonga and others, *Generation Equality Accountability Report 2024* (New York, UN-Women, 2024).

### **C. Progress in implementing the 12 critical areas of concern in the context of the 2030 Agenda**

47. The thirtieth anniversary review of the implementation of the Platform for Action is the second review to be conducted since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. Recognizing the linkages between the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda and its Goals to accelerate progress on gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights, the twenty-fifth anniversary review in 2020 clustered the 12 critical areas of concern into six overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of the two frameworks (see table below). In the present report, for the second time, the analysis of progress in implementation, gaps, challenges and future priorities is based on the same clusters.

## Alignment of the Platform for Action critical areas of concern with the Sustainable Development Goals

<i>Report cluster</i>	<i>Critical areas of concern</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Cross-cutting critical areas of concern and themes from the 2030 Agenda</i>
A. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work	F. Women and the Economy	Goal 5 Goal 8 Goal 10	
B. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services	A. Women and poverty B. Education and training of women C. Women and health	Goal 1 Goal 3 Goal 4 Goal 5	
C. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes	D. Violence against women J. Women and the media	Goal 5 Goal 11 Goal 16	I. Human rights of women L. The girl-child
D. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions	G. Women in power and decision-making H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	Goal 5 Goal 16 Goal 17	Human rights Leaving no one behind Universality
E. Peaceful and inclusive societies	E. Women and armed conflict	Goal 5 Goal 16	
F. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building	K. Women and the environment	Goal 2 Goal 12 Goal 13 Goal 14 Goal 15	

48. In addition to the six thematic clusters, there are three cross-cutting themes that are integrated into the assessment of progress. The human rights of women (critical area of concern I) cut across all sections, so that States' implementation is guided by their obligations and responsibilities under international human rights law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention enshrines a broad understanding of gender equality that goes beyond formal equality to achieving substantive equality, so that women and girls can exercise and enjoy their rights equally in practice. The second cross-cutting theme that is integrated across all six clusters is "leaving no one behind", a feature of the 2030 Agenda that is focused on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality, and the need to meet all goals and targets for all countries, all peoples and all segments of society. The universal application of the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda to all people in all countries requires that States ensure that all women and girls, regardless of their

location, situation and circumstances, enjoy their human rights. The indivisibility and interdependence of human rights is also a key principle, where one set of human rights cannot be enjoyed without another. Each section in the present report includes a box with examples that show not only how marginalized groups of women and girls have raised their voices, but also how those with power and resources have been held accountable for action.

49. The girl child (critical area of concern L) is also integrated across the report, reflecting the priority placed on the next generation in the Platform for Action. As stated in the Platform for Action, “the girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow” and progress depends on safeguarding their futures and harnessing their skills and energy in their families, communities, countries and at the global level. Meeting the Platform for Action’s commitments to the girl child, including meeting the unique needs of adolescent girls, means investing in girls’ education and transition to decent work (see sect. III); ensuring that girls are not subjected to violence and harmful practices (see sect. IV); amplifying their voices in civil society organizations (see sect. V) and in peacebuilding (see sect. VI); and recognizing their leadership across all spheres, including most visibly in the powerful movements for environmental sustainability and climate justice (see sect. VII).

50. Over the past five years, a range of intergovernmental bodies have built on the Platform for Action to advance the normative framework on gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of the human rights of women and girls, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, as well as the Security Council and the Human Rights Council and its special procedures. Since 2020, the Commission on the Status of Women has considered the following priority themes and adopted agreed conclusions on: women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (sixty-fifth session, see [E/2021/27](#)); 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 (sixty-sixth session, see [E/2022/27](#)); innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (sixty-seventh session, see [E/2023/27](#)); and accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective (sixty-eighth session, see [E/2024/27](#)). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has also continued to advance the normative framework on women’s and girls’ human rights (see box III).

#### Box III

#### **The Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

The Platform for Action calls for the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All areas of the Platform for Action are addressed by the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and there is complementarity between the Platform for Action’s critical areas of concern, and the articles of the Convention and general recommendations of the Committee. The two instruments are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the enjoyment by all women and girls of their human rights. Since 2016, the Committee has increasingly linked the obligations of countries under the Convention to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals,

including by calling for the realization of substantive gender equality throughout the implementation of the Goals. In order to guide States in the implementation of their human rights commitments, the Committee has continued to interpret the normative content and scope of the Convention through its general recommendations. Between 2020 and 2024, the Committee adopted three new general recommendations, as follows:

- General recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.
- General recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls.
- General recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.

51. Against this background, the sections that follow review the implementation of the Platform for Action. Each section starts with an overview of the relevant elements of the Platform for Action, as well as significant normative advances, particularly since the previous global review in 2020. The sections continue with an assessment of global trends using global quantitative data, where available, followed by an assessment of actions taken by States to implement the Platform for Action. The assessment of actions draws on the inputs provided by States in their national reviews and in their responses to the survey. While efforts have been made to identify promising practices and trends, information on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes was limited in the national reports. The sections conclude with an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation.

## II. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

### Key messages

- The global economy is in a fragile state, with low- and middle-income countries facing very limited fiscal space and unsustainable debt burdens, placing enormous constraints on their capacity to implement gender-responsive policies.
- The succession of crises associated with the COVID-19 pandemic widened gender gaps in the labour market, with women losing jobs at a faster pace and regaining them more slowly than men. At the time of writing, the rates of labour market participation of women and men are largely unchanged compared with 20 years ago.
- Women continue to be overrepresented in informal and precarious employment, with 38.7 per cent of employed women in low-income countries working as unremunerated contributing workers, often on family farms, compared with 14.2 per cent of men.
- Women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their economic opportunities and participation in public life as well as their right to rest, leisure and self-care.
- States have progressed actions in several areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:

- (a) 80 per cent of States reported having passed laws and implemented policies that specifically prohibit gender-based discrimination in employment; and 68 per cent reported passing legislation and implementing policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, up from 55 per cent in 2019;
- (b) 27 per cent of countries reported having implemented measures to secure women's land rights and tenure, with the strongest focus in sub-Saharan Africa (56 per cent);
- (c) Closing the gender digital divide and increasing women's representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors has been a priority, particularly through digital literacy and skills programmes for women and girls (73 per cent of States) and gender-responsive education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (70 per cent). However, significant challenges remain in women's attraction to and retention in technology and related sectors;
- (d) Nearly three quarters of States reported actions to expand and improve parental leave and other forms of leave to support carers; 32 per cent of States reported implementing measures to promote decent work for paid care workers, up from 25 per cent in 2019. A key innovation across several States is the advance towards integrated national care systems that encompass comprehensive leave policies and universal care services and that invest in better wages and conditions for paid caregivers;
- (e) 34 per cent of States reported having implemented measures to support the transition from informal to formal work, and 61 per cent reported having implemented measures to promote women's financial inclusion and access to credit. However, exclusion from labour rights and social protection and a lack of access to credit remains common among informal women workers;
- (f) Only 6 per cent of States reported undertaking an assessment of the gendered impact of austerity and fiscal consolidation measures prior to their planning, design, and implementation, despite the unequal impacts of austerity measures.

## A. Introduction

52. Gender equality in access to economic resources, opportunities and power (critical area of concern F) is fundamental to the full realization of human rights for women. In the Platform for Action, it is recognized that when gender equality is not well integrated into economic policies, governance and decision-making, there is a direct impact on women's equal access to economic opportunities, productive assets such as land, and the distribution of paid and unpaid work. There is also a recognition of the fact that women's and girls' persistent poverty is directly related to these economic inequalities (see sect. III). The commitments in the Platform for Action were reflected in the 2030 Agenda, particularly in Goal 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Goal 8, to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for

all, and Goal 10, to reduce inequality within and among countries. Accelerating progress towards achieving these Goals, requires an urgent transition to break the vicious cycle of informal employment, low pay and limited access to social protection, all of which affect women disproportionately (see [E/2024/52](#)).

53. Over the past five years, the succession of crises, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the food, fuel and financial crises, have had a devastating impact on women's economic security across the world. Women's labour market participation, which was already stagnant before the pandemic, went into reverse. Despite evidence of the disproportionate economic impact on women, national fiscal and monetary stimulus packages during the pandemic largely failed to take gender equality into account.<sup>44</sup> A similar pattern was observed in social protection and labour market responses that often failed to address gender-specific risks and needs (see sect. III). Escalating climate change and biodiversity loss have intense impacts on women and girls, especially those in poor households or rural communities with a greater dependence on natural resources for food, water and fuel. While the shift to low-carbon economies is expected to create new jobs, women rarely benefit from such opportunities, as they remain underrepresented in green sectors.<sup>45</sup>

54. In the past five years, the normative framework has expanded commitments on women's economic rights and autonomy. At its sixty-eighth session, in 2024, the Commission on the Status of Women elaborated on the linkages between addressing women's poverty, strengthening institutions and financing for gender equality. The agreed conclusions called upon States to close gender gaps in labour force participation and address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment. Also in 2024, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution concerning decent work and the care economy, in which it urged Member States to invest in high-quality, affordable and accessible care services, including childcare, healthcare and long-term care.<sup>46</sup>

55. In the agreed conclusions adopted at its sixty-eighth session, the Commission on the Status of Women also recognized the growing finance divide between and within countries and the fact that no meaningful progress on commitments to human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls can be achieved without adequate financing, including the full implementation of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and its follow-up processes.

## B. Global and regional trends

*The global economy is in a fragile state, with low- and middle-income countries facing very limited fiscal space and unsustainable debt burdens, placing enormous constraints on their capacity to implement gender-responsive policies*

56. The succession of crises affecting the world continues to impact the global economy. In June 2024, the World Bank projected that global GDP growth would hold steady in 2024 at 2.6 per cent. An expected improvement in 2025 will still linger below the pre-pandemic trend of 3.1 per cent.<sup>47</sup> While the world economy avoided a recession in 2023, growth prospects for many developing countries, especially vulnerable and low-income countries, remain weak. Looking further ahead, in a

<sup>44</sup> UN-Women and ILO, "Consolidated report: national fiscal stimulus packages from a gender equality perspective", 2023.

<sup>45</sup> ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with Jobs* (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> International Labour Conference, Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy, 14 June 2024 (ILC.112/Resolution V).

<sup>47</sup> World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: June 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).



worst-case climate scenario, global GDP could be reduced by 12.1 per cent (\$23.9 trillion) by 2050, with sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean suffering the highest economic losses due to climate change.<sup>48</sup>

57. Some aspects of gender equality, such as girls' education and women's employment, can have catalytic effects on economic growth (see [A/69/156](#)). However, the reverse does not always hold true: economic growth does not necessarily have catalytic effects on gender equality. In fact, some patterns of economic growth are premised on maintaining gender inequalities, exploiting women's low wages to bolster competitiveness in global markets and entrenching gender-discriminatory norms and institutions. While it is within the remit of macroeconomic policies to promote growth and economic development that are sustainable, inclusive and geared towards the realization of women's economic and social rights, progress on this front has remained wanting.

58. Global economic policies and the structure and practices of the international financial system have eroded state capacities to sustainably and progressively raise resources. The growing and aggressive use of low or no-tax jurisdictions reduces the taxes corporations pay.<sup>49</sup> In 2023, multinational corporations shifted an estimated \$1.15 trillion of profits into tax havens, cutting direct tax revenue by \$311 billion a year. An additional \$169 billion was lost through wealthy individuals using tax havens.<sup>50</sup> The scale of this problem has galvanized Member States to take action on international tax cooperation over recent years. In an historic move, in December 2022, the General Assembly adopted a resolution proposed by the Group of African States on the promotion of inclusive and effective tax cooperation at the United Nations ([77/244](#)). Negotiations on the new convention will begin in February 2025.

59. In the meantime, with domestic resource mobilization falling short, many low- and middle-income countries have increasingly taken on external debt. In 2023, global public debt – comprising general government domestic and external debt – reached a record \$97 trillion, a \$5.6 trillion increase from 2022.<sup>51</sup> At the time of writing, 55 per cent of the least developed countries and other low-income countries are either in debt distress or are highly at risk.<sup>52</sup> Interest payments on debts crowd out spending on development priorities, including investments in gender equality, essential social protection and public services.

*Crises associated with the pandemic widened gender gaps in the labour market, with women losing jobs at a faster pace, and regaining them more slowly, than men*

60. Even before the pandemic, progress in closing the global gender gap in labour force participation rates had stalled, occupational segregation and gender wage gaps remained pervasive and the majority of the world's working women were stuck in informal and precarious jobs, with few rights and protections ([E/CN.6/2020/3](#)). The pandemic and its associated crises exacerbated these trends, taking a disproportionate toll on women's jobs and livelihoods.<sup>53</sup> By 2022, women's employment rates had barely recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Globally, 63.2 per cent of women aged 25 to 54 were in the labour force in 2022 compared with 92.0 per cent of men of the same age. Gender gaps in labour force participation were particularly pronounced in

<sup>48</sup> Pirzadeh and others, *Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty, Productivity and Food Insecurity*.

<sup>49</sup> *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024: Financing for Development at a Crossroads* (United Nations publication, 2024).

<sup>50</sup> Tax Justice Network, *State of Tax Justice 2023* (2023).

<sup>51</sup> UNCTAD, *A World of Debt*.

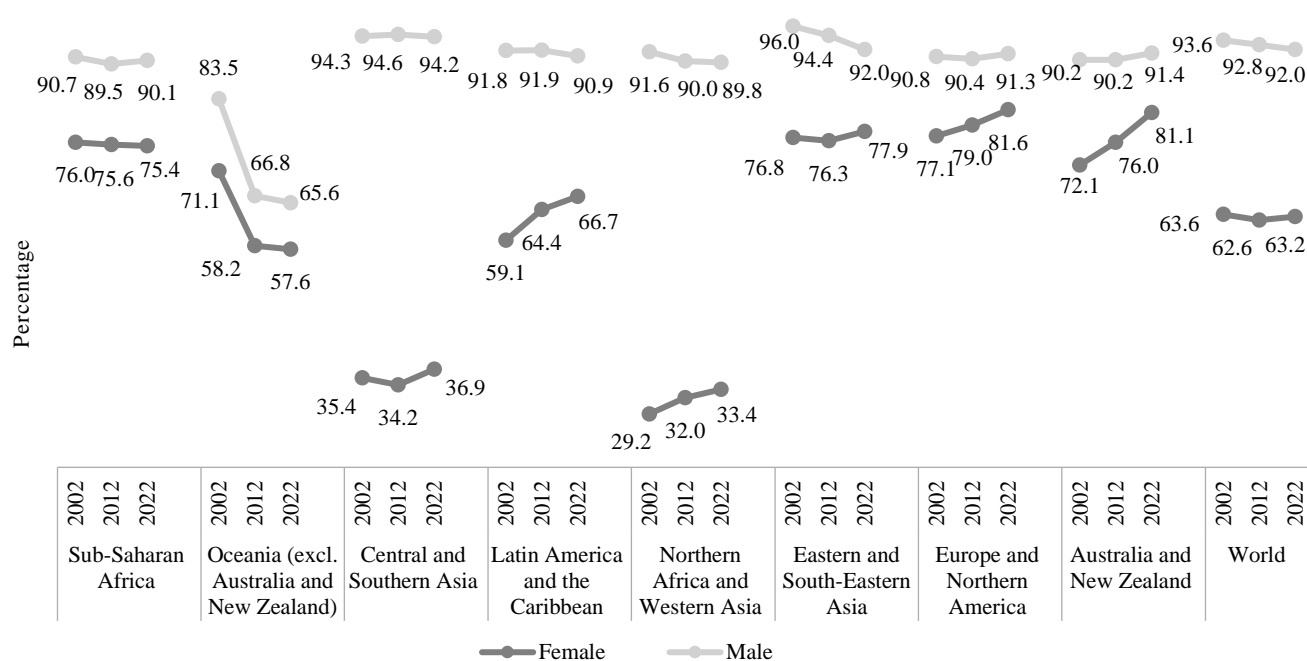
<sup>52</sup> *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024* (United Nations publication).

<sup>53</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil* (2022).

Northern Africa and Western Asia as well as Central and Southern Asia. While Latin America and the Caribbean experienced significant gains in women's participation between 2002 and 2022, women in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) fared the worst, with participation declining by nearly 14 percentage points (see figure I).

Figure I

### Labour force participation rate among individuals aged 25–54, by sex and region (2002–2022)



Source: UN-Women calculations based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) “Statistics on the population and labour force”, ILOSTAT database, and United Nations, Population Division Data Portal. Available at <https://population.un.org/dataportal> (accessed October 2024).

61. Unemployment levels remained persistently higher for women than men almost everywhere in 2023, except in Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia. Women fared worst in Western Asia and Northern Africa (15 per cent for women versus 8 per cent for men), Latin America and the Caribbean (8 per cent for women versus 5 per cent for men), and sub-Saharan Africa (7 per cent for women versus 5 per cent for men).<sup>54</sup> Young people have fared even worse than the adult population. Globally, in 2023, the youth unemployment rate, 13.3 per cent, significantly exceeded that of adults at 3.9 per cent.<sup>55</sup> Particularly worrying are the persistently high rates of young people, particularly young women, who are not in education, employment or training (see sect. III).

*Poor quality and conditions of women's work remain a concern across the world, with significant implications for women's economic independence and security*

62. Women are disproportionately represented in informal employment and occupations characterized by low wages, a lack of rights and poor working conditions.<sup>56</sup> According to the latest available data, the highest prevalence of informal

<sup>54</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>55</sup> ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024* (Geneva, 2024).

<sup>56</sup> ILO, “World employment and social outlook: May 2024 update”, May 2024.

employment is observed in sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly 90 per cent of women are in informal employment, compared with 84 per cent for men; followed by Central and Southern Asia with 88 per cent of women versus 85 per cent for men, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) where 74 per cent of women are in informal employment, compared with 70 per cent for men.<sup>57</sup>

63. Some forms of informal work are especially precarious. Globally, 16.4 per cent of employed women are contributing workers, often on family farms or businesses, employment which is unremunerated. This share rises to 38.7 per cent in low-income countries (down from 48.7 per cent in 1991).<sup>58</sup> Domestic workers are another highly vulnerable category. Globally, 76.2 per cent of domestic workers are women, many of them migrants or members of ethnic or racial minorities, who work in other people's homes providing care services.<sup>59</sup> More than 80 per cent of them are informally employed, and in some cases domestic work is explicitly excluded from national labour laws (see box IV).

64. Globally, 36 per cent of women are employed in agrifood systems, often working as small-scale farmers, contributing family workers or agricultural wage workers on larger farms. Women's farms are 24 per cent less productive than men's, because women often lack secure land tenure, and access to the credit and productive resources they need. Men have greater ownership or secure tenure rights over agricultural land than do women in 40 of 46 countries with data.<sup>60</sup> Women's rights to inherit their husbands' property continue to be denied in more than 100 countries.<sup>61</sup> In the context of climate change, women need secure land rights and access to resources and agricultural extension services in order to enable them to adopt more sustainable agricultural practices; such measures are critical for women's resilience (see sect. VII).

65. Where women are employed, they are consistently paid less than men. The global gender pay gap stands at 20 per cent, a level that has not changed over the past decade.<sup>62</sup> It is estimated that between 2015 and 2020, women earned just over one third (34.7 per cent) of labour income across the world, a marginal increase from 30.6 per cent in 1990.<sup>63</sup> A major driver of gender pay and income gaps is pervasive occupational segregation, which exists across all countries and regions. Horizontal segregation means that women are clustered into sectors or occupations that are characterized by lower pay (e.g. social and care services) compared to those where men predominate (e.g. construction). Vertical segregation, in turn, means that women are concentrated in lower-status, lower-paid positions within the same sector or occupation, with fewer opportunities for promotion or progression. Occupational segregation is driven by the persistence of discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes that remain embedded across all institutions and that influence the unequal division of paid and unpaid work, as well as expectations of public and

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, "Statistics", Sustainable Development Goal Indicators database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>58</sup> ILO, "Defining informality for contributing family workers", room document to support the discussions at the Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics in preparation for the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, February 2023.

<sup>59</sup> See [www.ilo.org/topics/domestic-workers/who-are-domestic-workers](http://www.ilo.org/topics/domestic-workers/who-are-domestic-workers).

<sup>60</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* (Rome, 2023).

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, *Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought on Women and Men* (Bonn, 2022).

<sup>62</sup> ILO, *Global Wage Report 2022–23: The Impact of Inflation and COVID-19 on Wages and Purchasing Power* (Geneva, 2022).

<sup>63</sup> Lucas Chancel and others, *World Inequality Report 2022* (World Inequality Lab, 2021).

private sector employers, government, community and family about the roles and sectors that women and men are most suited to.<sup>64</sup>

66. Recent trends in the digitization of the economy and the adoption of artificial intelligence are disrupting the very nature of work, threatening jobs in female-dominated sectors of the economy and rapidly transforming many others. At the same time, women are not necessarily equally benefiting from the growth of jobs in technology-based sectors. Women remain underrepresented in occupations and leadership roles in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.<sup>65</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) predicts that the shift to low-carbon and circular economies could create 100 million new jobs by 2030, but to date, these jobs are primarily in male-dominated occupations.<sup>66</sup>

*Women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their economic opportunities and participation in public life, as well as their right to rest, leisure and self-care*

67. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, and to ensure better representation and rewarding of paid care work, including through social dialogue and collective bargaining.<sup>67</sup> Unpaid care and domestic work is essential work that undergirds families, communities and economies, contributing to individual and collective well-being, as well as to economic prosperity. That this work is provided for free does not mean that it comes without costs. In the light of limited public support, women bear the bulk of these costs in the form of lower employment rates, wage penalties and time poverty, all of which have ripple effects on their health and well-being and their participation in public life. When care is commodified, it often remains profoundly devalued, with wage penalties and poor working conditions disproportionately affecting migrant and racialized women.

68. Before the pandemic, women were already spending on average 2.8 times as many hours on unpaid care and domestic work as men.<sup>68</sup> Widespread and often prolonged school and daycare closures during the pandemic increased the demand for unpaid care and domestic work.<sup>69</sup> While the time spent on such work increased for both men and women, women continued to shoulder the lion's share. Based on the current trajectory, the gender gap with respect to time spent on unpaid care and domestic work will narrow slightly, but by 2050, women globally will still be spending 2.3 times more hours per day on unpaid care work than men.<sup>70</sup>

69. Time spent on unpaid care and domestic work varies significantly across regions.<sup>71</sup> Australia and New Zealand, and Europe and Northern America, register the lowest gender gaps, with women performing on average 1.7 times and 1.8 times more hours of unpaid care and domestic work than men, respectively. The highest gender gaps are observed in Northern Africa and Western Asia, where women perform 4.7 times more hours than men, followed by Central and Southern Asia, at 3.6 times,

<sup>64</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All* (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> ILO, "Where women work: female-dominated occupations and sectors", 7 November 2023.

<sup>66</sup> ILO, *Gender Equality and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action: A Policy Guide* (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>67</sup> UN-Women, "A toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: from 3Rs to 5Rs", June 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Taylor Hanna and others, "Forecasting time spent in unpaid care and domestic work: technical brief", UN-Women and Frederick S. Pardee Centre for International Futures, 2023.

<sup>69</sup> UN-Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice* (New York, 2021).

<sup>70</sup> Hanna and others, "Forecasting time spent in unpaid care and domestic work".

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) at 3.0 times, and sub-Saharan Africa at 2.8 times (see figure II).

Figure II

**Average percentage of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, per 24-hour day and by region and sex, 2023**



Source: Taylor Hanna and others, “Forecasting time spent in unpaid care and domestic work: technical brief”, UN-Women and Frederick S. Pardee Centre for International Futures, 2023.

70. The unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work exacerbates women’s labour market disadvantages. Globally, for example, the presence of young children (under the age of 6) in the household has a dampening effect on women’s labour force participation, associated with a 5.9 percentage points decrease compared with women who do not have children under the age of 6 in the household. The opposite effect is observed for men, whose participation increases by 3.4 percentage points with the presence of children under 6. Mothers also bear a significant penalty in terms of wages, while for most men, fatherhood results in a wage “bonus”.<sup>72</sup> These factors underscore the urgent need to incorporate care provisions into broader social and economic policies.

### C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

71. The data included in national reports show that policy and programmatic trends in implementation have emerged in the following areas: (a) strengthening laws and policies to address discrimination, reduce occupational segregation and promote women’s access to decent work and economic resources; (b) supporting workers with care responsibilities and expanding the rights of paid and unpaid caregivers; (c) improving the quality of women’s employment, especially in informal and rural economies; and (d) in the area of macroeconomic policies, national reports point to the negative impacts that global economic trends have had for their ability to sustain and strengthen investments in gender-responsive policies needed to support women’s economic rights.

<sup>72</sup> UN-Women, *Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (New York, 2019).

(a) *Strengthening laws and policies to address discrimination, reduce occupational segregation and promote women's access to decent work and economic resources*

72. Laws and policies play a crucial role in dismantling discrimination and fostering gender equality in the workplace, enabling women's access to decent work and economic resources. In order to achieve those objectives, such laws and policies must explicitly prohibit direct and indirect forms of discrimination based on sex and other characteristics, and ensure equal opportunities and outcomes in hiring and promotion and equal pay for work of equal value. Such efforts also require tackling systemic barriers that impede women's progress.

73. Globally, 80 per cent of States reported passing laws and implementing policies that specifically prohibit gender-based discrimination in employment. Examples of laws and policies include legislative and regulatory frameworks that promote equal pay for work of equal value, as along with measures for pay transparency; and legislative reform to prohibit discrimination based on sex, disability and pregnancy in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, promotion, retention and termination. States also reported having introduced, strengthened and enforced minimum wage legislation, which is important for boosting the earnings of women workers at the lower end of the pay scale and has been shown to contribute to reducing overall wage disparity, as well as gender pay gaps.<sup>73</sup>

74. Since its adoption in 2019, 45 States have ratified the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of ILO. Some 68 per cent of countries reported having passed national legislation and implementing policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, including by creating a supportive environment where victims feel safe to report workplace abuses, up from 55 per cent in 2019. Such measures include confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms, thorough investigation procedures and protection for those who report incidents, as well as the expansion of counselling and support services. The most comprehensive laws require employers to put in place accountability measures and zero-tolerance policies and to provide comprehensive training for all employees so as to address discriminatory workplace cultures.

75. Globally, 27 per cent of countries reported having implemented measures to secure women's land rights and tenure. The strongest focus on women's land rights was in sub-Saharan Africa, at 56 per cent, and Latin America and the Caribbean, at 36 per cent. Most countries reported having implemented measures to reform property and land rights, including inheritance rights, so as to prohibit discrimination based on sex. Some countries passed legislation to facilitate the acquisition of longer-term leases to boost tenure security. Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa passed legislation to ensure that women can inherit land, free from discrimination and irrespective of their marital status.

76. Many States noted that the increased focus on green and digital economies created new opportunities, as well as challenges, for addressing deep-seated gender inequalities in the world of work, including occupational segregation. Digital innovation and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence were a hallmark of the past five years. However, the widespread adoption of these technologies, particularly in developing countries, has been hindered by gaps in infrastructure and skills, as well as barriers to entry, which can be particularly high among women, older workers and workers in lower-skill occupations.<sup>74</sup> While the gendered impacts of emerging technologies in the workplace are still unclear, these developments may

<sup>73</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality*.

<sup>74</sup> OECD, *OECD Employment Outlook 2023: Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market* (Paris, 2023); and ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*.

have a disproportionate impact on women's jobs, given their overrepresentation in clerical roles.<sup>75</sup>

77. In this context, closing the gender digital divide and increasing women's representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors has remained a clear priority for States, including through digital literacy and skills programmes for women and girls (73 per cent), gender-responsive education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (70 per cent) and gender mainstreaming in national digital policies (53 per cent). Specific actions taken by States include providing scholarships for training in digital skills; creating networks to support women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; providing digital literacy programmes; and establishing partnerships with the technology sector, women's organizations and international organizations to implement programmes that target women's access to technology and digital skills training.

78. While there is a growing focus on education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (see sect. III), there remain significant challenges in attracting and retaining women in the technology and related sectors, including because of the male-dominated culture of these sectors and the absence of women in leadership roles.<sup>76</sup> As well as increasing women's representation in male-dominated fields, reducing occupational segregation requires men to take up jobs in female-dominated sectors such as care. Very few States reported actions in this area, which indicates that a greater focus on that aspect is needed.

(b) *Supporting workers with care responsibilities and expanding the rights of paid and unpaid caregivers*

79. Achieving gender equality in the economic domain will require concerted efforts to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and to ensure greater protection of the rights of paid and unpaid caregivers, which includes rewarding them with better pay and fostering greater representation. Those efforts will require an expansion of affordable, quality and accessible childcare, elder care and disability care, extending paid parental leave and other care leaves, and stepping up efforts to redistribute care between men and women, boys and girls, and between households and the state. Large-scale investments in inclusive care policies and services could generate close to 300 million decent jobs globally by 2035.<sup>77</sup> Investments in collecting time-use statistics, particularly through dedicated surveys, are essential for informing the development and implementation of care policies.

80. Nearly three quarters of countries (73 per cent) reported prioritizing actions to expand and improve parental leave, and other forms of leave, for example to care for a sick or disabled family member. Shared parental leave, especially if a non-transferable portion of it is reserved for the father, can contribute to greater involvement of men in child-rearing and a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities. Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean reported passing legislation to expand parental leave to fathers and/or to increase the length of paternity leave so as to encourage more fathers to take up parental leave.

81. Even for workers with access to maternity, paternity and parental leave, the lack of affordable, quality childcare services continues to compromise the return to paid

<sup>75</sup> Paweł Gmyrek, Janine Berg and David Bescond, *Generative AI and Jobs: A Global Analysis of Potential Effects on Job Quantity and Quality*, ILO Working Paper, No. 96 (Geneva, ILO, 2023).

<sup>76</sup> Judy Wajcman, Erin Young and Anna Fitzmaurice, "The digital revolution: implications for gender equality and women's rights 25 years after Beijing", Discussion Paper, No. 36 (New York, UN-Women, 2020).

<sup>77</sup> Jerome De Henau, *Costs and Benefits of Investing in Transformative Care Policy Packages: A Macrosimulation Study in 82 Countries*, ILO Working Paper, No. 55 (Geneva, 2022).

work. In 2021, only 23 countries provided statutory childcare services for children aged 2 and younger that were free and universal, mostly in Europe and Central Asia; 64 offered such services for children aged 3 and older.<sup>78</sup> That situation results in what amounts to an average 4.2-year global gap between the end of statutory childcare-related leaves and the starting age of free universal early childhood education.<sup>79</sup> In order to address this gap, 68 per cent of countries reported having prioritized the expansion of childcare services or enacted policies to make existing services more affordable. Over 80 per cent of countries in Central and Southern Asia, Europe and Northern America, and Northern Africa and Western Asia reported action on childcare services. In sub-Saharan Africa, 47 per cent of the countries reported having prioritized the issue.

82. Eldercare is an increasingly urgent gender equality issue in rapidly ageing societies. Women, who tend to live longer, provide the bulk of unpaid care for ageing spouses, and depend more on eldercare systems since they spend more of their lives in ill health or with a disability.<sup>80</sup> Globally, 66 per cent of countries reported having prioritized the expansion of support for eldercare, long-term care and disability care – a significant increase compared with 2019, when 46 per cent reported this as a priority. Several countries introduced measures to increase the availability of centre-based care for older persons, including at the community level. Along with new family leave policies, promising examples include the provision of cash-for-care payments to compensate family members with care responsibilities.

83. Some 32 per cent of States reported having implemented measures to promote decent work for paid care workers, up from 25 per cent in 2019. Specific measures include passing legislation to recognize the rights of care workers, including domestic and migrant workers, to collective bargaining, a minimum wage, weekly and annual leave, and a safe working environment free of violence and harassment. By September 2024, a total of 38 countries had ratified the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of ILO. Several countries enacted legislation to ensure overtime pay, a night shift differential, labour inspections and pay transparency.

84. The lessons learned during the recovery from the pandemic also strengthened calls to put care at the centre of new development models that prioritize the well-being of people and planet. In 2022, member States from across Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Buenos Aires Commitment,<sup>81</sup> which outlines an ambitious road map to build caring societies, in which care is recognized as a universal right and a public good, with gender equality at the centre. In parallel, countries have spearheaded the development of national care systems or strategies, which prioritize both the rights of care-dependent populations and of paid and unpaid caregivers (see box IV).

#### Box IV

##### **Advancing towards integrated national care systems**

At least 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are making strides in the implementation of integrated national care systems. The integrated national care system in Uruguay (*sistema nacional integrado de cuidados*) is the most advanced in the region. Created in 2015 following

<sup>78</sup> ILO, “ILO Global Care Policy Portal”. Accessed 19 June 2024, available at <https://webapps.ilo.org/globalcare>.

<sup>79</sup> ILO, “The benefits of investing in transformative childcare policy packages towards gender equality and social justice”, ILO brief, October 2023.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Lloyd-Sherlock, “Long-term care for older people: a new global gender priority”, Policy Brief, No. 9 (New York, UN-Women, 2017).

<sup>81</sup> *Compromiso de Buenos Aires* (United Nations publication, 2023).



an extensive process of social dialogue, the system enshrines care as a universal right and gender equality as a cross-cutting principle. Among the most significant achievements are the universalization of care services for children aged 3 and above, the development of care services for older and disabled people, the professionalization of caregivers through training, the regulation of working conditions and the formalization of caregivers.

Interest in other regions has also been growing. In sub-Saharan Africa, Cabo Verde launched its national care system in 2017, comprising childcare and long-term care. It includes professional training for caregivers in poor and vulnerable households, the creation of a national care service network and policies to encourage the redistribution of unpaid care work. Kenya established its national care policy in 2023 to strengthen efforts to redistribute and reduce care work through gender-responsive public services and to reward care and domestic work through decent jobs and social protection.

In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Singapore has spearheaded a strategy for expanding access to childcare and eldercare while promoting interaction between seniors and children in a rapidly ageing society. They have co-located senior care and childcare facilities in new housing developments; expanded active ageing centres to promote healthy ageing and social connectedness; provided subsidized mobility devices and home retrofitting to enable older people to remain in their homes as long as they wish; and improved urban infrastructure that combines physical accessibility with urban greening.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2024: Harnessing Social Protection for Gender Equality, Resilience and Transformation* (New York, 2024).

(c) *Improving the quality of women's employment, especially in informal and rural economies*

85. In response to the survey, 34 per cent of countries reported having implemented measures to support the transition from informal to formal work, including legal and policy measures that were focused on women in informal employment. Specific measures included the extension of labour rights and social protection benefits to previously ineligible informal workers (see box V). Other measures were focused on incentives for informal entrepreneurs to register their businesses, which opens opportunities for formal financing through private banking or public lending facilities, as well as the extension of social protection to workers.

**Box V**

**Advancing decent work for domestic workers and migrant workers**

The exclusion from labour rights and social protection is common among domestic workers – one of the most feminized categories among the informally employed. In 2020, just under half of the world's domestic workers (49.9 per cent) were legally entitled to at least one social protection benefit and only 6 per cent were comprehensively covered for the nine contingencies laid out in Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) of the International Labour Organization, a proportion that is far below the global average for all women and men of working age (27 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively).<sup>a</sup> In many contexts,

domestic workers are also migrants, which can further limit their access to legal rights and social protection.

The Government of Burundi implemented several measures to promote the rights of women working in the informal sector. Act No. 1/11 of 24 November 2020 revised the Labour Code of Burundi to apply to the informal sector, including the integration of domestic workers, apprentices and trainees, as well the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, health and safety at work and the prohibition of child labour. Furthermore, the Government passed legislation to extend access to pension, healthcare and social protection to informal workers, including domestic workers. Recognizing the importance of extending protection to the increasing number of Burundian migrant workers in Gulf States, the Government negotiated and signed agreements aimed at protecting Burundian women migrant workers so as to ensure that workers' rights are protected in destination countries and to prevent human trafficking.

In Mexico, federal laws were amended to include domestic workers under mandatory social protection coverage in 2019. The new provisions entered into force in October 2022, facilitating the inclusion of domestic workers with multiple employers and clearly stipulating the exclusive responsibility of employers for the registration and payment of contributions. Between 2020 and 2024, the pilot programme provided 62,831 domestic workers, including 42,506 women, with access to health insurance, maternity protection, childcare services, disability, pension and unemployment benefits. Even so, there is still a long way to go to ensure that all 2.4 million domestic workers in Mexico enjoy full access to social security.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2024*.

86. Recognizing the need to improve access to credit for women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses, 61 per cent of countries reported having implemented measures to promote women's financial inclusion and access to credit. The greatest focus on improving financial inclusion was in Central and Southern Asia, where over 90 per cent of countries reported taking action, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, at a little over 80 per cent, and Latin America and the Caribbean, at more than 70 per cent. Specific State actions include: introducing measures to facilitate access to benefits and loans for self-employed women and those in the broader informal sector; digital financial literacy programmes for self-employed women and women-owned businesses; expanding financial inclusion for rural women by empowering them and providing resources to community-based initiatives; and introducing alternative identification documents, including the use of mobile phone numbers as digital identification to undertake and track financial transactions. Despite these efforts, barriers to women's financial inclusion remain. In 2021, women in developing economies were 8 per cent less likely than men to have an account at a formal financial institution. However, the growth of mobile money accounts has created new opportunities to better serve those traditionally excluded: in some countries, women are more likely than men to have a mobile money account, which might be an indicator of a narrowing gender gap.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and others, *The Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2022).

*(d) Limited action on gender-responsive macroeconomic policies*

87. The fragility of the global economy and the dysfunctional global financial architecture<sup>83</sup> have hampered the ability of States, especially low- and middle-income countries, to mobilize adequate resources in order to implement policies to protect people from the fallout of the multiple crises that are affecting the world at the time of writing. The crisis of unsustainable debt means that 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest payments on debt than on either education or health, and more than half of developing countries allocate at least 8 per cent of government revenues to interest payments, a figure that has doubled over the past decade.<sup>84</sup> Rising interest rates across the globe are increasing the debt burden on low-income countries, making it harder for countries to meet their human rights and gender equality commitments.

88. In the context of ongoing economic uncertainty, 15 per cent of countries reported that the debt crisis had hampered their ability to implement the Platform for Action. Furthermore, 55 per cent of countries reported having introduced austerity and other fiscal consolidated measures in order to address public deficits, revitalize the economy and gain financial market confidence. There is scant evidence of the effectiveness of such measures to achieve their stated goals and growing evidence that such measures can further exacerbate inequalities, including gender inequalities.<sup>85</sup> Specific measures implemented by countries include contractionary fiscal policies, cuts in public expenditure, selective tax hikes, wage cuts, pension reforms and reductions in labour protection. Several countries reported reverting to contractionary monetary policies after the expansion of monetary policies during the early years of the pandemic.

89. Austerity measures disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and undermine the realization of economic and social rights. Women, children, minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons, young persons and the poor face diminished job opportunities and a lack of access to social welfare programmes owing to such measures.<sup>86</sup> Yet only 6 per cent of countries reported undertaking an assessment of the impact of austerity and fiscal consolidation measures prior to their planning, design and implementation, which highlights the fact that implementing gender-responsive macroeconomic policies remains an area requiring urgent attention.

## **D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

90. The successive economic crises have had a gender-differentiated impact on employment and economic rights and on well-being. Growth prospects in many developing countries have also deteriorated amid rising external borrowing costs, which continue to limit resources for policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Looking ahead, efforts need to be made to ensure that an analysis of the gendered impact of fiscal stimulus and economic recovery efforts are incorporated into the planning, design and implementation of such measures. Three priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts, as set out below.

<sup>83</sup> United Nations, “Global financial architecture has failed mission to provide developing countries with safety net, Secretary-General tells summit, calling for urgent reforms”, 22 June 2023.

<sup>84</sup> UNCTAD, *A World of Debt*.

<sup>85</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2024: Harnessing Social Protection for Gender Equality, Resilience and Transformation* (New York, 2024).

<sup>86</sup> UN-Women and ILO, “How to assess fiscal stimulus packages from a gender equality perspective”, March 2021.

*Ensure a focus on gender equality, care and decent work for women in the transition to a low-carbon economy and in the context of technological change, particularly the growth of artificial intelligence*

91. The “just transition” to a low-carbon economy provides an opportunity to advance women’s economic justice and equality.<sup>87</sup> Much needed transformation in food and energy systems, for example, could be harnessed to address long-standing gender gaps in jobs and livelihoods, while improving women’s working conditions. Gender-responsive active labour market policies along with enhanced access to economic resources and climate-smart technologies are needed to ensure that women can take advantage of new job opportunities in green, blue and care economies. In addition, investments in the care economy could drive the creation of new green decent jobs and the formalization of existing ones by promoting labour rights and social protection for domestic workers, as well as for community health, childcare and long-term care providers.

92. As articulated in the Global Digital Compact, addressing the impact of technological change on women’s work will require bold action from the global community. Such action should include policies that promote gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including in education (see sect. III), ensure equal access to digital public infrastructure, support women entrepreneurs in the technology sector, and enhance digital literacy and artificial intelligence-specific skills among women, particularly those from marginalized groups. These actions are integral to enabling the key transition in relation digital connectivity and to driving progress across all the Goals (see [E/2024/52](#)). Measures to prevent the informalization of formal jobs as a result of austerity measures and technological change are also necessary.

*Prioritize public investments to develop and expand integrated care systems, including care leave policies, the provision of universal care services across the life course and the proper recognition and reward of paid caregivers*

93. An urgent priority is the need to step up investments in integrated care systems, including the provision of quality, affordable and accessible care services and the implementation of policies that recognize, reduce and redistribute women’s and girls’ unpaid care and domestic work, and that represent and reward paid care workers. Such investments have important economic multiplier effects by contributing to job creation and raising aggregate demand.<sup>88</sup>

94. The key obstacle to expanding access to care services is the lack of fiscal space, necessitating a rethink of monetary and fiscal policies. Progressive taxation also plays a role in increasing government revenue, promoting equality and creating the fiscal space needed to fund care services and gender equality initiatives and to alleviate women’s poverty.

*Improve the quality and conditions of women’s work, through labour rights and entitlements for informal workers and efforts to reduce labour market segregation and close the gender pay gap*

95. Ensuring basic labour rights and access to social protection for 771 million women in informal employment who make significant contributions to families, communities and economies remains a top priority. Efforts to support transitions from the informal to the formal economy should combine legal recognition, registration

<sup>87</sup> Turquet and others, *Feminist Climate Justice*.

<sup>88</sup> UN-Women and ILO, *A Guide to Public Investments in the Care Economy: Estimating Care Deficits, Investment Costs and Economic Returns* (New York and Geneva, 2024).

and taxation with access to infrastructure and social protection, and should be developed in close consultation with organizations to ensure their responsiveness to the diverse needs of women workers, including those in paid domestic work, home-based work, street and market trading, and small-scale farming.

96. Promoting women's access to and control over key resources such as land, water, technology, services and finance, and opportunities for education, extension and training, group participation and networks is particularly critical in order to strengthen rural livelihoods and close the gender gap in agricultural productivity.<sup>89</sup>

97. Reducing occupational segregation and achieving equal pay for work of equal value requires overcoming entrenched social norms and market mechanisms that consistently devalue work that is done disproportionately by women.<sup>90</sup> In addition, pay transparency, along with efforts to ensure minimum wage-setting mechanisms and collective pay, as well as the focusing of attention on gender equality, are needed to accelerate progress on stubbornly persistent gender pay gaps.

98. The promotion of full employment, decent jobs and adequate wages for both women and men should be an explicit goal of monetary and fiscal policies.

### III. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

#### Key messages

- In the past five years, multiple crises have stalled progress on eradicating extreme poverty, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls. To meet the goal of eradicating poverty by 2030, the rate of progress would need to be 26 times faster than the average rate over the period 2019 to 2024.
- Education is the area that has seen the greatest improvement in the situation of women and girls since 1995. At the time of writing, 122.4 million girls are out of school, down from 124.7 million in 2015. However, girls' educational attainment continues to lag in conflict-affected countries.
- Progress on women's and girls' health has stagnated. Maternal mortality has declined since 2000, but in recent years, the global annual reduction was effectively zero. Among adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 globally, 69 per cent of new HIV infections occur in girls.
- States have progressed actions in several areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:
  - (a) 79 per cent of States reported efforts to strengthen routine social protection systems, up from 70 per cent in 2019. Innovation in recent years have included new gender-responsive social protection policies and programmes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shocks and crises. However, significant gender gaps in access to social protection persist globally, as coverage for women and girls in low-income countries is lagging behind.

<sup>89</sup> FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.

<sup>90</sup> ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality*.

- (b) 70 per cent of States reported efforts to increase women's and girls' access to skills and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and digital skills, up from 59 per cent in 2019. However, pockets of extreme exclusion and significant barriers to translating educational gains into successful school-to-work transitions persist.
- (c) 76 per cent of States reported action to promote access to health services for women and girls through the expansion of universal health coverage and public health services, up from 67 per cent in 2019. However, many women continue to struggle to gain access to the health services they need as a result of financial and geographical barriers, as well as stigma and stereotypes, particularly against women and girls from marginalized groups.

## A. Introduction

99. For women and girls, poverty and vulnerability are inseparable from the inequalities that shape their everyday lives. Persistent inequalities in access to decent work and economic resources, restricted agency and decision-making power, disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work and the pervasiveness of violence against women and girls intensify poverty risks across the life course and in the face of shocks. Rising inequalities within and among countries heighten vulnerability and diminish the capacities of countries, communities, households and individuals to act collectively in the face of crises, with the most devastating effects being borne by those who are already furthest behind. For women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, deficits in access to income, education, healthcare, housing and other public services often cluster and compound one another. Conversely, investing in girls' and women's education and gender-responsive social protection are key transitions for catalysing progress across multiple Goals ([E/2024/52](#)).

100. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of robust social protection, health and education systems in mitigating the adverse consequences of shocks. Countries with more comprehensive and more gender-responsive public services and social protection systems were generally better able to respond to women's multidimensional needs and prevent increases in poverty.<sup>91</sup>

101. Conflict, displacement and the climate emergency are creating new risks for women and girls and are putting additional strain on already fragile health, education and social protection systems. The pushback against sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as against girls' education, in some contexts, challenges long-standing global agreements and disregards well-established knowledge on what works to safeguard the health and well-being of women and girls ([A/HRC/56/51](#)). The rapid advance of digitalization in education, health and social protection systems creates new opportunities for women and girls, including with respect to access to information about their sexual and reproductive health and rights in a safe and confidential way.<sup>92</sup> However, a sizeable gender digital divide prevents women and

<sup>91</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>92</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024: Gender Report – Technology on Her Terms* (Paris, 2024).

girls from taking full advantage of these opportunities and new gender-specific risks must be carefully managed.

102. Building on the Platform for Action, recent years have seen further normative advances in the areas of poverty eradication, social protection and social services. In 2022, at its sixty-sixth session, the Commission on the Status of Women recognized that equal access to social protection was a lever for strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk reduction (E/2022/27, chap. I, sect. A). The potential of digital technologies for promoting access to social protection and public services was highlighted at the sixty-seventh session of the Commission, in 2023, alongside concerns that women's and girls' limited access to education, digital literacy and skills might exacerbate gender gaps in social protection coverage (E/2023/27, chap. I, sect. A). Most recently, at its sixty-eighth session, in 2024, the Commission called upon Member States to expand fiscal space and strengthen institutions to end women's poverty, including through investments in inclusive, comprehensive and universal social protection systems and public services (E/2024/27, chap. I, sect. A).

103. In its general recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urged Member States to ensure equal access of Indigenous women and girls to culturally appropriate and acceptable health services and education at all levels, while the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has examined poverty and socioeconomic inequality as outcomes of systemic failures that violate multiple human rights of women and girls, as well as threats and risks posed to the sexual and reproductive health and autonomy of women and girls, before and during crises, urging Member States to invest in response and recovery (A/HRC/47/38).

## B. Global and regional trends

*In the past five years, multiple crises have stalled progress on eradicating extreme poverty, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls*

104. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme poverty – defined as the proportion of people living on less than \$2.15 per person per day<sup>93</sup> – had declined significantly, even if the pace of reduction was slowing. Extreme poverty decreased from 10.9 per cent of households globally in 2015 to 9.6 per cent in 2019. For women and girls, the extreme poverty rate fell from 11.4 per cent to 10.1 per cent.<sup>94</sup> The pandemic derailed this progress, with extreme poverty rising to 10.7 per cent in 2020 for all households and to 11.1 per cent for women and girls. Extreme poverty has reduced since the pandemic, however the slow and uneven recovery is evident in the fact that 9.4 per cent of the world's population remained in extreme poverty in 2024.

105. Persistent gender gaps in poverty remain, with 9.8 per cent of women and girls living in households in extreme poverty, compared to just 9.1 per cent of men and boys (see figure III). That gap translates into 24.3 million more poor females than males.<sup>95</sup> The regions with the highest proportions of women and girls living in poverty were sub-Saharan Africa (37.6 per cent), Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (19.8 per cent), and Central and Southern Asia (10.5 per cent). Using higher international poverty lines of poverty (less than \$3.65 per day) and moderate poverty

<sup>93</sup> World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform, available at <https://pip.worldbank.org/home> (accessed 2024). Many analysts see this line as far too low to enable an adequate standard of living, see the report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, A/HRC/44/40.

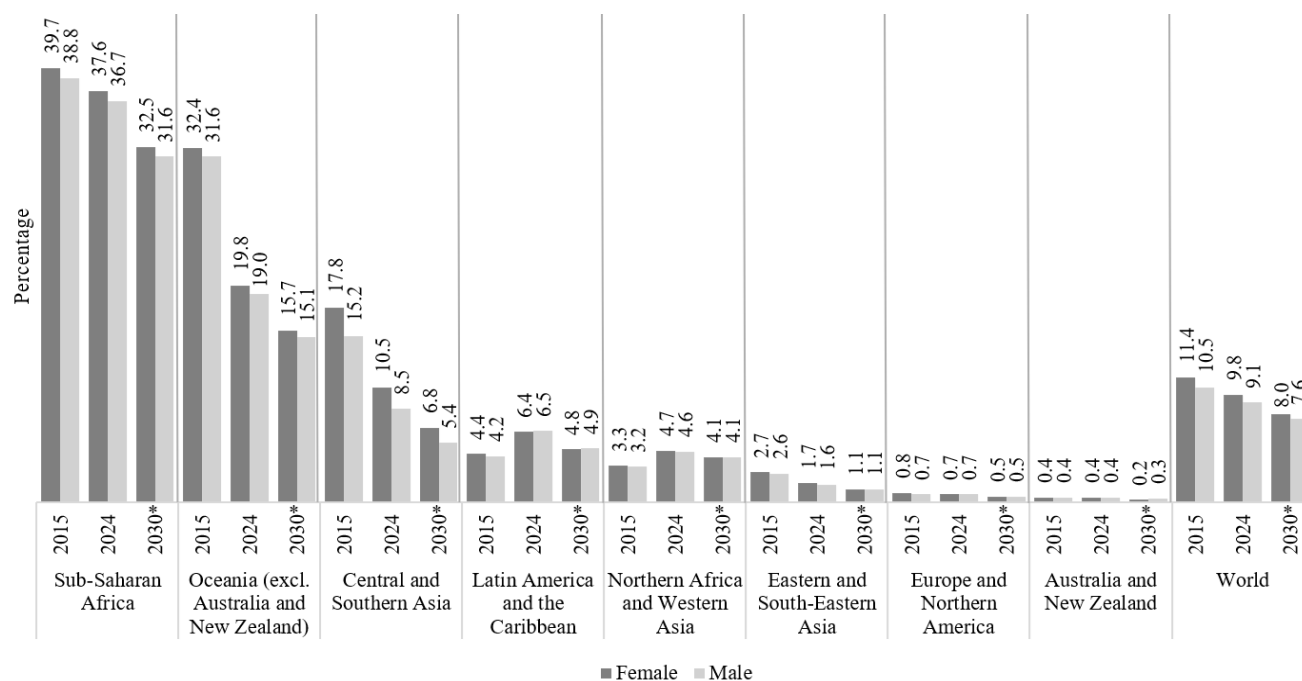
<sup>94</sup> Pirzadeh and others, *Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty, Productivity and Food Insecurity*.

<sup>95</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

(less than \$6.85 per day) raises the proportions to 25.4 per cent and 47.5 per cent, respectively, for women, and 24.7 per cent and 46.8 per cent, respectively, for men.<sup>96</sup> While poverty rates at the \$2.15 line are low in Europe and Northern America and in Australia and New Zealand, countries in these regions often use relative income poverty thresholds to measure poverty. For the European Union, such data show that the poverty risk is particularly high among women, young adults, people with limited education and unemployed persons.<sup>97</sup>

Figure III

**Female and male extreme poverty rates based on the \$2.15 international poverty line, 2015–2030 (projections)**



Source: UN-Women and Frederick S. Pardee Centre for International Futures calculations based on the latter's International Futures Platform 2023.

Note: \* indicates estimates are projections.

106. Gender gaps in poverty are evident at all stages of life but are highest for those between the ages of 25 and 34, when gender disparities in paid work and care responsibilities for small children heighten women's poverty risks. Women in this age group are 24 per cent more likely to live in poor households than men.<sup>98</sup>

107. If current trends persist, it is projected that by 2030, 340 million women and girls globally will still live in extreme poverty. However, conflict and the rapidly advancing climate crisis may worsen these projections. Currently, women and girls in extremely fragile contexts are 7.7 times more likely to live in households below the \$2.15 poverty line than those in non-fragile contexts. Under a worst-case climate scenario, up to 158.3 million additional women and girls could be pushed into poverty by 2050 as a direct result of climate change, surpassing the number of men and boys

<sup>96</sup> Pirzadeh and others, *Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty, Productivity and Food Insecurity*.

<sup>97</sup> Eurostat, "Living conditions in Europe: poverty and social exclusion", June 2024.

<sup>98</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2023*.

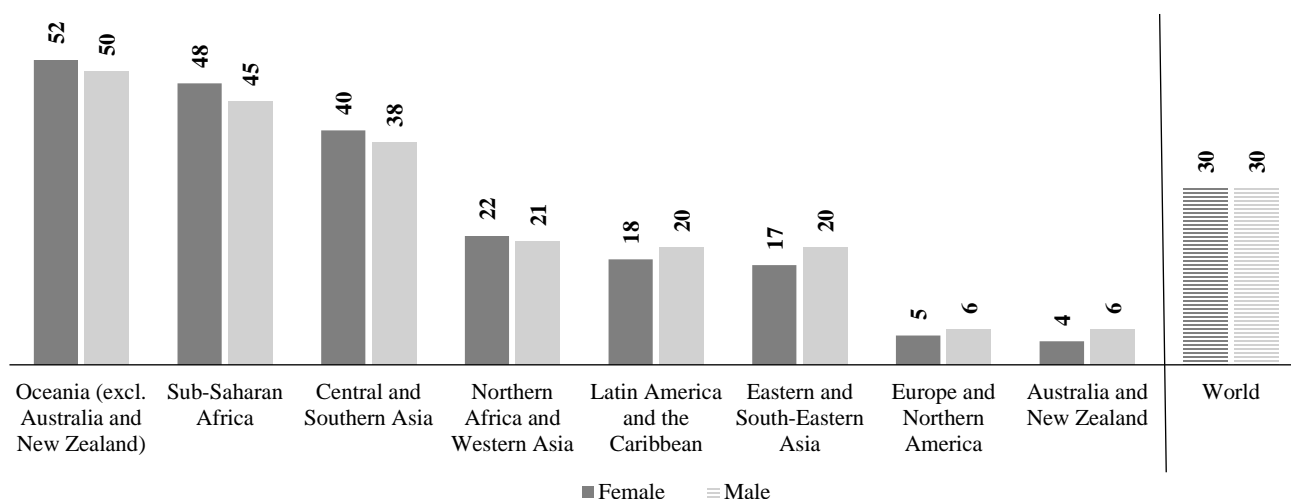


by 16 million. The number of food-insecure women and girls could rise by as much as 236 million, compared with an additional 131 million men and boys.<sup>99</sup>

*Education is the area in which the situation of women and girls has improved the most since 1995. However, pockets of extreme exclusion and significant barriers to translating educational gains into successful school-to-work transitions persist*

108. At the time of writing, 122.4 million girls are out of school, down from 124.7 million in 2015.<sup>100</sup> Gender gaps in enrolment have closed at all levels of education globally, although pockets of extreme exclusion for girls persist in some countries. While upper-secondary disparities persist in some regions, reverse gender gaps appear in others, such as in Latin America and the Caribbean or Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (see figure IV). Girls from the poorest households are most disadvantaged in all regions.<sup>101</sup> Social norms regarding unpaid care and domestic work and child, early and forced marriage limit the chances that girls will be enrolled in, regularly attend or complete their schooling, particularly upper secondary education.<sup>102</sup>

Figure IV  
Upper secondary out-of-school rates, by sex, 2023 (percentage)



Source: UN-Women calculations based on UNESCO, “Out-of-school rate”, Education Estimates Database (accessed November 2024).

109. There has also been progress in equalizing learning outcomes among girls and boys, particularly when it comes to minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, girls outperform boys when it comes to reading proficiency at the end of lower secondary education globally. Gender gaps in adult literacy rates are also closing, with women accounting for 56 per cent of illiterate youth compared to 63 per cent of illiterate adults in 2020. In science and mathematics, there is near parity at average levels of learning achievement, but boys continue to have a significant advantage over girls at the higher levels of achievement. While it is too early to assess the lasting impact of school closures during the pandemic on learning outcomes, emerging evidence suggests a decline in learning progress, with greater losses among

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>101</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024*.

<sup>102</sup> Quentin Wodon and others, *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

<sup>103</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024*.

students who faced relatively longer closures as well as among migrant children and other groups that already faced educational disadvantages prior to the pandemic.<sup>104</sup>

110. Huge disparities exist in the prevalence of digital skills between youth in high-income countries (with 57 per cent of youth possessing such skills), compared to upper-middle (33 per cent), lower-middle (14 per cent), and low-income countries (1 per cent). While gender gaps in programming skills are smaller among young women and men than among adults, the disparity remains large, including in high-income countries. Research finds that girls' confidence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects is harmed early, which feeds into diverging educational trajectories and subject choices that drive occupational segregation (see sect. II). Globally, only about 15 per cent of young women choose science, technology, engineering and mathematics over other courses, compared with 35 per cent of men; and just over a third of graduates in those subjects are women.<sup>105</sup>

*Despite overall positive global trends in poverty reduction, education and health since 1995, progress has slowed or reversed in recent years against the backdrop of the pandemic and other cascading crises*

111. Over the past 30 years, there has been important progress on key health outcomes for women and girls. Globally, life expectancy has continuously increased, with women outliving men in all regions. There have been improvements on several indicators regarding women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, although stark gaps remain across countries, regions and different groups of women. Maternal mortality declined from 339 deaths to 223 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2000 and 2020, alongside improved access to services.<sup>106</sup> In 2023, 86 per cent of births were attended by a skilled birth attendant, compared with 75 per cent in 2010 and 61 per cent in 2000.<sup>107</sup> Central and Southern Asia achieved the greatest overall reduction in maternal mortality, followed by Northern Africa and Western Asia (see figure V). In recent years, however, the global annual reduction in maternal mortality was effectively zero, and reversals have been noted in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Europe and Northern America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Maciej Jakubowski, Tomasz Gajderowicz and Harry Anthony, *COVID-19, School Closures, and Student Learning Outcomes: New Global Evidence from PISA*, IZA Discussion Paper, No. 16731 (Bonn, IZA Institute of Labour Economics, 2024).

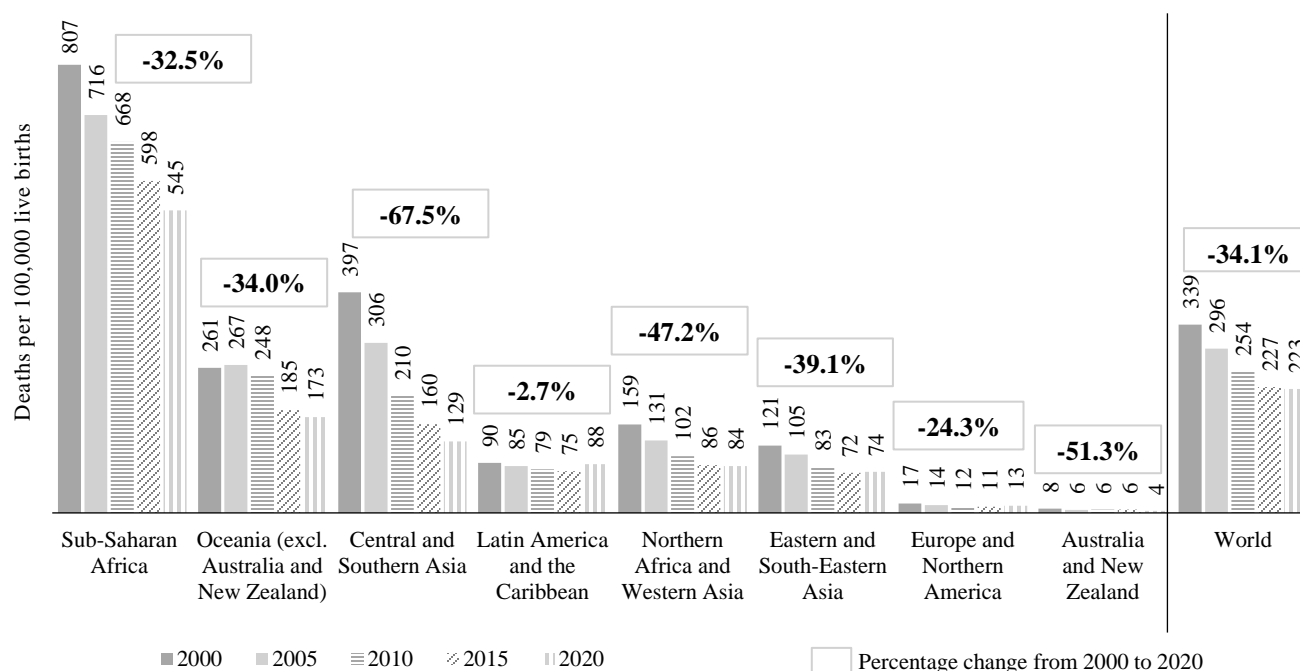
<sup>105</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024*.

<sup>106</sup> WHO, *Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2020: Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division* (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>107</sup> See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/delivery-care/>.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of World Population 2023: 8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities – The Case of Rights and Choices* (New York, 2023).

Figure V

**Maternal mortality ratio, 2000–2020 (deaths per 100,000 live births)**

Source: UN-Women calculation based on WHO, “Trend in MMR”, Maternal Mortality: Levels and Trends 2000 to 2020 database (accessed November 2024).

112. The global trend towards lower fertility and later childbearing has continued, reflecting greater reproductive choice (E/CN.9/2024/2). In 2023, the global fertility rate was 2.3 births per woman, down from 2.9 in the mid-1990s.<sup>109</sup> Births among adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years have declined by about a third, from 64 births per 1,000 adolescent girls in 2000 to 41 in 2024.<sup>110</sup> In 2024, 77 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 had their family planning needs met with modern methods, up from 71 per cent in 1995, with the most significant increases registered in sub-Saharan Africa, where coverage doubled.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, significant gaps remain between desired and realized fertility. In high-fertility contexts, women often report a preference for smaller family sizes than they achieve, which reflects a significant unmet need for family planning. In low-fertility contexts, in turn, women often state a preference for larger family sizes than they actually achieve, and more women remain involuntarily childless, which may be influenced by such factors as widespread economic uncertainty, rigid gender norms regarding paid employment and unpaid care, and inadequate family-friendly policies.<sup>112</sup>

113. In 2023, fewer people acquired HIV than at any point since the mid-1990s, with the greatest decline registered in sub-Saharan Africa. With more people than ever receiving life-saving antiretroviral treatment, AIDS-related deaths are at their lowest level since the peak in 2004. However, during the past 10 years, the number of new

<sup>109</sup> UNFPA, Population Data Portal, available at <https://pdp.unfpa.org/> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>110</sup> UN-Women calculations based on World Bank, World Development Indicators. Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>111</sup> United Nations, “Unmet need for family planning: any modern method (number)”, Data Portal. Available at <https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/12/locations/900/start/2023/end/2023/metadate/metadateindicators?df=13d7bcc6-5da9-4f85-aff0-a114bfe1c4b6v> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>112</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2023*.

infections among women and girls (aged 15 years and older) has increased in the Middle East and Northern Africa and remained largely unchanged in Latin America.<sup>113</sup> At particular risk of HIV are adolescents and young people, who make up an increasing proportion of people living with HIV worldwide.<sup>114</sup> Among adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 globally, 69 per cent of new HIV infections occur in girls.<sup>115</sup> Across 22 sub-Saharan African countries, HIV incidence among adolescent girls and young women is three times that among adolescent boys and young men. However, only 25 per cent of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in Eastern and Southern Africa – the epicentre of the HIV epidemic – have tested for HIV in the past year.<sup>116</sup>

*Marginalized women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty and exclusion from social protection and public services*

114. Women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination face heightened risks of poverty and violence, and yet are often the most excluded from access to social protection and public services. Data on multidimensional poverty (incorporating health, education and standard of living) show striking disparities by gender, race and ethnicity. For example, ethnic minorities in Eastern Asia and the Pacific show higher levels of multidimensional poverty, while Indigenous Peoples are among the most multidimensionally deprived across most Latin American countries.<sup>117</sup> Globally, 84 per cent of multidimensionally poor people live in rural areas,<sup>118</sup> where access to services can be especially constrained, and two thirds of multidimensionally poor people live in households where no woman or girl has completed at least six years of schooling.<sup>119</sup> Exclusion from education and employment can be especially pronounced for young women with disabilities, who are significantly more likely to be not in employment, education or training than both young men with disabilities and young women without disabilities.<sup>120</sup> The escalation of armed conflict around the world will further entrench disparities.

115. Significant inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights also persist on the basis of race and ethnicity, refugee and migration status, education, socioeconomic status, rural versus urban location and other markers.<sup>121</sup> For example, owing to discrimination and exclusion across countries, Indigenous women are less likely to benefit from antenatal care, less likely to give birth under the care of a skilled birth attendant, more likely to give birth as an adolescent, and significantly more likely to die of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>122</sup> The likelihood of acquiring HIV is also heightened among groups that face stigma and criminalization; the risk of contracting HIV is 9 times higher for sex workers and 20 times higher for

<sup>113</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *The Urgency of Now: AIDS at a Crossroads* (Geneva, 2024). See also UNAIDS, AIDSinfo (epidemic and response: trend of new HIV infections). Available at <https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>114</sup> See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/hivaids/adolescents-young-people/>.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021: unmasking disparities by ethnicity, caste and gender”, 2021.

<sup>118</sup> UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023: unstacking global poverty – data for high impact action”, 2023.

<sup>119</sup> UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021”.

<sup>120</sup> ILO, “New ILO database highlights labour market challenges of persons with disabilities”, 13 June 2022.

<sup>121</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2024: Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope – Ending Inequalities in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* (New York, 2024).

<sup>122</sup> UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, “Indigenous women’s maternal health and maternal mortality”, 2018.

transgender women than for the wider adult population globally, while those groups also have lower coverage for antiretroviral therapy and worse treatment outcomes.<sup>123</sup>

*Lack of adequate financing remains a major barrier to accelerating progress on poverty eradication, health and education for women and girls in all their diversity*

116. After a temporary expansion in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most governments scaled back public spending in 2021. Stifling debt burdens severely constrain the ability of low- and middle-income countries to invest in more and better social protection and public services for women and girls. The need to service debt has deepened fiscal austerity measures, including as part of debt restructuring and as a condition for new loans from the international financial institutions. A review of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans to 39 countries between 2020 and 2023 found that the majority were conditional on the reduction of public wage bills or increases in regressive taxes. When public spending is stretched thin, women lose their jobs first, eat least and last, and act as shock absorbers by taking on additional unpaid care work to sustain their families and communities.<sup>124</sup>

### C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

117. The data included in national reports show that policy and programmatic trends in implementation have emerged in three areas: (a) strengthening women's access to gender- and age-responsive social protection systems to end women's poverty and realize their rights; (b) ensuring quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls; and (c) ensuring women's access to affordable, good quality health services.

#### (a) *Strengthening women's access to gender- and age-responsive social protection systems to end women's poverty and realize their rights*

118. The COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of social protection for alleviating and preventing poverty and hardship;<sup>125</sup> many countries, even those with limited social protection coverage, made significant efforts to reach excluded populations. About two thirds of Member States reported adopting gender-responsive innovations in their social protection response to the pandemic. A review of efforts in this area points to five key lessons on integrating gender into large-scale shock responses (see box VI). Member States also reported on the increasing use of digital tools to promote women's financial inclusion and access to social protection. Overall, however, the attention paid to gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities remained inadequate. Of over 3,000 social protection and labour market measures adopted by 226 countries and territories in response to the pandemic, only 12 per cent targeted women's economic security and only 7 per cent provided support for rising unpaid care demands.<sup>126</sup> An analysis of social protection measures adopted in response to the 2022–2023 cost-of-living crisis revealed similarly sobering results.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> UNAIDS, *The Urgency of Now*.

<sup>124</sup> United Nations, Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2023: Financing Sustainable Transformations* (New York, 2023).

<sup>125</sup> Clare O'Brien and others, *Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Synthesis Report* (Oxford, Oxford Policy Management, 2018).

<sup>126</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>127</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*.

## Box VI

**Lessons from gender innovations in the COVID-19 social protection response**

Gender innovations during the pandemic show that gender design features can be integrated into shock-responsive social protection, which is critical given the rise in the number of conflicts and climate disasters. Five key lessons emerge from this experience:

- Horizontal expansion that is inclusive of women: when extending coverage (horizontal expansion), it is crucial to include demographic and/or occupational groups where women are overrepresented. During the pandemic, informal workers, including domestic workers, street vendors and market vendors, many of whom are women, were hit hardest by job and income losses. In response, at least 15 low- and middle-income countries – including Argentina, Bangladesh, Liberia and Mozambique – extended emergency social protection to informal workers, with special provisions for women.
- Gender-responsive benefit top-ups: benefit top-ups (vertical expansion) can be designed to reduce gender disparities. When selecting programmes for top-ups, the gender composition of beneficiaries should be assessed to ensure that women benefit equally. In addition, giving extra benefits to women can address pre-existing gender inequalities. For instance, an emergency assistance programme in Brazil (Auxílio Emergencial), was aimed at informal workers and provided extra benefits to single mothers, given their double role as income providers and caregivers.
- Linking cash to services: coordinating social protection with services can better support women's needs during emergencies. The risks women and girls face during shocks are multifaceted, including income insecurity, increased violence against women and girls and rising unpaid care demands. During the COVID-19 crisis, 15 countries integrated social protection with services to prevent and respond to violence against women, including through cash transfers, rental assistance, in-kind support and a combination of employment or entrepreneurship programmes aimed at survivors of violence.
- Relaxing eligibility and conditionalities: broader targeting criteria (geographical, categorical or targeting-out) and relaxed conditionalities during the pandemic benefited women and other marginalized groups. During emergencies, these approaches, which allow self-selection and/or suspend educational or work conditionalities, can improve inclusivity, diminish administrative costs and improve timeliness.
- Harnessing digital technologies to facilitate registration and speed up benefit disbursement and receipt: for digital tools to work for women, they must be accompanied by investments in digital public infrastructure and improved connectivity and literacy, with particular attention to the needs of marginalized groups. Strengthening women's access to, knowledge and use of digital technology is an important part of that process.

*Source: Based on UN-Women and UNDP, Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil (2022).*

119. In addition to the immediate shock response, over the past five years, 78 per cent of Member States reported efforts to strengthen routine social protection systems, including floors, up from 70 per cent in 2019. Recent data confirm that significant progress has been made in this area. In 2023, for the first time, more than half of the global population (52.4 per cent) was covered by at least one social protection benefit (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 1.3.1), marking an increase of nearly 10 percentage points since 2015.<sup>128</sup> However, the proportion of women who benefit from such coverage (50.1 per cent) continues to lag behind the proportion of men who benefit (54.6 per cent), which translates into 2 billion women and 1.8 billion men without access to any form of social protection.<sup>129</sup> While high-income countries have edged closer to universal coverage and middle-income countries have made important strides in closing gaps, coverage in low-income countries was below 10 per cent, with little progress since 2015. Coverage is lowest in sub-Saharan Africa, while gender gaps are widest in Central and Southern Asia and narrowest in Australia and New Zealand, and in Europe and Northern America.

120. Even where women have access to social protection, benefits are often inadequate and fail to meet gender-specific rights and needs. By 2024, only 27 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men were comprehensively covered by law for all major life course contingencies,<sup>130</sup> and many national social protection systems neglect such gender-specific risks as women's and girls' disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work and their heightened exposure to violence.<sup>131</sup> To remedy these shortcomings, States reported actions across both contributory and non-contributory schemes, including child and family benefits, maternity, paternity and parental leave policies, unemployment support, sickness benefits, pensions, disability and survivors' benefits, as well as access to affordable medical care, all of which are critical to ensuring that women and girls are covered for the risks and vulnerabilities they face across the life course.

121. Some 80 per cent of countries reported having strengthened non-contributory cash transfer programmes for families with children, including child benefits or allowances and conditional or unconditional cash transfers that prioritize mothers or other caregivers as recipients. The longer-term expansion of child-related cash transfers has contributed to an increase in social protection coverage for women and girls.<sup>132</sup> In addition, some countries reported measures to increase child alimony provided by separated parents to the primary caregiver, usually mothers, who reside with the children, including subsidies for primary caregivers in cases of non-payment as well as tighter controls and better enforcement procedures to ensure that alimony obligations are fulfilled.

122. Among the respondents, 46 per cent of States reported having strengthened social protection for working-age women, including through reforms to assistance relating to unemployment, sickness and occupational injuries, and to maternity, paternity and parental leave. The extension of social protection to women in informal employment remains a key priority (see sect. II). Globally, 33 per cent of countries reported measures to strengthen social protection for working-age women, with

<sup>128</sup> ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024).

<sup>129</sup> UN-Women calculations based on ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*.

<sup>130</sup> Comprehensive legal coverage refers to the proportion of the population covered by law in respect of one of the eight areas specified in the ILO Convention No. 102 on Social Security; and ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*.

<sup>131</sup> Tara Patricia Cookson and others, "Do governments account for gender when designing their social protection systems? Findings from an analysis of national social protection strategies", *Social Policy and Administration*, vol. 58, No. 1 (June 2023).

<sup>132</sup> ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*.

particularly high shares in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (64 per cent), Oceania (55 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (44 per cent). Some countries have revised legal frameworks to allow informal self-employed workers to join tax-funded, non-contributory schemes (e.g., income support, maternity leave), or established community-based schemes (e.g., savings, pensions and health insurance); while other reported putting in place full or partial subsidies to cover informal worker contributions. Despite these efforts, exclusion remains common.<sup>133</sup> A total of 48 per cent of countries reported having implemented measures to improve social protection access for marginalized populations, including migrant and refugee women and girls.

123. Efforts to improve women's access to old-age pensions were reported by 48 per cent of countries. Some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, East and South-East Asia, and Oceania have implemented new or expanded existing non-contributory social pension schemes. Because they are not tied to employment histories or contributory capacity, social pensions play a key role in closing the gender pension gap. However, in many countries the benefit level of non-contributory pensions is too low to lift older women out of poverty. Despite significant increases in the cost-of-living over the reporting period, few countries reported having adjusted pension benefits for inflation. Reducing gender bias in contributory pension schemes and strengthening the links between contributory and non-contributory benefits therefore remains important. Countries in Europe and North America, in particular, reported measures in this area, including the introduction of pension credits for caregivers. The latest data available show that 109 countries included periods of childcare in their calculations for pension schemes in 2023,<sup>134</sup> thereby improving pension entitlements for parents, mainly mothers who are more likely to interrupt employment to care for children.

124. A positive trend is the growing recognition of the use of social protection policies and programmes to address the underlying drivers of women's poverty and economic insecurity. For instance, several countries reported having extended financial assistance and social protection support to survivors of violence against women and girls through cash transfers, unemployment benefits and rental subsidies, as well as having established interdisciplinary teams equipped to provide the comprehensive assistance needed to overcome the violence suffered. Such measures can enable women to leave violent relationships and rebuild their lives.<sup>135</sup>

(b) *Ensuring quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls*

125. Recognizing the multiplier effects of investing in girls' education, 70 per cent of States have focused action on girls' access to education, up from 61 per cent in 2019. Specifically, more than three quarters (76 per cent) of States reported having taken measures to close gaps in enrolment and completion of technical and vocational training and skills development programmes. The risk of being left behind is particularly high for girls in conflict and post-conflict settings.<sup>136</sup> At least 18 conflict-affected countries reported taking steps to increase the enrolment of girls and women at all levels, increase retention and improve learning outcomes for girls affected by conflict and crises. Gender-specific and intersectional barriers were also a focus, with countries reporting actions to ensure access for girls with disabilities, support

<sup>133</sup> Shea McClanahan and others, *Inclusive Social Insurance: Exploring Real Solutions to Reach the Self-Employed* (forthcoming).

<sup>134</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

<sup>135</sup> Tara Patricia Cookson, Lorena Fuentes and Jennifer Bitterly, "Addressing violence against women through social protection: a review of the evidence", Policy Brief, No. 26 (New York, UN-Women, 2023).

<sup>136</sup> Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, *Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict* (New York, 2021).



adolescent mothers and introduce school-based health or nutrition programmes, such as free school meals. Actions were also focused on improving educational infrastructure and protecting and supporting teachers. Finally, many countries reported steps to address learning setbacks from prolonged school closures during COVID-19, including through continued remote learning for children in remote areas and reintegration programmes for those who had dropped out of school during the pandemic. Nevertheless, concerns remain about setbacks to girls' educational outcomes owing to gender stereotypes and digital divides.

126. Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of States reported actions to prevent and address harassment, bullying and all forms of violence in educational settings. Specific actions included: adopting, enforcing and effectively communicating strategies, laws and policies that protect women and girls from all forms of violence and harassment in and around schools; establishing confidential mechanisms for reporting and addressing incidents; creating gender-responsive educational environments, with attention to physical safety and access to clean water and sanitation and menstrual hygiene management; and awareness-raising and capacity-building aimed at teachers, school psychologists or social workers, staff and students in order to support safety at school, including through the involvement of parents and civil society. Promising practices are explicitly aimed at fostering healthy and consensual relationships, as well as a broader positive culture of respect for diversity and non-discrimination in schools, which can prevent violence and discrimination from occurring in the first place.

127. Globally, 59 per cent of countries reported having taken action to eliminate gender bias in educational curricula and 53 per cent reported that they had implemented measures to improve gender equality and human rights training for teachers and educators. On both counts it marked an increase from 2019, when 55 per cent and 51 per cent of countries, respectively, reported actions in these areas (E/CN.6/2020/3). Such a positive trend is set against the backdrop of an ongoing opposition to gender equality in many contexts, which has often featured explicit criticism of education systems for promoting "gender ideology" in school curricula, along with progress on comprehensive sexuality education being challenged in numerous cases.<sup>137</sup> Alongside efforts to remove gender stereotypes in curricula and learning materials that limit the potential of girls and boys, significant progress in gender equality teacher training was observed in Central and South Asia (73 per cent), sub-Saharan Africa (59 per cent), and North Africa and Western Asia (52 per cent), particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. Of note, some countries are expanding age-appropriate sexuality education to younger students in primary schools, while broadening the comprehensive sexuality education curricula to cover relationships, emotions, positive roles and self-esteem, beyond a narrower focus on the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The latest data show that at least 83 countries require the provision of comprehensive sexuality education in primary schools.<sup>138</sup>

128. Some 76 per cent of States reported actions to improve access for women and girls to technical and vocational education and training, which can offer a critical pathway towards successful school-work transitions. While 53 per cent of countries in Europe and North America flagged such measures as a priority, over 90 per cent of

<sup>137</sup> Sophia D'Angelo and others, *Whose Hands on Our Education? Identifying and Countering Gender-Restrictive Backlash* (London, Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms and Overseas Development Institute, 2024).

<sup>138</sup> UNAIDS, "Education policies on life skills-based HIV and sexuality education – primary school, Global, Most recent data. Percentage of reporting countries", Laws and Policies Analytics database. Available at <https://lawsandpolicies.unaids.org/topicresult?i=313&lan=en> (accessed December 2024).

countries in Central and South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa did so. In the context of a rapidly changing world of work, technical and vocational education and training programmes increasingly centre on skills development and employability in sectors that experience labour shortages or for which demand is expected to increase in the future, including in digital and green economies. Recognizing the gender gap in access to vocational training,<sup>139</sup> efforts by States have been focused on addressing supply-side constraints, including through scholarships or bursaries, the provision of childcare support to enable the participation of adolescent mothers, campaigns to promote non-stereotypical vocational training choices, and building skills for occupations that are currently dominated by men. Some countries also reported demand-side measures, such as having worked with employers to increase technical and vocational education and training opportunities for young women, including by offering hiring incentives, and to create work environments free of harassment and discrimination that enable the retention and career progression of women in male-dominated fields.

129. Reflecting an effort to close the gender digital divide, the proportion of States reporting that they had taken measures to increase women's and girls' access to skills and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and digital skills has increased significantly, from 59 per cent in 2019 to 70 per cent in 2024. While European and Northern American countries remain more likely to report measures in this area, other regions have caught up significantly. Several countries reported early action on this front, with efforts to raise the interest of girls in, and their aspirations towards careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics as early as kindergarten, including through a greater inclusion of female role models in educational materials for the relevant subjects and a range of related educational programmes.

130. Globally, much attention has also focused on closing gender gaps in tertiary education, for example through scholarships and mentoring programmes. Several countries noted the need to move beyond providing access and adopt measures to promote the retention of female talent in science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related fields of study and employment.

(c) *Ensuring women's access to affordable, good quality health services*

131. Access to affordable, good quality health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, is critical for women's empowerment, health and well-being, and for the eradication of poverty. More than three quarters (76 per cent) of States reported having taken action to promote access to health services for women and girls through the expansion of universal health coverage and public health services, a significant increase from 2019, when two thirds of States reported action in this area. Universal health coverage reforms are aimed at reducing or eliminating the need for out-of-pocket payments, which tend to affect women more than men.<sup>140</sup> Between 2011 and 2021, the lack of money for treatment was the most important reason why women across 58 low- and middle-income countries had to forgo healthcare. Women in rural areas were much more likely than those in urban areas to report accessibility issues. Common measures reported by States to address such barriers included the extension of social or community-based health insurance and the free or subsidized provision of specific services, such as maternity care, HIV testing, human papillomavirus vaccines and screening for breast and cervical cancer. Despite such efforts, as of 2021,

<sup>139</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024*.

<sup>140</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*.

about half the world's population – 4.5 billion people – had no coverage for essential health services.<sup>141</sup>

132. Some 41 per cent of States reported taking specific measures to address access barriers among marginalized groups of women and girls, recognizing that gender inequalities in access to healthcare intersect with other dimensions of discrimination. Several countries reported on specific measures that address the health rights and needs of women with disabilities (see box VII).

#### Box VII

##### **Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive healthcare measures**

Over the past decade, the number of persons with disabilities has increased globally, due to people living longer with chronic and non-communicable health conditions, health emergencies, such as pandemics, and the mental and physical impacts of conflict and natural disasters. Globally, 18 per cent of women have a disability compared with 14 per cent of men, and prevalence is highest among those who are over 60.<sup>a</sup>

Many countries reported having taken action to reduce barriers that make access to healthcare services difficult for women, girls and gender-diverse persons with disabilities. In some cases, including Austria and Mongolia, such action has taken the form of measures to increase the accessibility of healthcare services, such as through providing information on sexual and reproductive health services in simplified language, sign language and Braille, implementing requirements for healthcare facilities to provide medical equipment for people with limited mobility, or introducing telehealth programs with options to communicate through the use of voice, images, signs or text.

In other cases, including in Canada, Fiji and Vanuatu, countries have worked collaboratively with persons with disabilities to deliver health outreach services to women and girls with disabilities, or to develop research initiatives to strengthen knowledge of the health needs of women who experience multiple forms of oppression, including ableism and racism. Other countries, including Nepal, New Zealand and Samoa, have published or adopted national needs assessments, service guidelines or strategies on the intersection of health, gender and disability. At least three countries (Republic of Korea, Latvia and Tuvalu) reported measures to promote comprehensive sexuality education among young persons with disabilities, including through educational classes aimed specifically at that audience.

Few countries reported specific measures to address the needs of older persons with disabilities, such as through the provision of long-term care services, or the treatment of gendered health conditions linked to older age, such as osteoporosis or dementia. Furthermore, few countries reported cross-sectoral actions to address the social and environmental determinants of health inequities, including to combat structural discrimination against women, girls and gender-diverse persons with disabilities in healthcare systems.

<sup>a</sup> WHO, *Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities* (Geneva, 2022).

<sup>141</sup> WHO and World Bank, *Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2023 Global Monitoring Report* (Geneva, 2023).

133. A total of 84 per cent of States reported having expanded specific health services for women and girls, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. For girls and adolescents, 48 per cent of States reported having strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes, including for groups that are often marginalized in educational settings, including out-of-school youth and persons with disabilities. In order to meet the needs of women of reproductive age, many States reported efforts to reduce maternal mortality, including in rural areas, and having expanded access to reproductive choice through contraception and fertility treatments. However, significant gaps remain with regard to women's sexual and reproductive health. For example, very few countries reported efforts to combat stigma and address health concerns associated with menopause.

134. Some 39 per cent of countries reported specific measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, including through running awareness campaigns, integrating education about HIV into comprehensive sexuality education, connecting women and girls affected by HIV to mental health services, efforts to reach at-risk groups, and addressing violence and stigma against women and girls living with HIV, including through training and counselling. In sub-Saharan Africa, some countries reported measures to address the disproportionate rate of new infections among adolescent girls and young women, including through education on HIV prevention and the prevention of violence and measures to support women and girls in their informed choice to use pre-exposure prophylaxis. In addition, 36 per cent of countries took action that was specifically tailored to address violence against women and girls living with HIV. Countries also reported efforts to increase the availability of HIV testing and treatment through integration with other health services and by expanding such services to all levels of health facilities. Recently expanded prevention options, particularly woman-controlled pre-exposure prophylaxis, provide women and girls with better tools to protect themselves against HIV infection.

135. About one third (34 per cent) of States reported on abortion. Legal reforms to decriminalize abortion or expand the grounds on which abortion is legal were reported by 6 per cent of States across Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Oceania and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. An additional 13 per cent of countries reported having reduced restrictions and barriers that hinder access to and the timely provision of safe abortion where it is legal, including by improving access to information and counselling, relaxing the need for spousal or parental consent, raising gestational limits, reducing mandatory waiting periods, limiting refusal to provide care, expanding the range of providers and facilities authorized to provide abortion services, and supporting travel to facilities. Three countries in Europe and Western Asia reported measures to prevent sex-selective abortions, a reflection of son preference. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2023, abortion was available at the woman's request with no requirement for justification in 51 countries, while others offered it on various grounds, including threats to the mother's life (112 countries), danger to physical health (66 countries) or to mental health (45 countries), foetal impairment (76 countries), rape (68 countries), incest (46 countries) and economic or social reasons (22 countries).<sup>142</sup>

136. Some 40 per cent of States reported the adoption of gender-responsive approaches to the prevention and treatment of chronic and non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, which have been the leading causes of death for women for decades. Gender-sensitive cancer prevention, including the roll-out of free or low-cost human

<sup>142</sup> WHO, Global Abortion Policies Database, available at <https://abortion-policies.srhr.org/> (accessed December 2024).

papillomavirus vaccines and breast and cervical cancers screening, was among the most common actions. Nevertheless, long-standing gender bias in medical research and clinical practice continue to compromise the quality of health information available to women, as well as the healthcare they receive.<sup>143</sup> A few States reported measures to address these biases, including through research into women's health and intersectional health inequalities, incorporating questions on women's health into the national census, and developing gender-sensitive approaches to the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

137. Mental health has become a pressing concern in the context of multiple and cascading crises. Women have long been more likely to report poor mental health than men, and this disparity increased during the pandemic. In 2021, 15.1 per cent of women suffered from mental health disorders, compared to 13.6 per cent of men.<sup>144</sup> Mental health conditions are a leading burden of disease for adolescents. Yet, data on the prevalence of adolescent mental health conditions remain sparse, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Exposure to gender stereotypes and unrealistic body images, the sharing of sexually explicit images, cyberbullying and online violence pose new challenges to the mental health of adolescent girls, with potential ripple effects on academic performance.<sup>145</sup>

138. A total of 45 per cent of countries reported actions to strengthen women and girls' mental health, including through expanding public health insurance coverage to include psychosocial support, providing specialist women's mental healthcare and rolling out mental health services in schools. The mental health of women and girls in conflict and displacement settings is particularly affected (see [S/2023/725](#)) – yet only 9 out of 26 conflict-affected countries reported any action in this area. Some host countries report expanding mental healthcare coverage for refugees and survivors of conflict, including through creating specialist programmes or including refugees under public health insurance.

139. The realization of the right to quality, dignified care for women and girls requires the availability of adequate resources, including physical and human infrastructure. While women healthcare workers bore the brunt of poor pay and difficult working conditions during the pandemic, their underrepresentation in health leadership and decision-making roles continue to constrain their ability to influence health policies and strategies in gender-responsive ways. Globally, women hold around 70 per cent of healthcare worker jobs, but only 25 per cent of senior leadership roles in the sector.<sup>146</sup> 48 per cent of States reported having provided training and capacity-building for health sector workers so as to increase the gender-responsiveness of service provision. With a projected global shortage of 10 million workers in the health sector, primarily affecting low- and middle-income countries,<sup>147</sup> greater efforts are needed to ensure the recruitment and retention of staff.<sup>148</sup> Several States reported actions to improve working conditions, including through providing overtime pay, introducing minimum wages or running training sessions to support the mental health of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Others reported

<sup>143</sup> Abdullah Al Hamid and others, "Gender bias in diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cardiovascular diseases: a systematic review", *Cureus*, vol. 16, No. 2 (2024).

<sup>144</sup> UN-Women calculations based on Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, GBD Compare database. Available at <http://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>145</sup> UNICEF, "Measuring mental health for adolescents and young people at the population level", March 2023.

<sup>146</sup> Women in Global Health, "The state of women and leadership in global health", March 2023.

<sup>147</sup> Mathieu Boniol and others. "The global health workforce stock and distribution in 2020 and 2030: a threat to equity and 'universal' health coverage?", *BMJ Global Health*, vol. 7, No. 6 (2022).

<sup>148</sup> UN-Women, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*; and Women in Global Health, "The great resignation: why women health workers are leaving", October 2023.

efforts to expand community health worker programmes, increase the recruitment of women healthcare workers in rural areas, or promote immigration pathways for nurses, midwives and mental health professionals.

## **D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

140. Efforts to strengthen access to social protection and public services have notably resulted in reduced poverty risk, more equal access to education and improved health outcomes for many women and girls. However, gender gaps and biases in social protection, education and health systems remain widespread. Three priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts.

*Shock-proof social protection, education and health systems with a focus on universal provision to better respond to the needs of women and girls in crises*

141. Urgent action is needed to ensure that social protection, education and health systems are shock-proofed and respond better to the specific challenges faced by women and girls during emergencies. In order to do so, shock responses need to be based on robust, real-time gender data – both quantitative and qualitative – that capture gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities. Investments are especially needed to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems, which are critical for registering vital events such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces, and for administering many government services. Countries should continue to work towards universally accessible systems, including through universal health coverage reforms, and maintain a strong focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to quality services.

*Harness digitalization for poverty eradication and gender equality, including women's access to social protection and public services, with a focus on bridging the digital divide*

142. Digitalization can be better harnessed for poverty eradication and gender equality, including women's access to social protection and public services, as well as essential information about their human rights. For digital tools to work for women, they should be devised on the basis of consultation with users, comprising target groups as well as front-line workers, and subject to testing of digital interfaces by accessibility experts, including women and girls with disabilities. They should also be accompanied by investments in digital public infrastructure and improved connectivity and literacy, with particular attention to meeting the needs of marginalized groups and reducing inequalities between countries. Such actions are integral to the key transition in digital connectivity to drive progress across all the Goals (see [E/2024/52](#)).

*Close the financing gap for social protection and public services, and invest in better conditions and wages for front-line workers*

143. The potential for social protection, education and health systems to bolster gender equality stands and falls with the availability of adequate resources for investments in both the physical and the human infrastructure required to ensure access for all. Financing gaps are large, but not impossible to close. Furthermore, spending in social protection and public services should be seen as an investment with a multiplier effect, rather than an expense. The positive impact on GDP of each dollar

spent on social protection surpasses that of total government expenditure<sup>149</sup> and every dollar spent in closing the childcare policy gap is tied to an ensuing \$3.76 boost in GDP.<sup>150</sup> Investments in a reformed care sector with better wages and working conditions for front-line workers would also create much-needed jobs, including for women, while improving service delivery for social protection recipients, students and patients.

## IV. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

### Key messages

- Violence against women and girls persists at alarming rates across the world, and has been intensified as a result of successive crises. Across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner.
- Harmful practices continue to undermine the well-being of women and girls. Globally, the rate of child, early and forced marriage has decreased from 24.1 per cent in 2003 to 18.7 per cent in 2023. Despite this progress, at the current rate of change child marriage will not be eradicated until 2092.
- Changes in the technology and media landscape continue to create platforms where violence against women and girls has proliferated, while women continue to be underrepresented in the media.
- States have progressed actions in several areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:
  - (a) 79 per cent of States reported that they had introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls, up from 68 per cent in 2019. As part of efforts to respond to the vulnerability of girls to violence, 77 per cent of States had focused action on preventing and eliminating violence against girls, up from 62 per cent in 2019;
  - (b) 90 per cent of States reported having introduced or strengthened laws, along with their implementation and enforcement, up from 83 per cent in 2019. Despite this focus, there remain significant gaps in laws concerning violence against women and protections for survivors;
  - (c) 88 per cent of States reported having introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence, similar to 2019. 75 per cent reported that they had introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls, up from 67 per cent in 2019. However, investments in prevention and responses are not commensurate with the scale of the problem, and technology and innovation have not been adequately leveraged to accelerate progress;

<sup>149</sup> Dante Cardoso and others, “The multiplier effects of government expenditures on social protection: a multi-country analysis”, Working Paper, No. 18 (São Paulo, University of São Paulo Department of Economics, 2023).

<sup>150</sup> ILO, “The benefits of investing in transformative childcare policy packages”.

- (d) An area of innovation in recent years has been legal reform to address new forms of violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology. 66 per cent of countries prioritized action to address violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology in the past five years, particularly through awareness-raising and strengthened legislation and regulation.

## A. Introduction

144. Violence against women and girls (critical area of concern D) remains an issue of pandemic proportions across the world that has significant impacts on the lives and well-being of individuals, communities and broader society. Women and girls continue to be subject to multiple forms of violence and abuse, largely perpetrated by men, across a range of contexts – in times of peace or conflict, or in the wake of conflict – and in all spheres of life: the family, the community, in public spaces and at work. Even as momentum to end violence against women continues to build, deeply entrenched gender inequality and discriminatory norms perpetuate a continuum of violence, abuse and harm against women and girls, from rigid gender stereotyping and sexual harassment to lethal forms of violence, such as femicide. As recognized in the Platform for Action, violence against women and girls further entrenches gender inequality across all spheres of life. It can be prevented, yet investments in prevention and responses are not yet commensurate with the scale of the problem.

145. Ensuring women and girls are free from violence, discrimination, stigma and stereotypes is also crucial to the achievement of several of the Goals, particularly poverty eradication (Goal 1), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), decent work (Goal 8), inequalities (Goal 10) and sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11). Tackling violence against women and girls also contributes to creating more peaceful and non-violent communities for all (Goal 16), given that violence against women is often a precursor to the eruption of conflict in a country.<sup>151</sup> At least 14 of the 17 Goals will not be achieved without the global eradication of violence against women and girls.<sup>152</sup>

146. All forms of media play an important role in advancing gender equality, with the potential to reach billions through various platforms to advance gender-equal social norms, address gender stereotypes and promote positive role models. However, discriminatory representations of women in the media (critical area of concern J) – whether in traditional media, social media or new forms of communication technologies – continue to entrench gender stereotypes.<sup>153</sup> Digital media in particular are increasingly playing a role in the intensification of a backlash against the advancement of women and girls.

147. Over the past five years, several broader trends have affected the way in which violence against women and girls is experienced and the responses thereto. Interlocking crises, including COVID-19, economic strain, climate change, conflicts and humanitarian disasters, have continued to exacerbate violence against women and girls in a number of ways ([A/77/302](#)). Rapid technological developments over the

<sup>151</sup> UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York, 2015).

<sup>152</sup> Sarah Homan and Emma Fulu, “Sustainable Development Goals and violence against women and girls”, The Equality Institute, 2021.

<sup>153</sup> UN-Women, “Accelerating efforts to tackle online and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls”, 2022.



past five years, such as generative artificial intelligence, have also created new environments for violence against women and girls and new spaces for popularizing discriminatory stereotypes.<sup>154</sup> These developments are enabling an upsurge in regressive social norms and attitudes, with harmful masculinities being amplified through online communities collectively known as the “manosphere” (A/79/500). Offline, too, anti-feminist actors and groups are contributing to the misogynistic backlash that perpetuates violence against women and girls.

148. Since the most recent review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, the normative framework has continued to expand. For instance, general recommendation No. 38 (2020) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women sets out guidance for States parties to combat all forms of trafficking, emphasizing that States also have obligations to discourage the demand that fosters exploitation and leads to trafficking, and that the obligations of States parties do not cease in emergencies resulting from conflict, political events, health crises or natural disasters. The Committee’s general recommendation No. 39 (2022) addresses the disproportionate rates of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. In addition, over the past five years, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences has produced several reports containing recommendations for advancing norms to eliminate violence against women and girls.

149. The General Assembly has also strengthened the normative framework through its resolutions on the intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. In 2020, resolution 75/161 was focused on measures to address violence against women and girls in the context of COVID-19, in 2022, resolution 77/193 was focused on actions needed to address gender stereotypes and negative social norms, and in 2024, resolution 79/152 was focused on actions to eliminate violence against women and girls in the digital environment. In its agreed conclusions, the Commission on the Status of Women has also recognized the importance of actions to address violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology (E/2023/27, chap. I, sect. A), and in the context of climate change (E/2022/27, chap. I, sect. A). In the Pact for the Future, Member States recognized that new technologies could advance gender equality, but also raised concerns over the serious risks they could pose to women and girls and the need to address the gender digital divide.

## B. Global and regional trends

*Violence against women and girls persists at alarming rates across the world and has intensified as a result of successive crises*

150. Globally, 1 in every 8 women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 was subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous year (12.5 per cent), a ratio reaching almost 1 in every 3 women and girls in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, and about 1 in 5 women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure VI).<sup>155</sup> Across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner.<sup>156</sup>

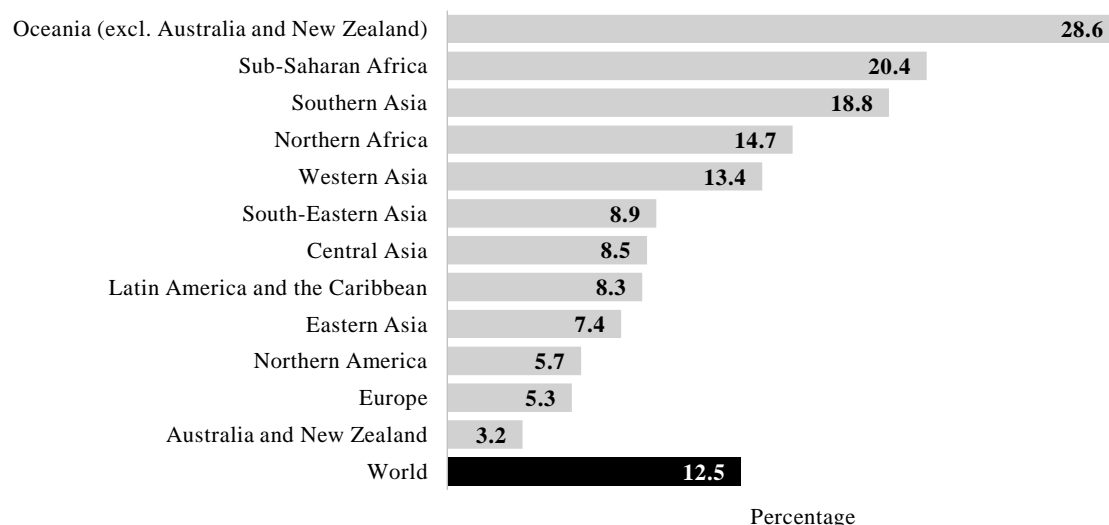
<sup>154</sup> Julie Posetti and others, *The Chilling: Global Trends in Online Violence against Women Journalists*, Research Discussion Paper (Paris, UNESCO, 2021).

<sup>155</sup> United Nations, “Statistics”, Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>156</sup> WHO, *Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018*.

Figure VI

**Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls (between the ages of 15 and 49) subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months**



Source: United Nations, “Statistics”, Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal> (accessed December 2024).

Note: Data points for broad Sustainable Development Goal regions are limited to some regions; for the remainder, data points for subregions are used. Caution is advised when interpreting estimates from some regions as they may not be fully representative of the respective population, due to limited country and/or population coverage.

151. The availability of data on femicide or gender-related killings at a global level is gradually increasing, which is a reflection of greater efforts to record and report these crimes. Despite the fact that most victims of homicide worldwide are men and boys, women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence, also referred to as femicide, in the home. Globally, approximately 51,100 women and girls were killed by their intimate partners or other family members during 2023.<sup>157</sup> This means that 60 per cent of the almost 85,000 women and girls killed intentionally during the year were murdered by their intimate partners or other family members. On average, 140 women and girls worldwide lost their lives every day at the hands of their partner or a close relative.

152. Sexual harassment and violence in the world of work remain a reality for many women. A 2022 global survey found that 8.2 per cent of women experienced sexual violence and harassment in their working life, compared with 5 per cent of men.<sup>158</sup> The survey found that young women were twice as likely as young men to have experienced sexual violence and harassment, and migrant women were almost twice as likely as non-migrant women to report sexual violence and harassment. Another study found that between 15 and 99 per cent of women in low-income and middle-income countries had reported experiences of sexual harassment.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN-Women, “Femicides in 2023: global estimates of intimate partner/family member femicides”, 2024.

<sup>158</sup> ILO and Lloyd’s Register Foundation, *Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey* (Geneva, ILO, 2022).

<sup>159</sup> Meghna Ranganathan and others, “Measurement and prevalence of sexual harassment in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis”, *BMJ Open*, vol. 11, No. 6 (2021).

153. Intersectional inequalities exacerbate the risk of violence for women and girls, such as those with physical or mental disabilities<sup>160</sup> and older women.<sup>161</sup> Among women refugees, up to 70 per cent are estimated to have experienced sexual and other forms of gendered violence.<sup>162</sup> Research across regions indicates that LGBTIQ+ persons experience high rates of violence.<sup>163</sup>

154. Multiple and interlinked crises around the world are intensifying the factors that make women and girls more vulnerable to all forms of violence, particularly due to increasing poverty and economic insecurity, displacement, violence committed against them and discrimination (A/77/292). Overall, COVID-19 was associated with an increase in violence against women. The data collected by UN-Women indicate that 7 in 10 women believed physical and verbal abuse by partners had become more common during the pandemic, and more than half of respondents expressed the view that sexual harassment in public had worsened.<sup>164</sup>

*Harmful practices continue to undermine the well-being of women and girls*

155. Harmful practices continue to undermine the well-being of women and girls, although there has been progress over the past three decades. Globally, child, early and forced marriage, measured by the proportion of women between the ages of 20 and 24 who were married or in union before age 18, has decreased from 24.1 per cent in 2003 to 18.7 per cent in 2023. The most significant decrease can be observed in Central and Southern Asia, from 48.1 per cent in 2003 to 25.0 per cent in 2023. A significant decrease is also evident in sub-Saharan Africa (see figure VII). Despite this progress, at the current rate of change, child marriage will not be eradicated until 2092.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>160</sup> UN-Women and WHO, *Measuring Violence against Women with Disability: Data Availability, Methodological Issues and Recommendations for Good Practice* (Geneva, WHO, 2024).

<sup>161</sup> UN-Women and WHO, *Violence against Women 60 Years and Older: Data Availability, Methodological Issues and Recommendations for Good Practice* (Geneva, WHO, 2024).

<sup>162</sup> Sandra Pertek and others, “‘Nobody helped me’: forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence – findings from the SEREDA project”, University of Birmingham, March 2022.

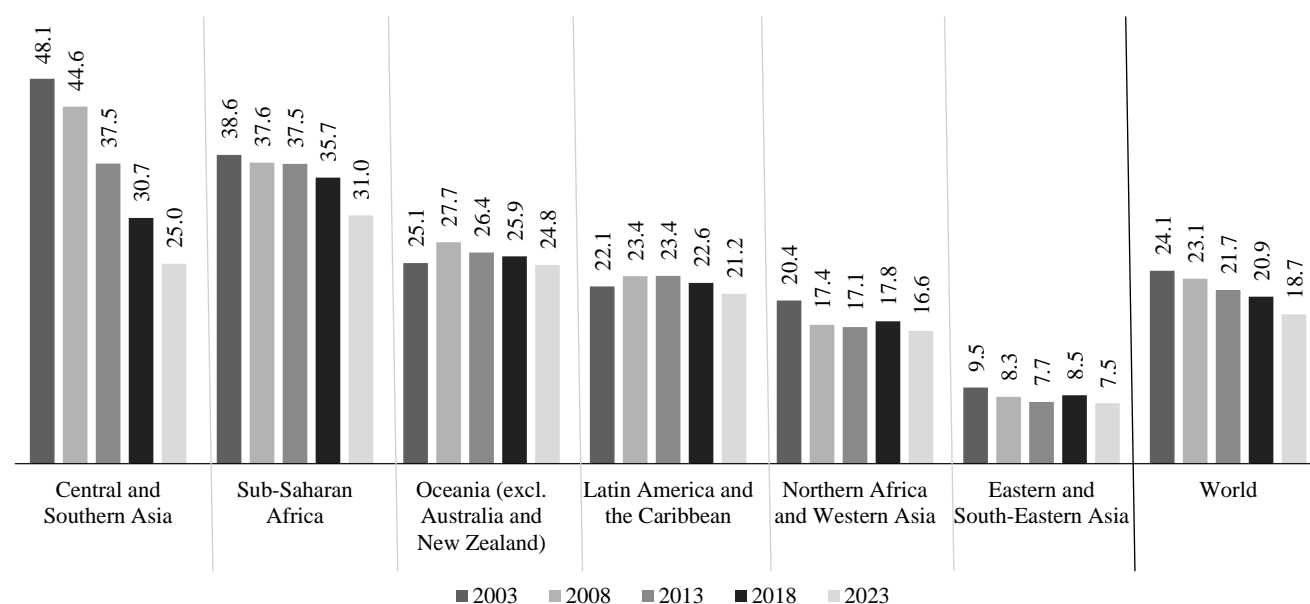
<sup>163</sup> Veronica Ahlenback, “Ending violence against LGBTIQ+ people: global evidence and emerging insights into what works”, Ending Violence Helpdesk, September 2022.

<sup>164</sup> Emandi and others, *Measuring the Shadow Pandemic*.

<sup>165</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

Figure VII

**Proportion of women between the ages of 20 and 24 who were married or in a union before the age of 18 (2003–2023)**



Source: UNICEF, “Executive summary dataset”, The Child Marriage Data Portal. Available at <https://childmarriagedata.org/data-centre/> (accessed December 2024).

156. Although rates of child marriage continue to decline worldwide, the average incidence of child marriage in conflict-affected countries is 14.4 percentage points higher than in non-conflict settings.<sup>166</sup> Successive and interconnected crises are also increasing the risks of child marriage. The knock-on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, war and the economic impact resulting from climate change all increase the risk of girls becoming child brides.<sup>167</sup> It is estimated that an additional 10 million girls will become child brides by 2030 because of the effects of the pandemic.<sup>168</sup>

157. Globally, over 230 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation, including 21.7 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 73.6 per cent in Northern Africa. This represents a 15 per cent increase, or 30 million more girls and women over the last eight years.<sup>169</sup>

*Changes in the technology and media landscape continue to create new spaces for violence against women and girls*

158. Violence against women and girls increasingly takes place along the online-offline continuum, with perpetrators using a range of digital tools and platforms to inflict gender-based harm, abuse, control, harassment and violence. The absence of agreed definitions and methodologies for measuring violence against women and girls in digital contexts, coupled with widespread underreporting, has hampered efforts to understand the true extent of the issue. Violence in online spaces may transition

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Sara Duerto-Valero and Sneha Kau, *Gendered Impacts of Climate Change: Empirical Evidence from Asia* (New York, UN-Women, 2023).

<sup>168</sup> UNICEF, “Is an end to child marriage within reach? Latest trends and future prospects – 2023 update”, May 2023.

<sup>169</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

offline in various ways, including through coercive control, surveillance, stalking, physical violence or even femicide.<sup>170</sup>

159. Despite a lack of recent global data to support a better understanding of the nature and extent of the issue, available data show that the prevalence of violence against women and girls in digital contexts ranges from 16 per cent to 58 per cent, depending on the question asked.<sup>171</sup> Younger women report experiencing violence at higher rates<sup>172</sup> and most report their first such experience occurring between the ages of 14 and 16.<sup>173</sup>

160. The forms and patterns of violence against women and girls in digital contexts continue to evolve as technology advances.<sup>174</sup> Globally, misinformation and defamation are the most prevalent forms of online violence affecting women, with 67 per cent of women and girls who have experienced online violence encountering these tactics.<sup>175</sup> Cyberharassment (66 per cent), hate speech (65 per cent) and impersonation (63 per cent) are among the other more common forms.

161. Girls are uniquely vulnerable to abuse in online environments. One study of 14,000 girls in 31 countries found that more than half of girls surveyed had been harassed and abused online.<sup>176</sup> Another recent global study found that over 300 million children under the age of 18 had been affected by online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the past 12 months. Further, 1 in 8 children globally had been subjected to online solicitation in the past 12 months, including unwanted sexual talk, which can include non-consensual sexting, unwanted sexual questions and unwanted sexual act requests by adults or other young people.<sup>177</sup>

162. The growth of artificial intelligence is creating avenues to perpetrate violence against women and girls and reinforce the normalization of discriminatory social norms. One particularly alarming development is the ascendancy of deepfakes, digital manipulation to replace one person's likeness with that of another, which is increasingly being used for image-based abuse and harassment. There has recently been extensive coverage of the phenomenon of pornographic deepfakes. It is estimated that 90 to 95 per cent of all online deepfakes are non-consensual pornographic images, with around 90 per cent of these depicting women.<sup>178</sup>

163. Women with a high level of public visibility, such as journalists, politicians and activists, continue to be at significant risk of violence, including in online environments. A 2021 report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that 73 per cent of the 901 women journalists interviewed for the study reported having experienced online violence, with reporting on elections and politics leading to an intensification of violence.<sup>179</sup> Several country studies conducted by UN-Women on the experiences of women in politics show high

<sup>170</sup> Bridget Harris and Laura Vitis, "Digital intrusions: technology, spatiality and violence against women", *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, vol. 4, No. 3 (2020).

<sup>171</sup> Jacqueline Hicks, "Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence", Institute of Development Studies, 8 October 2021, table 1.

<sup>172</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women", 1 March 2021.

<sup>173</sup> Plan International, *State of the World's Girls 2020*.

<sup>174</sup> Alex Berryhill and Lorena Fuentes, "Technology-facilitated violence against women: taking stock of evidence and data collection", UN-Women and WHO, March 2023.

<sup>175</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women".

<sup>176</sup> Plan International, *State of the World's Girls 2020*.

<sup>177</sup> Global Child Safety Institute – Childlight, *Into the Light Index on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Globally: 2024 Report* (Edinburgh, 2024).

<sup>178</sup> Karen Hao, "A horrifying new AI app swaps women into porn videos with a click", *MIT Technology Review*, 13 September 2021.

<sup>179</sup> Julie Posetti and others, "The Chilling".

levels of online violence and abuse, particularly through social media around election cycles and parliamentary activity.<sup>180</sup>

164. Violence in digital contexts is also often directed towards women who challenge gender norms and patriarchal structures. A majority of human rights defenders say they or their organization have been threatened or harassed, and one quarter have received death threats.<sup>181</sup> Threats and harassment are most severe for women human rights defenders in locations where there is conflict and instability.<sup>182</sup>

*Women continue to be underrepresented in the media*

165. As reported in the previous review, in 2015 women made up only 24 per cent of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspapers and on television and radio news (E/CN.6/2020/3). By 2020, there was a small increase to 25 per cent in the proportion of subjects and sources who were women.<sup>183</sup> Data collected across five continents in 2024 revealed that only 24 per cent of people in the role of editor-in-chief are women.<sup>184</sup> Women's representation in the media industry is impeded by their experiences of gender-based discrimination and a heightened risk of violence.

166. Stories on violence against women and girls remain relatively absent from or misrepresented in major daily news outlets, and this was also the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>185</sup> Negligible progress has been made with regard to the likelihood news coverage will challenge stereotypes, as studies have found that coverage of sexual harassment, rape, other forms of gender violence and specific gender inequality issues often reinforces gender stereotypes. That situation further entrenches and normalizes the injustices in such coverage.

## C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

167. The data included in national reports show that policy and programmatic trends in implementation have emerged in five areas: (a) strengthening and enforcing of laws, policies and national action plans that address violence against women, and ensuring women's access to justice; (b) increasing women's access to high-quality, context-responsive support services; (c) preventing violence against women and girls; (d) responding to the impact of technology on violence against women; and (e) addressing gender stereotypes in the media.

*(a) Strengthening and enforcing of laws, policies and national action plans that address violence against women, and ensuring women's access to justice*

168. Ending violence against women and girls requires change at every level – from State systems and laws to organizations such as schools, workplaces and support services, local and cultural communities, and in individual relationships and behaviours. A whole-of-system or whole-of-government approach encourages coordination between all relevant government agencies and sectors to work together

<sup>180</sup> Ingrid Beck, Florencia Alcaraz and Paula Rodríguez, “Violencia de género en línea hacia mujeres con voz pública. Impacto en la libertad de expresión”, Alianza Regional por la Libre Expresión e Información and UN-Women, 2022.

<sup>181</sup> Charlotte Pruth and Eva Zillén, *Hope and Resistance Go Together: The State of Women Human Rights Defenders 2023* (Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2023).

<sup>182</sup> DanChurchAid, “Online harassment and censorship of women human rights defenders”, February 2023.

<sup>183</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project, *Who Makes the News?* (2020).

<sup>184</sup> Amy Ross Arguedas, Mitali Mukherjee and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, “Women and leadership in the news media 2024: evidence from 12 markets”, Reuters Institute, 8 March 2024.

<sup>185</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project, *Who Makes the News?*

to provide better support, keeping survivors at the centre of responses so as to ensure their healing and recovery, as well as providing entry points for prevention. Creating enabling conditions such that diverse civil society and women's rights organizations can influence policies as key experts is also essential, including by ensuring that they are adequately resourced.

169. National action plans that reflect multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches to enable coordination between agencies and the participation of civil society are critical for a comprehensive, long-term and coordinated strategy to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.<sup>186</sup> In the 2024 national reviews, 79 per cent of countries reported that they had introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls, reflecting an increase from 68 per cent in 2019.

170. Launched in 2017 with seed funding from the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative has made important contributions to the implementation of the Platform for Action. Some 548 laws and policies to end violence against women and girls have been signed or strengthened with the Initiative's support, and 50 countries have strengthened their national action plans.<sup>187</sup> The Initiative has also contributed to nearly a 13-fold increase in the amount budgeted across 13 countries' national budgets to address violence against women and girls.

171. The global and regional normative framework calls for comprehensive laws that address all forms of violence against women and girls as a systematic violation of women's human rights and a form of discrimination, providing for the prosecution of perpetrators and setting out State obligations to prevent violence and protect, empower and support survivors. Laws to address violence against women should be embedded in a broader legal framework based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Evidence is mounting to show that where such laws are in place, they play a role in reducing rates of gender-based violence. Countries with domestic violence legislation have lower rates of intimate partner violence than those without legislation, with 9.5 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 experiencing intimate partner violence in the past 12 months in countries that have domestic violence legislation, compared to 16.1 per cent in countries without such legislation.<sup>188</sup>

172. In the 2024 national reviews, the introduction or strengthening of laws, their implementation and enforcement were priorities for States, with 90 per cent of countries reporting action in this area in the past five years, representing an increase from 83 per cent in 2019. Actions have included: expanding definitions of domestic violence to include psychological violence; increasing penalties for perpetrators; expanding the range of people protected by legislation, for example including domestic workers; criminalizing different or additional forms of violence; strengthening protection orders; reforming family law to be responsive to domestic violence; introducing positive obligations to eliminate sexual harassment; and introducing new standards of consent with respect to rape.

173. A new focus for legal reform in recent years has been the criminalization of coercive control, which recognizes the patterns of power and control in intimate partner violence and the impact of psychological and financial abuse. Coercive control and psychological violence is now criminalized as a form of domestic violence and intimate partner violence in several States members of the European

<sup>186</sup> The Equality Institute and UN-Women, *Together for Prevention: Handbook on Multisectoral National Action Plans to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls* (New York, UN-Women, 2023).

<sup>187</sup> Spotlight Initiative, *Global Final Narrative Progress Report 2017–2023* (2024).

<sup>188</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

Union.<sup>189</sup> Further, building on the work of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women, which stated that the “[a]bsence of consent must become the global standard for definition of rape”,<sup>190</sup> there has been a growing focus on affirmative consent laws and definitions since the previous review. A growing number of States have recently changed their definition of rape and explicitly included lack of consent as its constitutive element (see [A/HRC/47/26](#)).

174. Despite this focus, there remain significant gaps in legal protection with regard to eliminating violence against women. While at least 151 countries have taken measures to prevent sexual harassment in employment, there are gaps in protection. Only 75 countries include protection for sexual harassment in education, 39 for sexual harassment in public spaces, and 75 countries for sexual harassment online.<sup>191</sup> In some 86 countries, domestic violence law does not sufficiently ensure protection from all forms of violence, such as marital rape, or does not adequately impose criminal penalties or protection orders. Only 29 countries – mostly in Latin America and the Caribbean – explicitly criminalize femicide. A further challenge for ensuring comprehensive laws to address violence against women and girls is the growth of anti-feminist movements and attacks on women’s and girls’ equal rights, which are increasingly influencing decision makers and resulting in proposals for regressive laws and policies that reinforce inequality, misogyny and norms that excuse or justify violence against women and girls (see [A/HRC/56/51](#)).

175. While comprehensive laws are an important starting point, their ability to keep women safe from violence hinges on effective implementation and enforcement. The lack of adequate resources, on the one hand, and institutional barriers, patriarchal systems and gender stereotypes that are prevalent within security, law enforcement and justice institutions, and in other services, on the other, remain significant challenges. Very low reporting rates indicate that women continue to experience significant barriers and lack confidence in the formal justice system. Even where cases are reported, there is often significant attrition along the justice chain, with cases dropping out before they reach court and very few resulting in a conviction. The rate of attrition is particularly elevated in contexts where there is impunity for perpetrators, when rape myths or other harmful stereotypes predominate, and when survivors do not receive trauma-informed support.<sup>192</sup> For women in rural and remote areas there is the additional barrier of physical distance to reach courts and law enforcement personnel, and in low-income contexts, courts and law enforcement often lack capacity to respond effectively and appropriately.<sup>193</sup>

176. Actions to improve access to justice were a priority for 77 per cent of States in the past five years. The focus on access to justice has been greatest in Central and Southern Asia (91 per cent) and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (86 per cent). Providing victims of intimate partner violence with access to protection orders remains one of the most common actions taken by States to enforce the law. Other common actions taken in the past five years include: the establishment of specialized courts or procedures, including mobile courts, for prosecuting cases of gender-based violence; free legal assistance for victims/survivors; the provision of training on

<sup>189</sup> Petra Jeney and others, *Violence against Women: Psychological Violence and Coercive Control* (Brussels, European Parliament, 2020).

<sup>190</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Absence of consent must become the global standard for definition of rape, say experts”, 25 November 2019.

<sup>191</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.

<sup>192</sup> UNODC, *Handbook for the Judiciary on Effective Criminal Justice Responses to Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls* (Vienna, 2019).

<sup>193</sup> Lori Mann, “Impact of COVID-19 on women’s access to justice”, Council of Europe, 17 November 2022.



violence against women and girls for investigators, prosecutors, the judiciary and law enforcement officers; the development of guidelines or protocols for justice agencies on responding to violence against women; and the pursuit of strategies to improve the efficiency of court processes, such as the implementation of electronic monitoring systems. There has been an increasing focus on survivor-centred and trauma-informed approaches, for example allowing victims and survivors to give evidence without having to face perpetrators. A promising development is the introduction of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches in which government agencies and specialist services work together to ensure the immediate safety of victims/survivors and ensure their access to justice.

(b) *Increasing women's access to high quality, context-responsive support services*

177. Specialist services for women and girls who have experienced violence are crucial for their healing. Services should be comprehensive, well-coordinated, interdisciplinary, accessible, of good quality, sustained and multisectoral. They should also be survivor-centred, focused on women's human rights, safety and empowerment, and designed to avoid secondary victimization (see [A/HRC/35/30](#)).

178. Introducing or strengthening services for survivors of violence was a priority action for governments in responding to violence against women, with 88 per cent of States reporting action in this area in the past five years (compared to 87 per cent in 2019). States have prioritized such actions as: the ongoing operation or expansion of shelters, housing options and service centres to provide access to support for women who have experienced violence; enhancing psychological and mental health support for victims/survivors; strengthening online and telephone-based support and referral services; delivering training on eliminating and responding to violence against women and girls for health and justice sectors; support for women's economic empowerment; and the expansion of behaviour change programmes aimed at reforming perpetrators. Some States also reported on the introduction of coordination, oversight and monitoring bodies to increase the coverage, consistency and responsiveness of services.

179. There has also been a focus on the provision of services in crisis contexts. Some 30 per cent of countries reported that they have focused actions on addressing violence against women and girls in humanitarian settings, with 43 per cent of States taking action to address violence experienced by refugee and displaced women. Amid the compounding crises of climate change and protracted conflicts, services must be responsive and demonstrate adaptability across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In recent years, mobile service hubs – sometimes called one-stop centres – have enabled more expedient access to services for women who have experienced violence in humanitarian settings. These hubs house multidisciplinary teams in agile units, allowing for a rapid response in demanding circumstances. Evidence shows that these services make a difference in the communities where they are located.<sup>194</sup> Mobile service hubs should not, however, replace more permanent, comprehensive safe spaces for women and girls.<sup>195</sup>

180. Ongoing challenges for women's access to services include a chronic lack of availability, accessibility and funding of services for victims/survivors of violence against women and girls, and the absence of an integrated approach between the provision of services and measures such as protection orders. This lack of integration among services increases women's risk of violence and the likelihood of them falling

<sup>194</sup> NORC at the University of Chicago, "Select gender-based violence literature reviews: the effectiveness of one-stop GBV resource centres", October 2020.

<sup>195</sup> Social Development Direct, "Understanding the core functions and differences between women and girls safe spaces and one stop centres", December 2022.

though the gaps, as well as being inefficient (see [A/HRC/35/30](#)). Measures to monitor the quality of services for victims/survivors of violence against women require improvement.

181. A key challenge for service provision remains the need to be responsive to intersectionality and diversity among women and girls. Some 68 per cent of States have focused action on addressing violence against girls, adolescents and younger women. While some 76 per cent of countries reported having focused on services for women with disabilities and 60 per cent on women in rural and remote areas, only 25 per cent reported having focused on Indigenous women, and 11 per cent on religious minority women. Examples of action taken include efforts to increase access to legal support services for marginalized groups, improved training for service providers so as to effectively respond to marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, and financial and housing support programmes for at-risk women. States also increasingly recognized the need to address discrimination and stigma as part of preventing violence against LGBTIQ+ persons.

(c) *Preventing violence against women and girls*

182. Preventing violence against women and girls requires addressing its root causes and risk factors. The widely accepted model of prevention is focused on multi-pronged interventions at different levels, including at the individual/relationship level and at the levels of the community and society, in order to transform unequal gendered power relations and address both gender inequality and intersectional discrimination.<sup>196</sup>

183. Since 2019, the RESPECT Women framework to prevent violence against women and girls has recommended action-oriented steps to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate interventions and programmes.<sup>197</sup> This is in line with other evidence-based frameworks and the international literature, which recognize that no single intervention will end violence against women and that combined and long-term strategies are more likely to be successful.<sup>198</sup> For example, a strategy to challenge harmful gender roles and stereotypes in the family will be more successful in a context in which women enjoy equal property rights or where public services exist to support the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work. In that respect, there is also evidence of the effectiveness of strategies that support women's economic empowerment and social protection measures in preventing violence against women and girls (see sect. III).

184. At the global level, 75 per cent of countries reported that they had introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls, compared with 67 per cent in 2019. There was significant regional variation in the attention given to prevention, with the greatest focus in Central and Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (all at 91 per cent) and the least focus in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

185. The most common type of action taken involved public awareness campaigns to change attitudes and behaviours (81 per cent of countries reporting), followed by empowering women and girls to promote their economic independence and access to resources, and promote equitable relations within households, communities and society (75 per cent), creating safe environments, including in schools, workplaces and public spaces (66 per cent), and promoting positive gender-equitable attitudes, beliefs, values and norms, especially among men and boys (62 per cent). There has

<sup>196</sup> UN-Women and others, "A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women", 2015.

<sup>197</sup> WHO and others, "Respect women: preventing violence against women", 2019.

<sup>198</sup> The Equality Institute and UN-Women, *Together for Prevention*.

been a limited but growing focus on social norm change in an effort to prevent violence (see box VIII). Very few States reported on long-term and comprehensive strategies to prevent violence against women and girls.

#### Box VIII

#### **Approaches to changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes**

Discriminatory social norms are a powerful driver of pervasive violence against women and girls. While there has been much focus on work to change the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, there is growing evidence that to bring about sustainable and transformative social norm change, engagement is needed at the level of social institutions, notably in families and communities, and in the market and the state.<sup>a</sup> Three linked approaches are needed:

- Transforming discriminatory narratives through participatory and whole-of-society approaches to build consensus around egalitarian values.
- Making tangible changes in the lived realities of women and girls through legal reform, creating opportunities and ensuring access to services.
- Strengthening feminist movements and building coalitions with other social movements and stakeholders.

Examples of countries that have brought these three approaches together in order to shift discriminatory social norms include the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the provision of comprehensive psychosocial care services, combined with whole-of-community healing from conflict-related trauma<sup>b</sup> and support for income generating activities for survivors and their families, has changed the norms that govern spousal relationships, including consensual sex, and women's role in decision-making on household resources. In India, community organizing over 30 years has sought to shift discriminatory norms on girls' education and early marriage, through engaging the whole of the community to create egalitarian narratives about girls' rights, engaging with local government officials and religious leaders to ensure school attendance, and empowering adolescent girls to understand and advocate for their own rights.<sup>c</sup> In Egypt, feminist scholars and activists mobilized a diverse coalition of activists, lawyers, government officials, civic leaders, legislators and scholars and worked with high-ranking religious leaders and officials to promote gender equality in legislation pertaining to the family, including the right to divorce.<sup>d</sup> Legal reform has also been crucial in Mexico, where the criminalization of intimate partner violence, accompanied by activism and media coverage of the legal reforms, has led to a decline in the share of women experiencing intimate partner abuse and a shift in attitudes with respect to condoning violence.<sup>e</sup>

Women's sports and the arts are also important arenas in which to challenge discriminatory social norms and prevent violence. From the national reports, in Samoa, the "My Village, My Pride" performing arts awareness programme seeks to promote positive social norms to help eliminate gender-based violence. In Zimbabwe, traditional leaders are being empowered to address rigid gendered social norms and the adverse effects of patriarchy for boys and men, as well as for girls and women.

The above-mentioned developments are promising; however, further progress is needed in order to promote egalitarian social norms. Effective methods for evaluating long-term interventions and methods to measure change are important for guiding governments and civil society. While community-based approaches show promise, larger-scale interventions are needed to shift discriminatory social norms and to enable women and girls to live free from violence and enjoy the full range of their human rights.

- <sup>a</sup> UN-Women, *Ideologies, Institutions and Power: Addressing Social Norms Implicated in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. A Framework for UN-Women* (forthcoming).
- <sup>b</sup> Aziza Aziz-Suleyman and Simon Gasibirege, "How change happens: learning from knowledge and practices to address social norms in the pursuit of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the global South", paper commissioned by UN-Women (forthcoming).
- <sup>c</sup> Rekha Wazir and Shantha Sinha, *Recasting Social Norms to Universalize Education for Adolescent Girls: The Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation Experience*, UN-Women Discussion Paper, No. 44 (New York, 2024).
- <sup>d</sup> Marwa Sharafeldin, "How does change happen? Social norms, religion and family laws in the Middle East and North Africa Region", UN-Women Discussion Paper (forthcoming).
- <sup>e</sup> Mala Htun and Francesca R. Jensenius, "Expressive power of anti-violence legislation changes in social norms on violence against women in Mexico", *World Politics*, vol. 74, No. 1 (2022).

(d) *Responding to the impact of technology on violence against women*

186. Addressing the issue of violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology requires a comprehensive approach, including consistent laws, regulatory frameworks and effective implementation; a focus on prevention and response from technology intermediaries; investments in better data through internationally agreed standards and measurement frameworks, as well as actions to improve transparency; and partnerships between governments, technology providers and women's rights organizations.

187. In their response to the growth of violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, 66 per cent of countries have prioritized action to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence in the past five years. The greatest focus has been in Central and Southern Asia and in Europe and Northern America. Specifically, 76 per cent of countries have implemented awareness-raising initiatives that target the general public and education settings in order to educate young people, caregivers and educators about ethical and responsible online behaviour; 70 per cent of countries have introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions; and 49 per cent of countries have strengthened the capacity of government actors for the development of policy and legislation, and the enforcement and implementation thereof. Less than one third of countries (29 per cent) have worked with technology providers to introduce or strengthen human rights-based design, development and deployment approaches to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, which indicates that greater efforts are needed in this area.

188. Despite such efforts, laws aimed at addressing violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology continue to lack clear and consistent definitions and have not kept pace with technological developments. While there has been progress in developing a standardized approach through a new statistical framework, as requested by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-fifth session (see [E/2024/24](#), chap. I, sect. C, decision 55/112), a key challenge remains the lack of globally

comparable prevalence data on violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology. While more countries have introduced laws and strategies to criminalize violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, tensions at the intersections of the rights of digital users and the right to live a life free from violence remain a challenge. In addition to enacting laws that reflect international standards, governments can also play a key role in establishing oversight and regulatory bodies so as to raise public awareness, ensure redress for victims and hold content generators and content distributors accountable. Collaboration with and investments in the expertise of women's organizations and in services that specialize in responding to violence against women and girls are critical to informing technology-based tools.

(e) *Addressing gender stereotypes in the media*

189. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the media remains one of the major overall challenges to preventing violence against women and girls and gender equality more broadly. The severity of the challenge has been exacerbated through the expansion of digital spaces that mobilize anti-feminist actors and through generative artificial intelligence technologies.

190. With respect to addressing the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, countries shared details of the following measures: 57 per cent of countries have provided training to media professionals so as to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media, including in social media; 55 per cent of countries have promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media; and 50 per cent of countries have enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including in social media. Less than a third of countries have supported the media industry in developing voluntary codes of conduct; introduced binding regulations for the media, including for advertising; or established or strengthened consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination and/or bias in the media, indicating that greater focus is needed in these areas.

## **D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

191. Reflecting the persistent advocacy of global movements to end violence against women, 88 per cent of countries globally have identified eliminating violence against women and girls as one of their top five priorities for the next five years, which makes ending violence against women and girls the most common priority area among States. Yet rates of such violence remain alarmingly high. Deeply ingrained narratives that excuse, minimize and normalize violence persist, and rapid technological change is expanding the platforms on which violence against women and girl has proliferated. Three priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts.

*Adopt and fund national action plans to end violence against women and girls*

192. States have prioritized the introduction, implementation and enforcement of national action plans and laws on violence against women and the establishment of support services for survivors, but greater efforts are needed to ensure their comprehensive and sustained implementation. Funding for implementation remains woefully inadequate, too often leaving women's organizations and civil society to fill the gaps. Civil society and women's rights organizations play a critical role yet remain underfunded. In the context of a growing backlash, there is an urgent need to strengthen access to long-term, core and flexible funding to deliver services, work on prevention and undertake advocacy.

*Ensure that victims/survivors of violence against women and girls have prompt access to support and justice in order to end impunity, including by addressing gaps in legal protection*

193. States should ensure that survivors have prompt access to support and justice, which requires the introduction of comprehensive laws to address gaps in legal protection and to end impunity, especially in addressing new forms of violence against women and girls in digital contexts. Such legal reforms should include ensuring equality and non-discrimination before the law, including family law, and ensuring that all institutions, including the justice system, deliver accountability for women victims and survivors of violence. States should also uphold due diligence principles in order to address the impact of media and technologies that perpetuate discriminatory and stereotypical portrayals of women and girls and facilitate violence.

194. Given the intensification of violence against women and girls in crisis contexts, States should also continue to prioritize coordinated, conflict- and crisis-responsive services across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for women and girls, with specific attention to the integration of health, education and social protection.

*Invest in whole-of-government and whole-of-society, evidence-based and long-term approaches to prevention strategies*

195. Although more attention is being paid to prevention, overall efforts remain fragmented, without enough of a focus on evidence-based whole-of-society approaches to changing social norms and stereotypes. States should prioritize implementing and resourcing a multi-pronged, evidence-based and long-term approach to prevention so as to transform social norms, the unequal place of women in all public and private spheres and the unequal power relations between women and men. A focus on young men's attitudes is critical in the context of recent political polarization about the rights of women and girls. Preventing violence against women and girls requires challenging entrenched norms of male dominance in families and communities and in economic and public life, as well as making justice systems work for women so as to end impunity, and fostering norms of respect, non-discrimination and equality.

196. The development of evidence-based approaches will require addressing data gaps, including on non-partner sexual violence, violence against older women, violence against children and violence against women and girls with disabilities. Key priorities include investing in regular dedicated surveys to collect data on violence against women and girls, improving the availability of quality administrative data, such as police, judicial and health records, and increasing the use of non-official data sources, such as citizen data and big data. Recent efforts to develop comparable measures of violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology in data collection also need to be backed by adequate technical and financial resources.

## **V. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions**

### **Key messages**

- Women's representation in executive and legislative decision-making bodies has steadily increased. Since 1995, the proportion of women in parliament has more than doubled globally, rising from 11 per cent to 27 per cent today. Nevertheless, at the current pace of change, it will take decades to achieve gender parity.

- Men continue to dominate decision-making across all sectors, including the private and public sectors, the judiciary, peace and security, humanitarian and environmental decision-making.
- Institutional mechanisms for gender equality remain limited. Gender machineries serve as critical channels for translating women's demands into policies that promote gender equality. However, they continue to lack the authority, capacity and resources needed to do so effectively, and growing attacks on gender machineries also undermine their role.
- Despite progress in implementing gender-responsive budgeting, public finance management for gender equality is still limited in scale and impact.
- The production and use of gender statistics has improved significantly, with statistics for 56 per cent of the 52 gender-specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators available in 2024, compared with 26 per cent in 2016. Significant data gaps remain, however, largely due to a lack of funding.
- States have made progress on action in several areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:
  - (a) 52 per cent of States reported having introduced temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making levels; however, the absence of robust compliance mechanisms undermines the attainment of equal representation;
  - (b) 38 per cent of States reported measures to prevent and investigate cases of violence against women in public life, end impunity and prosecute and punish perpetrators – more than double the percentage reported in the previous review period. Nevertheless, gaps remain in protection and access to justice;
  - (c) Just over half (52 per cent of States) reported that their gender machineries are provided with adequate financial resources and staff capacity to fulfil their mandates;
  - (d) 54 per cent of States reported having tracked the proportion of the national budget invested in gender equality, but only 26 per cent fully meet the criteria for systematically tracking allocations under the provisions of indicator 5.c.1;
  - (e) Only 27 per cent of States reported measures to protect civic space and human rights defenders, despite increasing civic restrictions and weakening accountability.

## A. Introduction

197. Equal participation, leadership, accountability and gender-responsive institutions are essential for inclusive governance, the robust functioning of democracies and the safeguarding of women and girls' human rights. As such, women's participation in political and public life is not only a matter of justice and equality but also a key driver in terms of leadership with a view to achieving better

outcomes on health, education, childcare and infrastructure and on ending of violence against women and girls. Civil society, regional and international human rights bodies and mechanisms play a critical role by holding governments accountable for gender equality commitments and ensuring that public institutions advance the rights of women and girls in all spheres of public life. The timely collection and availability of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are also critical accountability tools for informing policies and monitoring progress.

198. Despite some progress over the past 30 years, men still dominate decision-making and parity between women and men in public life remains elusive. At the same time, civic and political freedoms have deteriorated in many countries in recent years. An increasingly hostile environment for women, girls and members of civil society organizations prevents them from expressing their views, assembling freely, creating associations and participating in decision-making. Such conditions are often a prelude to a general deterioration in political situations and to the increased likelihood of human rights violations.<sup>199</sup> There have been increasing attacks on women in public life, including women in politics, women journalists and women human rights defenders. Trends of de-democratization across the globe have continued along with an increasing opposition to gender equality, a hollowing out of institutions that are important for gender equality and a pattern of regression with respect to previous gender equality policy achievements (see sect. I). In the context of the successive crises over the past five years, women have been systematically sidelined from decision-making systems and processes tasked with addressing urgent national and global challenges, including pandemics, as evidenced during the COVID-19 response.<sup>200</sup>

199. Normative frameworks continue to highlight the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making at all levels of government, zero tolerance for violence against women in public life and gender-responsive institutions as key drivers for achieving gender equality. The General Assembly, in its resolution [73/148](#), encouraged national legislative authorities and political parties to adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating zero tolerance for sexual harassment, intimidation or any form of violence against women in politics. The commitment to parity between women and men was reaffirmed in the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fifth session, in 2021, in which the Commission urged governments to encourage the implementation of measures and mechanisms, including appropriate mechanisms to track progress, to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender balance at all levels of elected positions (see [E/2021/27](#), chap. I, sect. A). In 2024, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted its general recommendation No. 40 (2024), which is aimed at guiding States parties towards reaching equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems in the public and private sectors, emphasizing parity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change in governance. Also in 2024, in the Declaration on Future Generations, Member States recommitted to ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in all spheres of society (General Assembly resolution [79/1](#)).

<sup>199</sup> United Nations, "Protection and promotion of civic space", guidance note, September 2020.

<sup>200</sup> Sabine Freizer, "COVID-19 and women's leadership: From an effective response to building back better", Policy Brief, No. 18 (New York, UN-Women, 2020).



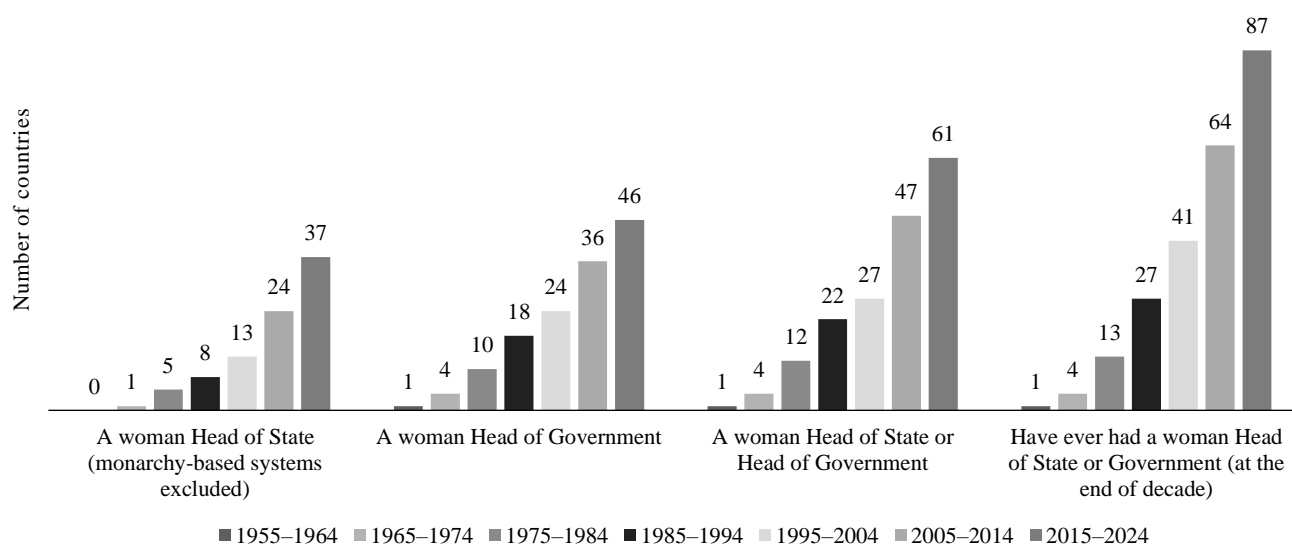
## B. Global and regional trends

*Despite some progress, women remain severely underrepresented at the highest levels of political power*

200. As at 1 November 2024, women served as Heads of State or Government in only 28 countries (11 with women as Head of State, 10 with women as Head of Government and 7 with women holding both positions), compared with 8 countries in September 1995. The number of countries that have ever had a woman leader increased steadily, from 27 between 1985 and 1994 to 87 between 2015 and 2024, with the largest gains observed in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. However, the overall rate of progress remains slow (see figure VIII). Women's underrepresentation at the national level is reflected in global spaces too: at the opening of the General Assembly in September 2024, around 10 per cent of speakers in the general debate were women.

Figure VIII

**Number of countries with a woman leader by type of position and by decade (1955–1964 to 2015–2024), as at 1 November 2024**



Source: UN-Women calculations, based on UN-Women database on women Heads of State and women Heads of Government, as of 1 November 2024.

Note: In some countries, women may hold both the positions of Head of State and Head of Government.

201. Globally, 23.3 per cent of cabinet members heading ministries were women as at 1 January 2024, compared to just 15 per cent in 2000. At this rate of progress, parity in cabinets will not be reached before 2077 (see [E/CN.6/2021/3](#)). The share of women is highest in Europe and Northern America (32.5 per cent) and lowest in Central and Southern Asia (9.5 per cent) and in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (8 per cent) (see figure IX). Only 15 countries had gender parity in the composition of their cabinets in 2024: 10 in Europe, 3 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 2 in sub-Saharan Africa. Cabinets in an additional 12 countries had between 40 and 49.9 per cent of seats filled by women. At the opposite end, 31 countries (mostly in Central and Southern Asia, Oceania, and Western Asia and Northern Africa) had less

than 10 per cent of seats filled by women. Seven countries, three of them in Oceania, had no women among their cabinet ministers.<sup>201</sup>

Figure IX

**Women's representation among cabinet members and heads of ministries, as at 1 January 2024**



Source: UN-Women, “Women political leaders 2024”, poster, January 2024, except for Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), which is based on UN-Women database on women cabinet members, as of 1 November 2024.

202. As heads of ministries, women continue to be mostly responsible for policy agendas on gender equality, family and children’s affairs, and social inclusion and development, and are largely missing as heads of ministries in the areas of finance, defence, justice and home affairs, and in economic policymaking areas. Gendered patterns in the allocation of ministerial portfolios are particularly prevalent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and Central and Southern Asia.<sup>202</sup>

*Women’s representation in national and local elected deliberative bodies has increased, but progress remains slow and uneven*

203. The proportion of women in parliament has more than doubled globally, rising from 11 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent at the time of writing, as monitored by target 5.5 of the Goals. However, at the current rate of progress (less than one percentage point increase per year), gender parity in national legislative bodies is not expected to be achieved before 2063 (E/CN.6/2021/3). In 1995, no parliament had reached parity between women and men, but by 2024, six countries had achieved this milestone. Similarly, in 1995, 10 countries had no women in their single or lower houses of parliament; compared with 3 countries as of 1 October 2024.<sup>203</sup> The share of women serving as presiding officers of parliament has also tripled, increasing from 10.5 per cent in 1995 to 33 per cent according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> See UN-Women, “Women political leaders 2024”, poster, January 2024. Available at [www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/poster-women-political-leaders-2024](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/poster-women-political-leaders-2024).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

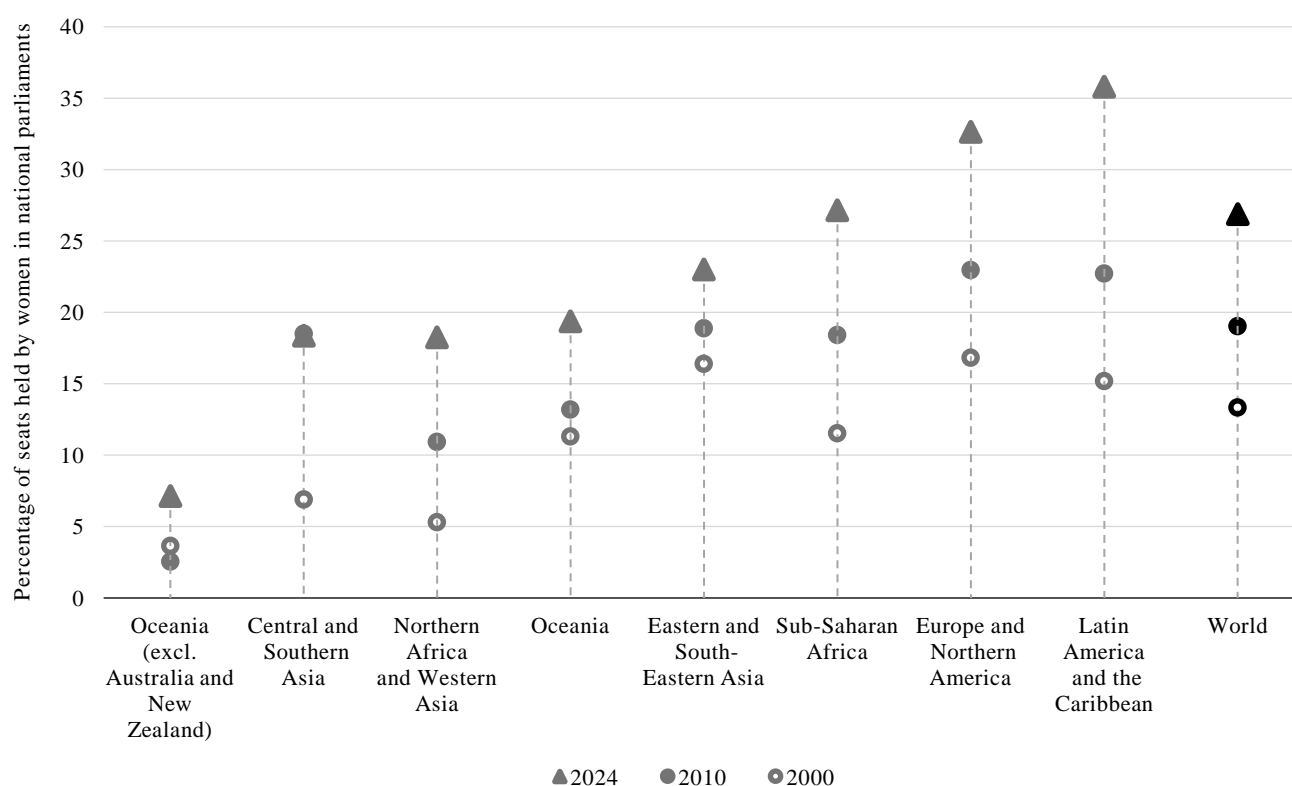
<sup>203</sup> See <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/>, for countries with data available.

<sup>204</sup> IPU, *Women in Parliament: 1995–2020* (Geneva, 2020). See also, <https://data.ipu.org/women-speakers/>.

204. Latin America and the Caribbean has seen the fastest progress, reaching 36 per cent of women legislators in 2024, having more than doubled since 2000. On the other hand, the slowest progress in women's parliamentary representation was in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where it increased modestly from 4 to 7 per cent, and 16 to 23 per cent respectively (see figure X).

Figure X

Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments, by region (2000, 2010 and 2024)



Source: United Nations, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal> (accessed November 2024).

205. Women's representation in at the level of local legislatures is higher than at the national level. As monitored by target 5.5, in 2024, women held 35.5 per cent of seats in elected local deliberative bodies across 145 countries, a small increase compared with 33.9 per cent in 2020. At this rate of progress, parity will not be achieved before 2055. In 2024, only two countries reached gender parity in local governments, while 12 countries had severe underrepresentation of women, at less than 10 per cent.<sup>205</sup>

206. Regional variations are also noted for women's representation in local councils. As of January 2024, Central and Southern Asia led with 41 per cent, followed by Europe and Northern America at 37 per cent; Oceania and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia both at 31 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean at 29 per cent; sub-Saharan Africa at 26 per cent, and Northern Africa and Western Asia at 20 per cent.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>205</sup> UN-Women, "Global data on women's political participation", Women in Local Government database. Available at <https://localgov.unwomen.org/data> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

*Men continue to dominate decision-making across all sectors*

207. Women's participation in decision-making and leadership outside of politics has not grown significantly in the past five years. In 2022, women held 27.5 per cent of managerial positions globally, despite accounting for 40.1 per cent of people in employment.<sup>207</sup> In 2020, globally women made up 46 per cent of public administrators but occupied only 31 per cent of top leadership roles and just 30 per cent of senior managerial positions.<sup>208</sup> In 2021, 43 per cent of professional judges or magistrates in criminal justice institutions were women, an increase from 34 per cent in 2010 (see [S/2023/725](#)). As discussed in sections VI and VII of the present report, attention has increasingly been paid to women's participation across all areas, including in peace and security, humanitarian and environmental decision-making. Decision-making in response to COVID-19 brought into sharp relief the importance of prioritizing women's participation. Of the 262 COVID-19 task forces with sex-disaggregated membership data across 130 countries and territories, women made up only 24 per cent of members. In total, just 7 per cent of task forces achieved gender parity, while 83 per cent were male-dominated.<sup>209</sup> Evidence shows that countries with strong feminist movements, a stronger democracy and higher representation of women in parliament adopted a higher number of gender-sensitive economic and social pandemic response measures than those with limited feminist movements, a weaker democracy and lower representation of women. That finding holds true independent of national income. Countries led by women also often implemented containment strategies more rapidly, such as testing programmes, and issued stay-at-home orders faster than male leaders, possibly resulting in lower mortality rates.<sup>210</sup>

208. In the past five years, women's civil society organizations have not only supported grass-roots communities, they have also been at the forefront of movements on climate change, racial and economic justice, peace, LGBTIQ+ rights and ending violence against women.<sup>211</sup> Their participation has proven essential in holding decision makers accountable for advancing women's and girls' human rights and in monitoring the implementation of policies.<sup>212</sup> The latest available global data on feminist mobilization date back to 2015 and signal that a quarter (32) of the 126 countries studied benefited from the presence of the strongest, most autonomous feminist movements at the time.<sup>213</sup> The lack of updated global, comparable data on women's and feminist mobilization since then makes it difficult to assess the current impact of such mobilization, recent progress and remaining gaps in this vital area of women's full and effective participation. At the same time, women's rights activists and human rights defenders continue to face increasing attacks, as do women in public and political life.

<sup>207</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>208</sup> UNDP and University of Pittsburgh, "Gender equality in public administration", 2021.

<sup>209</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>210</sup> Jennifer M. Piscopo and Malliga Och, "Effective, decisive, and inclusive: women's leadership in COVID-19 response and recovery", Working Paper (New York, UN-Women, 2021).

<sup>211</sup> Kaitlin Kelly-Thompson and others, "Dimensions of transnational feminism: autonomous organizing, multilateralism and agenda-setting in global civil society", *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 22, No. 4 (December 2024); Sonia E. Alvarez and others, "13 theses on feminist protest: a manifesto", *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 50, No. 1 (2024).

<sup>212</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *Logics of Gender Justice: State Action on Women's Rights around the World* (London, Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>213</sup> Summer Forester and others, "New dimensions of global feminist influence: tracking feminist mobilization worldwide, 1975–2015", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 66, No. 1 (March 2022).

*National gender equality mechanisms continue to lack the adequate mandate, authority and resources to fulfil their role*

209. The Platform for Action outlined three components to advance the critical area of concern that refers to gender-responsive institutions: the creation or strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies; the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into legislation, policies, programmes and projects; and the generation and dissemination of gender data for planning and evaluation. At the time of writing, most countries have one or more dedicated gender equality mechanisms or focal points in place.<sup>214</sup> While they may vary greatly in their institutional form, aims and structure, such mechanisms are usually central coordinating units within national governments that are meant to promote the integration of gender equality measures across national plans, policies and programmes, and that coordinate gender mainstreaming across sectoral portfolios. Gender-responsive budgeting is one component of gender mainstreaming. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality are an important conduit for enhancing democracy and are key drivers of policy advancements in key policy areas for gender equality – such as violence against women – while also championing women’s access to decision-making and gender quotas.<sup>215</sup>

210. Data for 70 countries from 1975 to 2005 suggest a statistically significant positive association between the presence of a national women’s machinery and levels of democracy.<sup>216</sup> Attacks on these mechanisms, including efforts to defund, undermine, rename and redirect their mandates, as observed in recent years, attest to their relevance not only in promoting gender equality but also in safeguarding rollbacks of women’s rights and democratic backsliding.

211. Despite their relevance for policymaking in the area of gender equality, no global data exist to properly monitor the authority, professional or financial capacity and effectiveness of national women’s machineries. Regional studies, however, provide valuable insights, suggesting that progress has been slow since the last review, and wide variations across countries remain a stark reality, as many national gender equality mechanisms continue to lack the mandate, resources and decision-making power to effectively implement the vision of the Platform for Action.

212. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, while 70 per cent of Latin American gender equality machineries operate at the ministerial level or equivalent, as few as 11 per cent hold the same level of authority in the Caribbean.<sup>217</sup> Likewise, a 2023 comparative study of 42 countries in Europe, Central Asia and Northern America highlights sharp differences in the institutional capacities of national mechanisms across countries, as measured by the presence of full-time staff, ranging from 104 in Sweden to 4 in Ukraine.<sup>218</sup> Evidence from 11 Central African countries also points to weaknesses in their budgetary allocations, which in most cases amounted to less than 1 per cent of the national budget in 2023.<sup>219</sup> The degree to which gender equality mechanisms consult civil society partners is indicative of their efforts to empower previously excluded groups in policymaking, monitor outcomes and hold policymakers to account. An emerging trend of concern

<sup>214</sup> UN-Women, *Directory of National Mechanisms for Gender Equality May 2022* (New York, 2022).

<sup>215</sup> Htun and Weldon, *Logics of Gender Justice*.

<sup>216</sup> Weldon, “State feminism, global feminist waves and democratic backsliding”.

<sup>217</sup> See <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/nivel-jerarquico-mecanismos-adelanto-la-mujer-mam>.

<sup>218</sup> Amy G. Mazur, *Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality: A Review from the OSCE Region* (Warsaw, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2023).

<sup>219</sup> Nadège Chouapi Kouam, Hamidou Koné and Franklin Bouba Djourdebbé, *Les ministères du genre en Afrique Centrale: De l’ombre à la lumière* (Senegal, UN-Women, 2023).

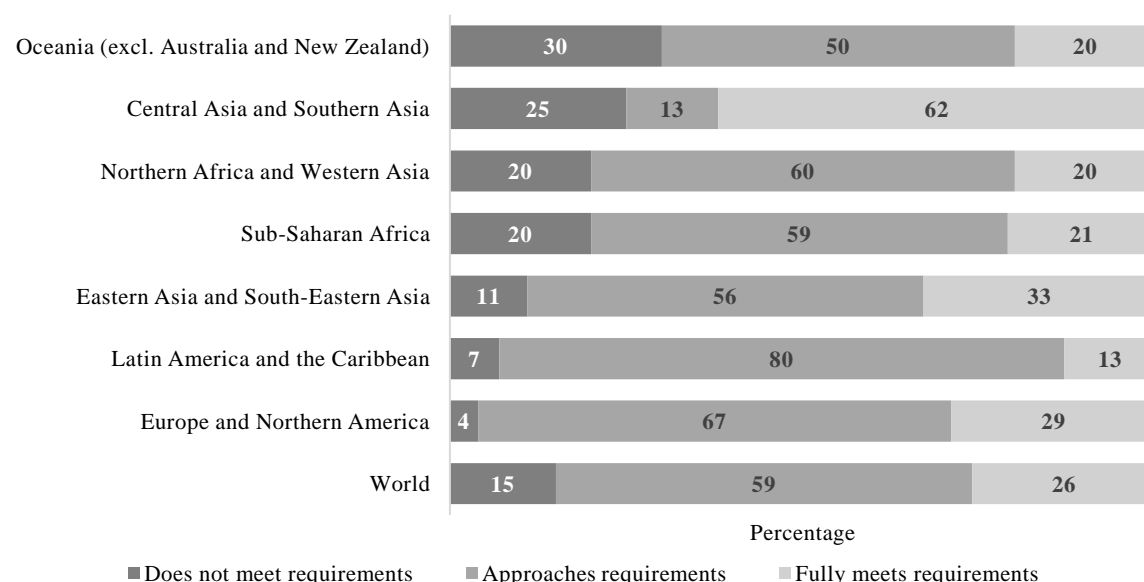
in this regard has been observed in a few countries in which the space for women's rights organizations to participate in state-led consultations has been restricted, while new spaces have opened for regressive actors that oppose women's human rights.<sup>220</sup>

*Despite progress in implementing gender-responsive budgeting, public finance management for gender equality is still limited in scale and impact*

213. Under the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework, States are measuring progress in systematically tracking budget allocations for gender equality based on three criteria: (a) the government's intent to address gender equality by identifying whether policies, programmes and resources are in place; (b) the presence of mechanisms to track resource allocations towards these policy goals; and (c) the presence of mechanisms to make resource allocations publicly available for increased accountability to women and girls. As of 2021, progress has been made on all criteria, but data from 105 countries and areas shows that only 27 countries (26 per cent) fully meet the three criteria and that 62 countries (59 per cent) meet at least one (see figure XI).

Figure XI

**Proportion of countries with gender equality budget allocation tracking systems (2021, percentage)**



Source: United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals indicator 5.c.1", Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal> (accessed November 2024).

Note: Data are derived from an assessment of country systems to track allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, based on reporting on three criteria collected through a questionnaire; the proportion represents the percentage of reporting countries that fully meet the three criteria for the indicator. Data are collected through the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The sample is based on 105 countries globally (26 countries in Europe and Northern America, 9 countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 30 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 10 countries in Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, 7 countries for Northern Africa and Western Asia, and 8 countries in Central and Southern Asia).

<sup>220</sup> Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsán, "The selective closure of civic space", *Global Policy*, vol. 12, No. S5 (July 2021).

*Production and use of gender statistics have improved significantly, along with global standards and methodologies, but critical gaps remain*

214. The use of robust data, including for monitoring of progress made towards achieving the Goals, is imperative to accelerate progress towards gender-responsive policies, laws and institutions. The production and use of gender statistics has improved significantly, with statistics available for 56 per cent of the 52 gender-specific indicators in 2024, compared with 26 per cent in 2016.<sup>221</sup> Yet, on average, countries are only halfway to achieving full capacity in planning, coordinating, producing and making gender data available, with significant variations across regions and income groups. Countries perform better in gender data production than in planning, coordinating and making gender data accessible to enable greater usage.

215. Data gaps remain a huge challenge, meaning that the realities of women and girls on various dimensions of the 2030 Agenda remain invisible. Four of the 18 indicators and subindicators of Goal 5 cannot be fully assessed at the global level. Data, although improving, are also sparse for targets 5.a.1, the proportion of women with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, and 5.a.2, the extent to which national legal frameworks guarantee women's equal land rights according to law, including customary law. Less than a quarter of Member States have data on 5.a.1 since 2000 (23.8 per cent) and just over a third on 5.a.2 (34.7 per cent), respectively. Relatively low data coverage also remains an issue for indicators 5.4.1 on unpaid care (47.2 per cent), 5.6.1 on sexual and reproductive health (35.2 per cent) and 5.b.1 on mobile phone ownership (43.5 per cent). The lack of data also persists in important areas such as on the nexus between gender equality and the environment. The limited availability of intersectional data represents a critical challenge in accurately gauging progress towards ensuring that no woman or girl is left behind. For instance, only 15.0 per cent of Member States have data available on indicator 5.4.1 with respect to rural women aged 65 and older since 2000.<sup>222</sup>

216. Limited funding for the production of gender statistics remains a key obstacle. A review of 74 countries found that, while two thirds included gender statistics in their national strategies, less than a third allocated a budget for them.<sup>223</sup> In addition, after a steady increase over the past decade, funding from the OECD Development Assistance Committee for gender data has declined to approximately \$120 million in 2021–2022 from a peak of \$135 million in 2019–2020.<sup>224</sup> Half of all data projects supported by ODA allocate either zero or negligible amounts (less than 0.05 per cent) to gender-related activities.<sup>225</sup>

### **C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action**

217. The data included in national reports show that policy and programmatic trends in implementation have emerged in four areas: (a) increasing women's participation through temporary special measures and other measures; (b) strengthening commitments to tackle violence against women in politics and public life;

<sup>221</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*; and Jessamyn Encarnacion, Ramya Emandi and Papa Seck, "It will take 22 years to close SDG gender data gaps", UN-Women, 6 September 2022.

<sup>222</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2024*.

<sup>223</sup> Clearinghouse, "Making the case to domestically finance gender data: three ways the NSDS can help", 9 November 2022.

<sup>224</sup> Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, "The PARIS21 partner report on support to statistics 2024: ensuring resilient data systems in a changing funding environment", 2024.

<sup>225</sup> Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and UN-Women, *Gender Data Outlook 2024: Unlocking Capacity, Driving Change* (New York, UN-Women, 2024).

(c) strengthening gender-responsive institutions; and (d) enhancing accountability for meeting gender equality commitments.

(a) *Increasing women's participation through temporary special measures and other measures*

218. Electoral reforms and temporary special measures, including legislated gender quotas, are pivotal for increasing women's political representation at all levels of government. The 2024 review by UN-Women of national legal frameworks for 193 countries found that 103 countries used legislated gender quotas to promote women's representation in elected positions in national or local legislatures,<sup>226</sup> compared with 64 countries a decade ago (see E/CN.6/2015/3). Women's political representation is higher in countries with quotas compared to countries without quotas, by 6 percentage points in single or lower houses of parliaments and in local deliberative bodies.<sup>227</sup>

219. In the past five years, 52 per cent of States reported having introduced temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets that promote women's participation in politics, especially at the decision-making level. The strongest focus on temporary special measures was in Central and Southern Asia (73 per cent), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (62 per cent), with countries in Oceania least likely to have introduced such measures (27 per cent). In order to ensure women's representation at the highest levels of decision-making, 23 per cent of States have introduced whole-of-government or ministerial cabinet gender parity laws or policies mandating that around half of decision-making positions be occupied by women, with the strongest focus in Latin America and the Caribbean (36 per cent).

220. The types of quotas and targets that are set and the implementing mechanisms that make a difference vary widely across countries, leading to mixed results. As at 1 January 2024, 80 countries had candidate quotas and 18 had reserved seats for parliamentary elections (4 countries used both types of quotas, bringing the total of countries with a quota for parliamentary elections to 94). Only 18 countries aimed for parity, setting the quota target at 50 per cent women. In 22 countries, the target for women is 40 per cent and in 35 it ranges from 30 to 36 per cent. The targets are typically more ambitious for candidate quotas compared with reserved seats: all but two countries targeting 40 per cent or over for women's representation do so through candidate quotas.<sup>228</sup> Similar legislated quota arrangements are observed for local elections.

221. The enforcement of candidate quotas is critical to achieving the targets set out in law, because without robust compliance mechanisms, equal representation remains unachieved. Half of the countries with candidate quotas for parliaments (41) have alternate placement rules that distribute women in equally winnable positions throughout the candidate lists. Among these, 32 countries use sanctions for political parties that fail to include the minimum share of women required or follow the placement rules, including 27 that mandate electoral management bodies to reject the non-compliant party lists.<sup>229</sup> In this respect, over the past five years only 19 per cent of States strengthened the implementation of existing temporary special measures by boosting compliance mechanisms, including sanctions on political parties for non-compliance. Additional measures, such as dedicated funding, capacity-building

<sup>226</sup> UN-Women calculations based on the United Nations Gender Data Portal for national legislatures, available at <https://genderquota.org/>; and the Women in Local Government database for local legislatures, available at <https://localgov.unwomen.org/> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>227</sup> UN-Women calculations based on unweighted averages of data retrieved from the United Nations Gender Quota Portal, available at <https://genderquota.org/> (accessed November 2024).

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. (accessed December 2024).



and awareness-raising, also contribute to increased political participation; 72 per cent of States reported having launched initiatives to enhance women's opportunities for mentorship and training for leadership and political campaigning.

222. Recognizing the need to ensure that the diversity of the population is reflected in decision-making, 60 per cent of States encouraged the equal political participation of all women, including young women and underrepresented groups such as Indigenous women, through capacity-building, skills development, awareness-raising and mentorship programmes (see box IX).

#### Box IX

##### **Supporting political participation for underrepresented women**

Intersecting inequalities mean that overall progress on women's political participation has not necessarily lifted all women equally. While there is an absence of globally comparable data, studies show that marginalized women (on the basis of ethnicity, indigeneity, rural status and income, for example) remain underrepresented in political institutions.<sup>a</sup> Lifting the political participation of marginalized women is critical to ensuring that their rights and needs are not overlooked.

A promising development in recent decades has been the evolution of quotas that support the political representation of marginalized women, for example based on ethnicity and gender.<sup>b</sup> Evidence from 37 countries shows that combining gender quotas with ethnic seats boosts the election of women from marginalized groups across different electoral systems.<sup>c</sup> While gender and ethnic minority quotas often function separately, thus limiting their impact, some countries, such as Burundi and Nepal, have advanced combined or "nested" quotas that specifically regulate the political inclusion of women from these groups.<sup>b</sup> As well as quotas supporting women's political participation, in the past five years several countries have reported on specific measures designed to support political participation for marginalized groups of women, including their engagement in public decision-making.

With growing representation of women from marginalized groups in elected seats,<sup>c</sup> Canada has introduced further measures to increase the representation and engagement of Indigenous women in public-decision making, including through the development of specific agreements and accords with different Indigenous women's groups on political engagement, developed in consultation with Indigenous women. In Argentina, workshops and political training programmes have been developed to empower women, including those from minority groups. In Ghana and Senegal, specific awareness-raising programmes have been introduced to enhance the representation and political participation of women living in rural areas and women from a low-income setting. In Albania, women parliamentarians engage in public hearings with marginalized groups of women, such as Roma women, in order to identify

and address specific gender discrimination issues that affect those communities.

- <sup>a</sup> Melanie M. Hughes, “Crossing intersections: overcoming the challenges of cross-national research on the legislative representation of women from marginalized groups”, in *Political Inequality in an Age of Democracy: Cross-national Perspectives*, Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow, ed. (New York, Routledge, 2015).
- <sup>b</sup> Melanie M. Hughes, “The combination of gender and ethnic quotas in electoral politics”, in *Gender Parity and Multicultural Feminism: Towards a New Synthesis*, Ruth Rubio-Marín and Will Kymlicka, eds. (Oxford, Oxford Academic, 2018).
- <sup>c</sup> Stephanie Holmsten, Melanie M. Hughes and Robert Moser, “Invisibility or inclusion? Ethnic parties, ethnic seats, and gender quotas and the representation of minoritized women”, *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, vol. 45, No. 2 (2024).

223. Temporary special measures play a crucial role in increasing women’s participation. By establishing higher targets and enforcing stricter regulations and oversight, the representation of women in decision-making positions can be improved. To increase the involvement of women from Indigenous and minority groups, it is essential that measures are taken to enhance the political representation of these underrepresented communities in all elected and appointed offices.

(b) *Strengthening commitments to tackle violence against women in politics and public life*

224. As more women have entered public and political life, they have increasingly faced unique forms of gender-based harassment and discrimination aimed at deterring their participation and silencing their voices (see sect. IV). Acts or threats of gender-based violence not only hinder women from participating in public life but have severe consequences, as they weaken public institutions, policy outcomes and peace and development more broadly.<sup>230</sup> A survey of office holders in five countries found that between one third and two thirds of women elected to local governments experienced violence because of their gender and position. Women reported experiencing harassment and violence most frequently within the institutions they serve: they are deliberately excluded from official meetings and events, are prevented from accessing resources to which they are entitled to perform their duties and are often on the receiving end of offensive, aggressive or sexual comments and remarks. Alarming, only 9 to 20 per cent of women who had experienced such violence have filed formal complaints.<sup>231</sup>

225. As part of efforts to address violence against women in politics and public life, 38 per cent of States reported having taken measures to prevent and investigate cases of violence against women in public life, end impunity and prosecute and punish perpetrators – more than double the percentage reported in the previous review period. The strongest response was in Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Specific actions included: prohibiting defamatory or derogatory attacks and any acts that incite violence, hatred or intimidation against political parties and candidates, often specifically mentioning women; working with national law enforcement institutions to develop priority interventions for the prevention of gender-based violence during elections; providing incentives and support for political parties to commit resources towards ending gender-based violence before, during and

<sup>230</sup> Julie Ballington, Gabrielle Bardall and Gabriella Borosvsky, *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide* (New York, UN-Women and UNDP, 2017).

<sup>231</sup> UN-Women, *Global Project on Violence against Women in Politics Data* (forthcoming).

after general elections; and developing policies and guidance for election administration and management bodies to address sexual and other forms of harassment. Other actions to address violence against women in politics and public life were focused on preventing the spread of misogyny and discrimination in the media.

226. While the focus in this area is encouraging, sustained action is needed in order to develop long-term and integrated institutional solutions to fully address the scale of the issue. Such action is particularly urgent in view of the emergence of newer forms of violence against women that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology in public life and politics (see sect. IV).

(c) *Strengthening gender-responsive institutions*

227. Gender machineries are essential for the strategic and coherent development, implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies, as well as for the mainstreaming of gender in all national and local policies. Half of States (50 per cent) reported that the mandate of their national gender equality machineries is focused on the vision of ensuring gender equality for all and 12 per cent were focused on promoting women's rights. Some 23 per cent of States included gender equality as part of the mandate of protecting families and children, suggesting that there is a dilution of the focus on gender equality. The absence of data on the features of gender machineries, and other aspects of gender mainstreaming such as budget allocation, is a barrier to monitoring and accountability regarding the state of gender-responsive institutions.

228. As was the case in the previous review, States also reported establishing gender directorates, commissions and focal points at the regional and municipal levels in order to improve intersectoral coordination and the design and implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies and action plans at the subnational level. These mechanisms typically focus on the systematic and coordinated implementation of gender policies, ensure women's representation and support their continuous participation in elected bodies.

229. Successive reviews of the implementation of the Platform for Action have highlighted the lack of resources and capacity of national gender equality machineries as a key impediment to their effectiveness. Only 52 per cent of States reported that their gender machineries were provided with adequate financial resources and staff capacity to fulfil their mandates and that their budget, as a proportion of the overall government budget, had increased in the reporting period (50 per cent). However, further analysis of the narrative reports reveals gaps in fully reporting gender budgets and significant regional disparities in funding for gender machineries as a share of national budgets. Budgets allocated to national gender machineries are less than 1 per cent of national budgets in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa and are around 10 per cent in some countries in Europe. Improving transparency regarding budgets allocated to gender machineries and their expenditure can provide valuable insights on the volume of funding for gender equality, priority activities and interventions and gaps in funding.

230. Some 90 per cent of States reported having integrated gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a key priority in their sustainable development national plans, acknowledging their mutually reinforcing role. In addition, 89 per cent of States reported that they had a national action plan for gender equality, with 53 per cent indicating that the plans had been costed and provided with sufficient resources in the current budget – an increase of 16 percentage points compared to the previous reporting period. Some States reported the pursuit of promising approaches, such as aligning national plans with global commitments, including those set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, coordinating with national human rights institutions in the process of drafting such plans and taking steps to ensure the active participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of these plans.

231. Across regions, national action plans have primarily been focused on mainstreaming gender through state policies and activities aimed at prioritizing the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls and gender-based discrimination. Other common commitments include: increasing women's employment, improving their access to social services and promoting their economic empowerment; achieving parity and equality in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres; and reviewing and reforming discriminatory laws and policies. Reports also indicate that States are increasingly taking steps to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls. The integration of gender equality and women's rights into foreign policy has been a growing focus for States over the past five years (see box X).

#### Box X

##### **Integrating gender equality into foreign policy**

In the past decade, a growing number of States have adopted gender-responsive foreign policies, including feminist foreign policies. While the areas of focus vary depending on national and regional contexts, the main focus is the mainstreaming of gender equality and the human rights of women and girls within ministries of foreign affairs, and through regional, bilateral and multilateral engagements. Policy commitments typically include the increased allocation of resources towards gender equality objectives, including through official development assistance; support for women's leadership; and the integration of gender considerations into international development and climate action; the promotion of women's equal and meaningful representation in decision-making; and gender-responsive institutional reforms within ministries of foreign affairs. Several countries also prioritize the women and peace and security agenda as part of their foreign policy objectives (see sect. VI). Mexico, for instance, reported that in 2021, a national action plan was rolled out to follow up on resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security by promoting the substantive participation of women in conflict prevention.

States also reported having integrated gender equality into their trade policies, including through the introduction of dedicated gender clauses in free trade agreements so as to ensure that the benefits of inclusive trade and economic development contribute to women's economic empowerment and broader gender equality goals. The feminist foreign policy of Chile prioritizes the inclusion of gender chapters in free trade agreements and internationalization programmes for women's businesses. The feminist foreign policy of Canada applies to all areas of international engagement, including trade and economic relations, and is being implemented through a set of complementary international policies, programmes and initiatives. A strategic priority of the foreign policy of Iceland is to make provisions for gender mainstreaming in international trade agreements.

Developed countries are also articulating priorities in foreign policy, often through specific targets regarding the use financial investments, including bilateral aid and allocations to civil society organizations and multilateral institutions, so as to advance gender equality and broader inclusive development efforts. Several States also recognized the pivotal

role of local organizations in promoting women's rights and gender equality through initiatives such as enhancing access to essential services in humanitarian and conflict-affected settings, advocating the inclusion of women in efforts to address climate issues and supporting gender equality partnerships. While these efforts have important potential for the promotion of gender equality, more effort is needed to bridge gaps between aspiration and implementation and to ensure accountability for action (see sect. VI). To further advance gender-responsive foreign policies, including feminist foreign policies, there is a need for quality data, gender mainstreaming across all areas of foreign policy, strong institutional mechanisms and improved collaboration among various stakeholders, including among feminist movements and civil society groups at the regional and global levels.

232. Reflecting a small increase compared with the previous review, 54 per cent of States reported that they track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting). According to the tracking of indicator 5.c.1 in terms of progress towards achieving the Goals, however, as noted in figure XI, only 26 per cent of countries fully meet the criteria for systematically tracking the proportion of their budget allocated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Those findings suggest that while the focus on gender-responsive budgeting is increasing, efforts are needed to embed a comprehensive approach.

233. States are using a variety of approaches to track their expenditures on gender equality commitments, including by incorporating gender considerations into accounting systems, developing relevant guidelines and training budget officers in line ministries. Some countries have adopted legislation to mandate gender-responsive budget management in all phases of the financial management cycle, including at the local level. Others have anchored gender budgeting in their constitution and list gender equality among the fundamental principles that must guide public finance management. Other initiatives include developing or incorporating gender-sensitive markers, classifying actions according to their degree of gender sensitivity and tracking their respective budgets. Fewer States, however, conduct outcome-oriented impact assessments and implementation audits or gender-responsive budgeting analyses of line ministries. Capacity constraints in gender analysis, a lack of connection between strategic planning and budgeting processes and gaps in the production and use of sex-disaggregated statistics and gender data remain key challenges. Accelerated efforts to develop and refine such systems are urgently needed for increased transparency and accountability on funding commitments and allocations for gender equality. Progress in this regard could be accelerated by exploring capacity-building partnerships.

234. In order to inform the formulation and monitoring of gender equality policies and programmes, States continue to prioritize the collection of data disaggregated by sex. Specifically, 44 per cent of States have reported that they have prioritized new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g. time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability), 43 per cent have used more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and the implementation of programmes and 35 per cent have established an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics. The least action was reported in relation to efforts to improve administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps (16 per cent).

235. There have been important advances at the international level to support States in the production and use of gender statistics. The Women Count programme launched by UN-Women has supported States by financing critical data collection, integrating gender statistics into national plans and strategies, fostering collaboration and coordination for gender statistics at all levels of government, improving accessibility of gender statistics and regularly monitoring the gender-related Goals and national policies. Since its inception, the programme has supported over 90 surveys and other data collection initiatives. The data have been used in over 40 countries, including to influence 18 policies, spanning care work, preventing violence against women, gender and the environment and constitutional amendments. The global gender data ecosystem has also expanded into new areas such as citizen data, which is created or collected by individuals or civil society organizations and has the potential to empower marginalized groups to monitor challenges and advocate change.<sup>232</sup>

236. Despite these promising developments, the availability of gender data is not sufficient to inform all areas of gender equality policies. Examples remain concentrated in recognized areas such as those relating to violence against women and girls and unpaid care and domestic work policies and programmes, and less in areas such as research, national monitoring and evaluation and to inform budget allocation decisions.<sup>233</sup>

(d) *Enhancing accountability for meeting gender equality commitments*

237. In addition to formal institutions, the inclusive, meaningful and transparent participation of civil society is paramount for increased accountability for meeting gender equality commitments. Reflecting an increase from the previous review, 86 per cent of States reported that civil society organizations were formally participating in national coordination mechanisms established to contribute to the implementation of the Platform for Action and almost 79 per cent also indicated that women's rights organizations were formally participating in the implementation of the Platform. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the broader context of resistance and backlash, including the dismantling of participatory spaces for civil society, undermines the effective monitoring and implementation of gender equality policies (see [A/HRC/56/51](#)).

238. Despite the growing recognition of the critical role played by women human rights defenders in advocating accountability and in claiming and reclaiming civic space, civil and political rights, and democracy around the world, efforts to protect them remain limited. Only 30 per cent of countries globally reported measures to protect civic space and human rights defenders, despite increasing civic restrictions and weakening accountability. Some promising policy tools and mechanisms that were reported in the current review period by States concerned strategies to protect women human rights defenders and their organizations, including the adoption of early warning systems that identify risks and threats to their safety. Other States have targeted programmes that are developed, implemented and monitored by multisectoral mechanisms and that guarantee the prevention of threats and risks, the protection of women human rights defenders and their access to justice and redress. Overall, however, there was limited information on States' efforts to protect women human rights defenders, signalling that greater attention is needed in this area.

<sup>232</sup> See, for example, the Collaborative on Citizen Data, available at <https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/citizen-data/>, led by the United Nations, Statistics Division and UN-Women, and The Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data, available at [https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session\\_55/documents/BG-4c-CGD\\_Framework-E.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/session_55/documents/BG-4c-CGD_Framework-E.pdf).

<sup>233</sup> Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and UN-Women, *Gender Data Outlook 2024*.

239. National human rights institutions, which have been established in 123 States, are playing a growing role in monitoring and responding to violations of women's rights. They can monitor States' compliance with gender equality commitments, collect individual complaints of discrimination, develop thematic reports and, in some cases, conduct investigations into individual complaints. Reflecting an increase from the previous review, 62 per cent of States reported that these institutions have a mandate to focus on gender equality or gender-based discrimination. In order to meet international human rights obligations, 70 per cent of States reported having a plan in place to follow up on recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the universal periodic review, with a clear outline of assigned tasks, entities involved, a concrete timeline and appropriate indicators to monitor progress. Very few States, however, reported on whether and how national legislation and policies were aligned with the recommendations of the review processes.

240. When women's rights claims are not addressed at the national level, global human rights mechanisms play a key role in providing an avenue for accountability. States are accountable for the realization of women's human rights in all areas. From January 2020 to October 2024, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women received 90 State party reports, issued 92 concluding observations and received 68 State party follow-up reports. Under the follow-up procedure (between November 2019 and October 2024), the Committee considered that: 7 per cent of the recommendations identified as follow-up items had been implemented; 10 per cent had been substantially implemented; 54 per cent had been partially implemented; and 22 per cent had not been implemented. In the context of the individual communications procedure and confidential inquiry procedures under the Optional Protocol to the Convention (between January 2020 and October 2024), the Committee found violations under the Convention in 23 cases, covering a wide range of issues, and conducted two inquiries.<sup>234</sup>

#### **D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

241. While there have been important improvements in women's participation in decision-making bodies, particularly in political institutions, the pace of change remains unacceptably slow, especially at the highest levels of executive and legislative power. This is particularly the case for women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. At the same time, national women's machineries play a fundamental role in the strategic and coherent development, implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies, as well as the mainstreaming of gender in policies and strategies, but they remain underfunded and do not have a mandate commensurate with fulfilling their role. Despite important advances in gender-responsive budgeting, comprehensive approaches do not exist across the board. In addition to these gaps, the broader context of democratic erosions and increasing attacks on women human rights defenders points to a widening accountability gap for gender equality. Five priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts.

*Accelerate gender parity in national and local government by applying temporary special measures*

242. Legislative and policy measures are needed to accelerate improvements in women's representation. Wider use of well-designed quotas aiming for 50-50 gender

<sup>234</sup> OHCHR/CEDAW secretariat, OHCHR/Petitions Team, "CEDAW statistics update after 89th session", email to authors, 11 November 2024.

parity and robust implementation mechanisms, as well as support for underrepresented women to engage in politics, are crucial. Consistent legislative and policy measures that address violence against women in politics and public life as an infringement of women's human rights, hold perpetrators accountable and enable women's access to justice and services are also urgently needed. Institutional changes are also required, including internal policies, procedures and practices, so that public institutions and political parties uphold standards of safe conduct and gender-inclusive principles, and deliver policies and outcomes in accordance with international and regional commitments to gender equality and prevention of violence against women.

*Ensure strong national gender equality machineries with a clear gender equality and women's human rights mandate*

243. States should ensure that national machineries have a clear mandate, status and authority, as well as sufficient human and financial resources, to lead the development and implementation of gender equality laws and policies and gender equality mainstreaming across all areas, along with open, inclusive and participatory processes so that women's rights organizations can influence and monitor gender-responsive laws and policies. Efforts to establish globally comparable, robust data on the role, focus and budgets of national gender equality machineries are required, as is research into their effectiveness.

*Implement a comprehensive approach to gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors*

244. States should ensure that there are linkages between strategic planning and budgeting processes and prioritize the production and use of gender data to inform gender-responsive budgeting. Accelerated efforts to develop comprehensive approaches to gender-responsive public finance management are urgently needed for increased transparency and accountability on funding commitments and allocations for gender equality.

*Increase the production and use of gender statistics to inform actions and monitor progress on gender equality*

245. Collective action and the engagement of key actors in the gender data ecosystem are needed to ensure that gender statistics play their full part in achieving gender equality and the empowerment and rights of all women and girls. Persistent data gaps, broken links between the production of, access to and use of gender data, irregular funding and underdeveloped mechanisms for collaboration need to be tackled in order to create transformative and impactful gender data systems. States should prioritize and significantly increase their investments in gender statistics so as to fill data gaps. In addition, communities need to be fostered around national gender data systems in order to build accountability and spur progress across dimensions of gender data capacity, and with a view to increasing the use of gender data, more systematic engagement across sectors and stakeholders is needed to activate gender data users and unlock the broad potential of gender data use and impact.

*Create safe and enabling environments for women's rights organizations and significantly increase flexible funding for such organizations, so as to hold decision makers to account*

246. Strengthening accountability for gender equality requires safe and enabling environments for women's rights organizations to hold decision makers to account; such environments must be created through robust laws and policies that safeguard women human rights defenders. Such measures also require increasing long-term, core and flexible funding to women's rights organizations.



## VI. Peaceful and inclusive societies

### Key messages

- Over the past five years, violent conflicts and humanitarian crises have intensified to unprecedented levels, affecting more people than ever before. In 2023, more than 170 armed conflicts were recorded, and approximately 612 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of these conflicts, more than 50 per cent higher than just a decade ago.
- Conflict and crisis significantly hinder progress for women and girls, in addition to affecting the essential services that are crucial for their well-being. The latest data show that over one third of maternal deaths occur in 48 fragile and conflict-affected countries. The prevalence of child, early and forced marriage in fragile States is twice the global average.
- Human rights violations and violence against women in contexts of conflict and crisis remain widespread. Despite the growing needs, measures to respond to such violations, including prevention efforts, services and justice for survivors, remain inadequate. Political violence against women in conflict settings is also on the rise.
- Despite strong evidence that women's participation in peace processes strengthens outcomes, women's exclusion from such processes remains the norm.
- The implementation of global women and peace and security commitments has been undermined by a lack of accountability and inadequate funding, as well as by an increase in military spending, contributing to a culture of militarism. Global military expenditure has continued to increase, reaching an all-time high of \$2.44 trillion per year in 2023, double the amount of military expenditure in 1995.
- Countries and territories have progressed actions in several areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:
  - (a) 111 countries and territories have adopted national action plans on women and peace and security. On the basis of responses to the survey, however, only 28 per cent of States reported having increased their budgetary allocations to this area of work;
  - (b) 43 per cent of countries and territories reported having adopted gender-responsive approaches to humanitarian action and crisis response, a slight increase from 40 per cent in 2019. A key innovation in recent years has been the growth of humanitarian response plans that integrate actions across three cross-cutting areas of gender equality: fostering women's economic empowerment, promoting sexual and reproductive health and eliminating gender-based violence;
  - (c) Only 3 per cent of countries and territories reported taking steps to reduce excessive military expenditure or to control the availability of armaments, and only 1 per cent have reallocated funds from military spending to social and economic spending, including for gender equality and the empowerment of women, a decline from 5 per cent in both areas in 2019.

- (d) Similar to 2019, 59 per cent of countries and territories reported having promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes. These actions are largely limited to peripheral meetings, however, rather than actual decision-making processes.

## A. Introduction

247. Over the past five years, violent conflicts and humanitarian crises have intensified to unprecedented levels, affecting more people than ever before. The pushback against human rights, particularly women's human rights, is a common thread in the spread of conflict, violent extremism and authoritarianism (see [S/2024/671](#)). Misogyny, defined as hostile sexist attitudes and support for violence against women, is strongly correlated with support for violent extremism.<sup>235</sup> The broader context of the backlash against women's and girls' rights and the weaponization of misogyny by armed actors, including after unconstitutional changes of government and coups, has also undermined progress on women and peace and security commitments.

248. Structural gender inequalities are at the foundation of norms that justify violence as a legitimate way to resolve conflict, fuelling cultures of militarization around the world.<sup>236</sup> Pre-existing gender inequalities are exacerbated in times of conflict and crisis, with devastating effects on women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights, as can be seen in high levels of violence against women. As such, overall progress on gender equality is significantly slower in conflict- and crisis-affected countries. Women's equal leadership and participation in all aspects of peace processes is critical for improving and strengthening peace processes and outcomes and for improving the effectiveness and outcomes of humanitarian action. In the Platform for Action, Member States recognized that creating peaceful and inclusive societies requires addressing the structural drivers of conflict, in particular inequality, discrimination, militarism and the arms trade.

249. Building on the policy guidance provided in the Platform for Action, the normative framework on women and peace and security, humanitarian action and the rights of refugees has continued to expand. Between 2015 and 2023, more than 65 per cent of the decisions of the Security Council explicitly included gender-related issues, compared with 32 per cent in the previous 15 years. The average has been trending down in the past two years, however, and reached 58 per cent in 2023, the lowest in seven years. Overall, there has been growing attention to women and peace and security and there have been innovations in the working methods of the Security Council, including by having more women from civil society briefing the Security Council. Since 2016, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security<sup>237</sup> has provided a space for regular consultations between Council experts and the United Nations on urgent concerns in country-specific situations. Despite these advances, the Security Council has struggled to cope with the challenging peace and security environment and to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

<sup>235</sup> Elin Bjarnegård, Erik Melander and Jacqui True, "Women, peace and security: the sexism and violence nexus", Folke Bernadotte Academy, PRIO and UN-Women, November 2020.

<sup>236</sup> Soumita Basu and Catia C. Confortini, "Weakest 'P' in the 1325 Pod? Realizing conflict prevention through Security Council resolution 1325", *International Studies Perspective*, vol. 18, No. 1 (February 2017).

<sup>237</sup> Established by the Security Council in its resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#).

including in situations such as the wars in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Sudan and Ukraine.

250. The Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are increasingly paying attention to the links between gender equality, women's human rights and peace. The Committee's general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations has provided an additional channel for Member States to report on their progress. In September 2024, during the high-level week of the General Assembly, several Governments announced that, in the face of the extreme repressions of the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, they had invoked the dispute settlement clause in article 29 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>238</sup> The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has called for the codification of gender apartheid as a new crime in international law, including in negotiations on the draft convention on crimes against humanity (see [A/HRC/56/51](#)).

251. In 2023, in an effort to advance gender parity in peace decision-making, the United Nations supported an initial minimum target that one third of participants in mediation and peace processes be women, to be achieved through the adoption of special measures, targets and incentives (see [S/2023/725](#)). In the Pact for the Future, adopted in 2024, Member States recognized that the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels of peace and security, including in conflict prevention and resolution, would be essential to achieving sustainable peace.

## B. Global and regional trends

*Conflicts and crises have intensified in recent years, with more women and girls affected*

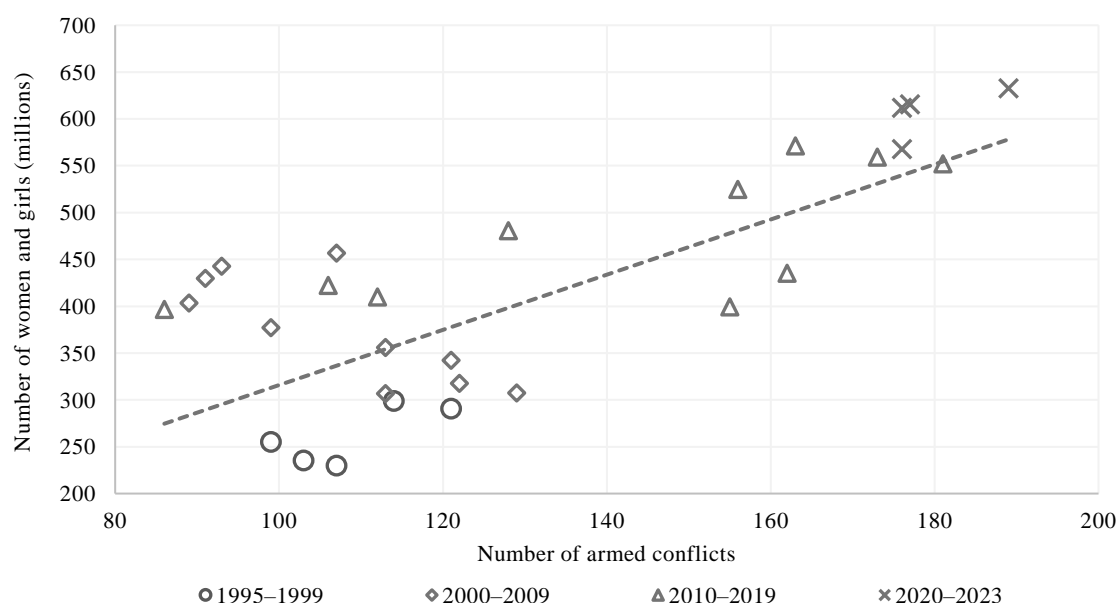
252. According to the 2024 Global Peace Index, the average level of global peacefulness has deteriorated for the fifth consecutive year.<sup>239</sup> In 2023, more than 170 armed conflicts were recorded, and approximately 612 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of these conflicts, an increase of 54 per cent compared with 2010 (see figure XII). Civilian deaths in armed conflicts surged by a staggering 72 per cent in 2023 compared with 2022, and the proportion of women killed doubled during the same period (see [S/2024/385](#)). At the end of 2023, an estimated 117.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced owing to persecution, conflict and violence, representing a 73 per cent increase over the past five years (see [S/2024/671](#)). Half of the forcibly displaced population are women and girls, and 1 in 4 are children. Women also account for a larger share of the adult stateless population (53 per cent).<sup>240</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Rangita de Silva de Alwis, "Groundbreaking efforts to protect Afghan women's rights under CEDAW", Penn Carey Law, 26 September 2024.

<sup>239</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Peace Index 2024: measuring peace in a complex world", June 2024.

<sup>240</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: forced displacement in 2023", 2024. Population for which demographic data (sex and age) is available accounts for 70 per cent of the world's forcibly displaced people estimated by UNHCR.

Figure XII  
**Number of armed conflicts and number of women and girls living within 50 kilometres of armed conflict, 1995–2023**



Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo calculations based on Uppsala Conflict Data Programme's Dataset Download Centre, available at <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/> (accessed June 2024).

253. The growing climate crisis is also exacerbating existing tensions and economic, political, social and environmental risks (see sect. VII), with gendered impacts, potentially resulting in the loss of livelihoods, competition over resources, displacement and migration, as well as volatility of food prices and food availability. These risks can undermine social cohesion, peace and security, while also reversing progress in sustainable development.<sup>241</sup>

*Conflict and crisis significantly hold back progress for women and girls, and there are growing attacks on essential services*

254. Conflict and crises hold back progress for women and girls on a range of economic and social indicators, such as their access to food, education and healthcare, particularly in contexts involving societal and economic collapse, a loss of infrastructure and restrictions on movement. Conflict and crises, as along with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have also contributed to the higher prevalence of violence against women, including intimate partner violence, violence against women who are active in the public sphere and sexual violence perpetrated by combatants as a tactic of war (see sect. IV).

255. In countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, progress for women and girls is held back owing to the breakdown of basic infrastructure and public services. A concerning recent trend has been the increase in attacks on civilian infrastructure, education and health services. Between 2022 and 2023, over 3,300 attacks on health facilities were reported in 19 countries with humanitarian emergencies, resulting in at least 2,700 deaths and injuries.<sup>242</sup> Such attacks deprive

<sup>241</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and others, *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change* (New York, 2020).

<sup>242</sup> UN-Women calculations based on WHO, Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care database. Available at <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx> (accessed November 2024).

people of essential healthcare for traumatic injuries or to treatment for chronic and infectious diseases and for malnutrition, as well as rendering maternal and paediatric healthcare inadequate or non-existent.<sup>243</sup> Between 2022 and 2023, approximately 6,000 attacks were reported on schools, universities, students and educators, including instances of parties to conflict using educational facilities for military purposes. These attacks on education surged by nearly 20 per cent in the period 2022–2023, as compared with the prior biennium.<sup>244</sup>

256. In humanitarian crises, women and girls face the worst impacts of the breakdown of essential services, as their basic needs are often the first to be compromised. In the Syrian Arab Republic, half of the 63 active emergency obstetric and newborn care centres face closure, severely affecting 1.3 million women. In South Sudan, maternal mortality rates are the highest in the world, and cuts to midwifery training programmes pose grave consequences for those giving birth without trained workers. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 4 out of 5 girls went without essential support to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.<sup>245</sup>

257. The latest data show that over one third of maternal deaths worldwide occurred in 48 fragile and conflict-affected countries. Between 2015 and 2020, the maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) in conflict-affected countries reduced from 424 to 370, a decline of 14 per cent. That ratio compares to a global decline from 227 to 223 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births globally, representing a 1.8 per cent decrease.<sup>246</sup> The rate of decline in conflict-affected countries is greater than in non-conflict countries, but starting from a much higher baseline.

258. Women and girls in conflict settings face heightened mental and physical health risks. A survey conducted in May 2024 in Rafah, Gaza Strip, revealed that over 80 per cent of women and girls reported feelings of depression, 66 per cent were not able to sleep and over 70 per cent had heightened anxiety and nightmares<sup>247</sup>. Similarly, a survey of Ukrainian refugee mothers in Poland conducted in 2023 showed that over 60 per cent experienced high or severe levels of distress.<sup>248</sup> Women and girls in conflict settings are also particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases due to displacement, loss of infrastructure and to disruptions in healthcare systems, disease control programmes and the supply chain of safe water, food and medication.<sup>249</sup>

259. Progress in girls' education is hampered in crisis- and conflict-affected countries (see sect. III). At the time of writing, an estimated 122.4 million school-age girls and adolescent girls are not in school and more than a quarter of those girls are in conflict- or crisis-affected countries. In 2015, the upper secondary out-of-school rate for girls was 52 per cent for conflict-affected countries, compared with 32 per cent globally. In 2023, this gap has only closed marginally to 48 per cent for conflict-affected countries, compared with 30 per cent globally.<sup>250</sup> Lower rates of girls' education (particularly at secondary level) are correlated with rises in child, early and forced

<sup>243</sup> Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition and Insecurity Insight, *Critical Condition: Violence against Health Care in Conflict 2023* (Baltimore, 2024).

<sup>244</sup> Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education Under Attack 2024* (2024).

<sup>245</sup> United Nations, "Global humanitarian overview 2025: abridged report", 4 December 2024.

<sup>246</sup> UN-Women calculations based on WHO, "Trend in MMR", Maternal Mortality: Levels and Trends 2000 to 2020 database. Available at <https://mmr2020.srhr.org/data>.

<sup>247</sup> UN-Women, "Intensified military operations will bring increased death and despair for Rafah's 700,000 women and girls", 6 May 2024.

<sup>248</sup> United Nations, "Survey reveals war's 'immense' mental health toll on Ukrainian refugee mothers in Poland", 19 May 2023.

<sup>249</sup> Valia Marou and others, "The impact of conflict on infectious disease: a systematic literature review", *Conflict and Health*, vol. 18, No. 27 (2024).

<sup>250</sup> UN-Women calculations based on UNESCO, Education Estimates database, available at <https://education-estimates.org/out-of-school/data/> (accessed on December 2024).

marriage. During conflict and crises, when rates of sexual violence escalate, this risk increases (see sect. IV). The prevalence of child, early and forced marriage in fragile States is twice the global average.<sup>251</sup>

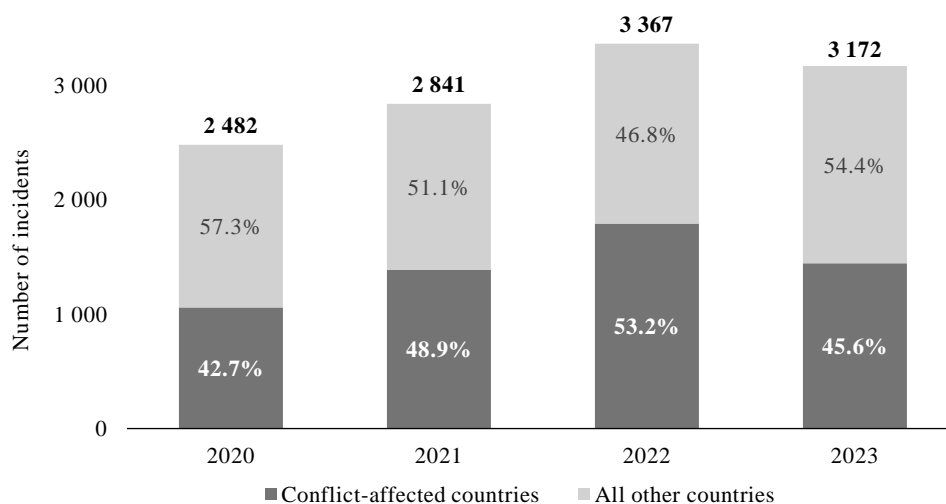
*Violence against women in contexts of conflict and crisis remains widespread, and political violence towards women is on the rise*

260. Recent data indicate that sexual violence remains widespread. The number of United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2023 surged to 3,688 cases, higher by 50 per cent than the year before, and among them, the cases in which women and girls were victims increased by 53 per cent.<sup>252</sup> While data remain scarce, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, noted that where reporting on weapons is available, 70 to 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve a weapon, in particular firearms.<sup>253</sup>

261. Political violence and hate speech targeting women is a concern in conflict- and crisis-affected countries, including high levels of violence and harassment against women leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders, as well as against voters and candidates in elections. Between May 2022 and April 2023, OHCHR documented 140 incidents of reprisals and intimidation for cooperation with the United Nations, affecting at least 108 women and girls (see [UNW/2024/2](#)). Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project show that in 2023, women and girls were the main targets in more than 3,000 political violence events worldwide, and nearly half took place in 32 conflict-affected countries with data (see figure XIII). The growth of such events targeting women in conflict-affected countries has increased more rapidly than in the rest of the world from 2020 to 2023.

Figure XIII

**Number of incidents of violence targeting women, 2020–2023**



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, available at <https://acleddata.com/> (accessed September 2024).

<sup>251</sup> UNICEF, “Global polycrisis creating uphill battle to end child marriage”, 2 May 2023.

<sup>252</sup> United Nations, “Factsheet: 2023 report of the Secretary-General on CRSV”, 21 April 2024; and United Nations, “Factsheet: 2022 report of the Secretary-General on CRSV”, 10 July 2023.

<sup>253</sup> Hana Salama, “Addressing weapons in conflict-related sexual violence: the arms control and disarmament toolbox”, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2023.

*Women's exclusion from peace processes remains the norm*

262. Despite evidence of the contribution that women make at various stages and levels to resolve conflict and negotiate peace,<sup>254</sup> exclusion rather than inclusion has remained the norm in formal peace processes. Preliminary data from over 50 peace processes indicate that in 2023, on average, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 per cent of mediators and 26.6 per cent of signatories to peace agreements and ceasefire agreements. The proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5 per cent if Colombia's agreements are excluded (see [S/2024/671](#)). The data show little progress over the past decade and in a number of processes, women were locked out of formal talks altogether.

263. The multiple active conflicts in 2023 that were not resolved have contributed to the devastating harms experienced by women, girls and civilians at large. Out of 31 agreements reached in 2023, only 8 (26 per cent) included explicit references to women, girls, gender or sexual violence, a drop from 28 per cent in 2022.<sup>255</sup>

*Global commitments are being undermined by increasing military spending, contributing to a culture of militarism*

264. In the Platform for Action, Member States acknowledged the inextricable relationship between achieving gender equality and peace, on the one hand, and reducing military expenditures, controlling the availability of armaments and promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution, on the other. Yet, the implementation of global commitments on disarmament has been stymied by increasing military spending, the continued spread of small arms and light weapons, the development of new weapons, the use of technology-based and chemical weapons, with impunity, and growing tensions between nuclear armed rivals ([S/2019/800](#)). Military spending is given higher priority than public budgets for the social spending that is critical to achieving gender equality. Global military expenditure increased in 2023 for the ninth consecutive year, reaching an all-time high of \$2.44 trillion. That level represented an increase of 6.8 per cent in real terms from 2022, and approximately double the level recorded in 1995, when the Platform for Action called for a reduction in military spending.<sup>256</sup>

*Funding for women, peace and security and humanitarian action fails to match the scale of the challenge*

265. There remains a significant gap to close on financing for women and peace and security commitments. The share of bilateral allocable ODA provided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee with gender equality objectives dropped from 45 to 42 per cent after a decade on the rise. A similar share is observed in bilateral allocable ODA to contexts experiencing fragility. In 2021–2022, it stood at \$47.7 billion on average per year. Of that amount, \$20.5 billion (44 per cent) included gender equality objectives. However, only \$2.5 billion (4 per cent) was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective.<sup>257</sup>

266. The recognition of the vital role women's organizations and movements play in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts is not matched by increased access to direct, flexible and sustainable funding. Bilateral allocable ODA aimed at supporting

<sup>254</sup> UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*.

<sup>255</sup> Laura Wise, "Gender references in peace agreements in 2023", Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, May 2024. This excludes local agreements, classified as intrastate/local in PA-X Gender Peace Agreements database (<https://peaceagreements.org/wsearch>).

<sup>256</sup> Nan Tian and others, "Trends in world military expenditure, 2023", SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2024.

<sup>257</sup> OECD, *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024*.



feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in conflict-affected countries remained at a low level of \$142 million (less than 1 per cent of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts) on average per year in 2021–2022, a decrease from \$191 million in 2019–2020.<sup>258</sup>

267. Between 2021 and 2023, a rise in gender-based violence-related needs prompted the United Nations to increase its funding requests to Member States for this issue by approximately 40 per cent. But, in 2023, only 26 per cent of total requirements of gender-based violence protection were met, making up only 1 per cent of humanitarian aid spending.<sup>259</sup> As crises worsen, many humanitarian organizations are facing unprecedented funding shortfalls. As of November 2024, the gap between humanitarian funding requirements and available resources stood at \$29.8 billion.<sup>260</sup>

### C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

268. The data included in national reports show that trends in implementation have emerged in three areas: (a) ensuring gender-responsive conflict and crisis policies to promote gender equality and inclusive societies; (b) supporting women's leadership and decision-making in conflict resolution and humanitarian action; and (c) protecting women's human rights in conflict and crisis. These areas are strongly interlinked: women's participation, for example, depends on women being free from violence; relief, recovery and prevention of conflict require women's participation and their protection.

#### (a) *Ensuring gender-responsive conflict and crisis policies to promote gender equality and inclusive societies*

269. National action plans on women and peace and security have been a key vehicle through which women's participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery has been facilitated. Such plans have helped to generate important progress in several contexts, including in facilitating the recruitment of women into the security sector; promoting women to key decision-making positions in peacebuilding and conflict resolution; providing information to women about how to protect their rights and security; and the passage of new laws on sexual violence.<sup>261</sup>

270. As of December 2024, 112 countries and territories had adopted national action plans on women and peace and security. Some 70 per cent of States integrated commitments on women and peace and security into key national and interministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks. Only 28 per cent of States, however, reported having increased their budgetary allocations to this area. Most such plans contain little or no information on financing mechanisms, and few allocate funds specifically for the monitoring and evaluation of progress.

271. There is a growing recognition of the urgent need to integrate gender equality and women's rights into humanitarian responses. At the global level, UN-Women joined the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the highest-level humanitarian coordination forum in the United Nations system, in 2022, thereby affirming a

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global sector overview 2023", Financial Tracking Service. Available at <https://fts.unocha.org/global-sectors/summary/2023> (accessed November 2024).

<sup>260</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global sector overview 2024", Financial Tracking Service. Available at <https://fts.unocha.org/global-sectors/summary/2024> (accessed November 2024).

<sup>261</sup> Caitlin Hamilton, Nyibeny Naam, and Laura J. Shepherd, "Twenty years of women, peace and security national action plans: analysis and lessons learned", University of Sydney, March 2020.



strengthening of the United Nations system's commitment to incorporating a gender lens in humanitarian coordination.<sup>262</sup> Some 43 per cent of States reported having adopted gender-responsive approaches to humanitarian action and crisis response. Specific actions included: supporting women's participation in decision-making; providing economic, income and housing support tailored to women; supporting women's and girls' access to health services; and providing services for responding to gender-based violence.

272. In the past five years, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of humanitarian response plans that integrate actions across three cross-cutting areas of gender equality priorities: women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health. In 2020, 54 per cent of humanitarian response plans met this criterion, rising to 83 per cent in 2022.<sup>263</sup> There have also been improvements in the percentage of humanitarian country teams with deployed capacity on gender equality; in the inclusion of women-led local organizations in humanitarian plans; and in the timely publication of gender analyses in crisis-affected settings. Despite these efforts, gaps and challenges remain (see box XI).

#### Box XI

##### **Addressing the needs and priorities of refugee and displaced women and girls in humanitarian action**

Existing gender inequality and discrimination exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and girls affected by situations of displacement. Displacement often causes the loss of property, assets and livelihoods, reduces access to healthcare, education and other basic services, and significantly erodes the protection of women and girls. This heightened vulnerability raises the risks of women and girls being subjected to violence, trafficking and sexual abuse. Even though local women's organizations play key roles in humanitarian efforts within hosting communities, they are often left on the sidelines of humanitarian decision-making and have limited access to funding.

In order to address the needs and priorities of displaced women and girls, the following approaches are crucial:

- Strengthening gender data and analysis: disaggregated data (by sex, age, nationality and other characteristics) and analysis are critical in order to formulate evidence-based refugee policies, frameworks and response plans that effectively address the needs of refugee women and girls and at-risk population groups.
- Capacity-building of refugee women, women in host communities and local organizations led by women: refugee women are underrepresented in the decision-making processes of response planning and implementation mechanisms. Local women's organizations should be supported to meaningfully participate in humanitarian decision-making, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and social cohesion, including by building their leadership and advocacy skills.
- Social and economic inclusion and empowerment of refugee women: interventions such as livelihood assistance, second-chance learning,

<sup>262</sup> UN-Women and Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "IASC gender accountability framework report 2022", December 2023.

<sup>263</sup> UN-Women and Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Gender accountability framework report 2020", 2021; and UN-Women and Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "IASC gender accountability framework report 2022".

skills development opportunities, vocational training and job placement are indispensable for enabling refugee women to graduate from short-term livelihood assistance and build sustainable livelihoods to promote their socioeconomic integration and social cohesion.

- Addressing statelessness of women and children: women and girls are often targets of discrimination in legal frameworks and excluded from formal registration and documentation processes, such as by being excluded from passing their nationality to spouses and children or registered as the dependant of a male family member rather than an autonomous individual. Reforms are needed to ensure nationality rights, which are central to women's status as equal citizens, equality in the family and the empowerment of all women and girls.

*Source:* UN-Women, "UN-Women humanitarian strategy (2022–2025): in brief", 2023.

273. Among States, one of the main areas of innovation in the past five years is the adoption of feminist foreign policies (see sect. V). Such policies have significant potential to promote gender equality. For those policies to be effective, more effort is needed to bridge gaps between aspiration and implementation, integrate diverse geographical perspectives as part of informing feminist foreign policies, improve coherence across all areas of foreign policy and drive transformative change, including through a reduction in military spending, as envisioned by the Platform for Action.<sup>264</sup>

274. Similar to the previous review, few States reported on efforts to integrate women's economic empowerment into conflict and crisis recovery plans and policies, and the economic needs and contributions of conflict-affected women are still absent from many peace agreements and from immediate and long-term recovery and reconstruction plans. Women's economic security and access to public services are critical for the realization of women's human rights and well-being, for the recovery and resilience of families, communities and societies and for the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies. In a survey of almost 13,000 women in 15 conflict-affected countries, livelihood assistance was identified as the most urgent need.<sup>265</sup>

275. The prevention of conflict is a founding principle of the United Nations. One indicator of efforts by States to challenge militarism would be reductions in military spending to ensure compliance with international norms and frameworks. Only 3 per cent of States reported taking steps to reduce excessive military expenditures or control the availability of armaments, and only 1 per cent have reallocated funds from military spending to social and economic spending, including for gender equality and the empowerment of women, a decline from 5 per cent in both areas in 2019. As countries took extraordinary fiscal measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, military spending still outpaced pandemic-related spending in much of the world, particularly in conflict-affected countries.<sup>266</sup>

276. Just over one third of countries reported having integrated a gender perspective into the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, a similar level to the previous review. Examples of specific actions in which women were included cover a range:

<sup>264</sup> UN-Women, "Gender responsive approaches to foreign policy and the 2030 Agenda: feminist foreign policies 2023", 2023.

<sup>265</sup> Emily Janoch and others, "Women in war: leaders, responders and potential", Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, May 2024.

<sup>266</sup> UN-Women, "Comparing military and human security spending: key findings and methodological notes", May 2022.

the mediation and resolution of community, interpersonal or tribal disputes before they escalate into conflict; negotiations between armed actors at the local level to halt the escalation of intercommunal tensions, broker ceasefires or create civilian safe zones; the coordination of humanitarian and relief initiatives; the monitoring of post-conflict elections; and the implementation of peace education programmes. Challenges remain in achieving such action on a larger scale, as these efforts are often at the local level, inadequately funded and are often disconnected from conflict resolution efforts at the national and regional levels, where women are still marginalized and underrepresented.

277. Recognizing, supporting and funding women's local prevention and peacebuilding efforts also strengthens conflict analysis and early warning systems. This has been the aim of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which has supported more than 1,300 local women's organizations in crisis-affected countries since 2016.<sup>267</sup>

(b) *Supporting women's leadership and decision-making in conflict resolution and humanitarian action*

278. Women's meaningful and substantive participation has the potential to improve and strengthen peace and humanitarian processes and outcomes. When women are signatories to peace agreements (which is an indicator of their substantive participation in the negotiations), on average, the agreements last longer than in cases in which they were not. Furthermore, women signatories are often linked to women's civil society groups, which are critical for bringing gender equality issues into the process and ensuring their implementation.<sup>268</sup>

279. Women's participation in transitional justice processes and international justice mechanisms remains key to addressing gender inequality, building and sustaining peace and promoting long-term recovery and healing. For instance, including women's voices in providing an official record of past events, acknowledging harms and often deeply gendered forms of human rights violations, and providing them with access to justice, all have the potential to build a shared pathway towards reconciliation.<sup>269</sup>

280. Some 59 per cent of States reported that they had promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes, similar to the previous review. That figure increases to 69 per cent for conflict- and crisis-affected countries. Specific actions to support women's participation include: convening spaces for women's mobilization around peace talks, setting up funding mechanisms to support women's inclusion, appointing women to mediation and facilitation teams, capacity-building, developing guidance tools and providing opportunities for networking so as to ensure that women are ready and able to participate in peace negotiations. Some States have also advocated with conflict parties to improve the gender balance of their delegations.

281. Since the previous review, there has been an increase in the percentage of States reporting that they had taken action to support women's participation and leadership

<sup>267</sup> Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, "The Invest-In-Women Global Campaign", n.d.; United Nations, "Women, Peace and Security", Climate Security Mechanism. Available at [www.un.org/climatesecuritymechanism/en/essentials/women-peace-and-security#:~:text=Women's%20Peace%20and%20Humanitarian%20Fund&text=Since%202016%2C%20it%20has%20supported,across%2044%20conflict%20affected%20countries](https://www.un.org/climatesecuritymechanism/en/essentials/women-peace-and-security#:~:text=Women's%20Peace%20and%20Humanitarian%20Fund&text=Since%202016%2C%20it%20has%20supported,across%2044%20conflict%20affected%20countries), n.d.

<sup>268</sup> Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Pila Bränfors, "Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace", *International Interactions*, vol. 44, No. 6 (2018).

<sup>269</sup> Pilar Domingo, "Transitional justice and the women, peace and security agenda", Overseas Development Institute, April 2022.

in humanitarian action; 60 per cent of States reported having promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in humanitarian crisis and response activities, compared with 43 per cent five years ago. That figure stands at 62 per cent for conflict- and crisis-affected countries. Data from the annual gender accountability framework reports, produced by UN-Women on behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Reference Group, point to improvements in consulting with women's organizations in humanitarian contexts, while gaps remain. In 2023, 85 per cent of humanitarian contexts reported that they had held at least one consultation with local women's organizations as part of the annual humanitarian planning process, marking a steady improvement from previous years (starting from 56 per cent in 2018).

282. While a significant number of States reported having supported women's participation, these actions are largely focused on meetings on the margins of decision-making processes at the global, regional and subregional levels. At the national and community levels, networks of women mediators reported having had impact in addressing local conflicts and community tensions, including by brokering local ceasefires, humanitarian access or the release of prisoners. Some countries reported that they had supported United Nations efforts to promote women's participation, through independent delegations, reserved seats, minimum targets and other conditions and incentives for the structure of peace negotiations, as well as through funding for women's organizations or for the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. A promising approach in the African Union is the development of a framework to set a minimum quota of women's representation in these processes, which is aligned with the global commitment called for by the United Nations.

283. The structural barriers to the meaningful participation of women and women's organizations need to be addressed. Aside from removing the economic, social and practical barriers to women's participation and creating safe spaces, States and relevant parties also need to design peace processes that provide opportunities for other actors to participate or have influence and that have enabling conditions and incentives to support women's participation. Such measures could include setting quantifiable, time-sensitive commitments to ensure women's direct and meaningful participation, the application of temporary special measures and the provision of logistical support and earmarked funding, such as the recommended minimum 15 per cent of mediation support, towards inclusive and gender-responsive processes (see [S/2023/725](#)).

(c) *Protecting women's human rights in conflict and crisis*

284. A comprehensive approach to responding to violations of women's human rights in conflict includes implementing a survivor-centred approach to preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence that seeks to empower survivors and considers intersecting inequalities; ensuring that survivors have access to justice and a range of services and support, including HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive care and services, access to emergency contraception and timely abortion care and legal services; and a gender-responsive security sector and effective oversight and accountability mechanisms, including specialized units to address sexual violence (see [S/2024/292](#)).

285. Attacks and reprisals against women human rights defenders have become more common. In the past five years, 30 per cent of States reported having taken action to protect civil society and women's human rights defenders. Specific measures included expediting applications for asylum, temporary relocation or protected status, making rapid and flexible funding available for the protection of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders at imminent risk, providing political support to activists and peacebuilders and publicly condemning attacks against them. One common way in

which States have stepped up their efforts in this area has been by increasing funding to specific programmes to support women human rights defenders, including programmes for protection, enhancements to digital and physical security, and relocation. In the past two years, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has supported 582 women human rights defenders and their 1,647 dependants across 24 crisis-affected countries, with more than half of them supported with livelihood and relocation costs (see [S/2024/671](#)). However, many women human rights defenders still report that their most reliable source of direct support is other human rights defenders and women-led civil society organizations, which is not a sustainable solution.

286. Globally, 54 per cent of countries (69 per cent of conflict- and crisis-affected countries) reported having strengthened the capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Action includes: undertaking barrier assessments to identify obstacles to women's participation in national security sectors; implementing and adjusting recruitment targets and policies, including changes in eligibility, as well as strategies on accommodation, equipment, childcare and outreach. Other efforts have been focused on preventing sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, and conflict-related sexual violence, promoting awareness of gender equality and human rights issues among security actors, or strengthening oversight and vetting mechanisms. These efforts have resulted in a modest increase in women's representation in the security sector and in deployments to peacekeeping operations. Among the countries that responded to a survey as part of the first-ever United Nations report on the status of women in the defence sector, the proportion of women in the armed forces rose from 11 per cent in 2016 to 14 per cent in 2022.<sup>270</sup>

287. Over a third of countries (37 per cent) reported having strengthened the institutional capacities of the justice system, including transitional justice mechanisms, as part of conflict and crisis response. In many cases, these measures are a continuation of long-standing initiatives to increase women's participation in the justice sector, enhance the awareness and guidance of professionals across the justice chain, or strengthen and expand the availability of mechanisms dedicated to addressing crimes of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, including through the deployment of mobile courts in countries with little judicial infrastructure outside of main cities. Such efforts have also yielded important innovations in recent years, resulting in growing attention to a broad range of gender-based harms, including gender-based persecution, reproductive violence, crimes on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and have notably seen the use of universal jurisdiction to bring a measure of justice to victims of atrocities (see box XII). While some countries report having provided reparations for victims of gender-based crimes, particularly conflict-related sexual violence, reparations are a tool of redress that continues to be underutilized.

#### Box XII

##### **Addressing reproductive violence and obstetric harm in war**

Attention is increasingly being focused on the lack of investigation of, and accountability for, reproductive violence, including forced pregnancy, sterilization, abortion or contraceptive use, restrictions on access to reproductive care and services and the destruction of essential reproductive healthcare infrastructure. Despite clear prohibitions in international criminal law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, these distinct harms affecting women and

<sup>270</sup> United Nations, *Towards Equal Opportunity for Women in the Defence Sector* (New York, 2024).

girls, often in brutal and fatal ways, almost always elude accountability, and are often omitted from documentation and investigation efforts.<sup>a</sup> At the same time, comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare and services are not always viewed as life-saving and essential by all actors or included in the initial phase of humanitarian responses.

The destruction of reproductive healthcare infrastructure in conflict contexts, for example, has brought into sharp relief this gap in international justice and the threat it poses to the lives of hundreds of thousands of women. In November 2023 in the Gaza Strip, an estimated 180 labour deliveries take place every day amid bombings and displacement, most of them without access to anaesthetics for caesarean sections, water or postpartum care.<sup>b</sup> In the Sudan, most victims of rape were unable to access post-exposure prophylaxis or emergency contraception within the 72-hour window, and some victims were denied an abortion because it was outside of the timeline allowed for by law.<sup>c</sup> In Ukraine, prior to 24 February 2022, 20 medical service points and maternity hospitals were providing assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, and less than two months later, only nine such facilities were operational due to the damage from hostilities and staffing shortages.<sup>d</sup> In the Syrian Arab Republic, only a minority of pregnant women in displacement camps are able to access obstetric and prenatal care. Girls as young as 12 have become pregnant and given birth after being forced to marry.<sup>e</sup> In Yemen, women have limited or no access to reproductive health and postnatal care as a result of years of conflict and restrictions on women's mobility imposed by armed groups. Consequently, every two hours, a woman dies in childbirth from preventable causes.<sup>f</sup>

There are some signs of increased attention at the international and national levels. In 2021, the International Criminal Court issued its first conviction for forced pregnancy, and in 2023 the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia opened a “macro case” to investigate reproductive violence, among others. Another promising development is the conviction, a world first, for the crime of forced pregnancy in a national court in the Democratic Republic of Congo as part of the charges of crimes against humanity against an armed group leader.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Global Justice Centre and UN-Women, *Documenting Reproductive Violence: Unveiling Opportunities, Challenges, and Legal Pathways for UN Investigative Mechanisms* (New York, UN-Women, 2024).

<sup>b</sup> WHO, “Women and newborns bearing the brunt of the conflict in Gaza, UN agencies warn”, 3 November 2023.

<sup>c</sup> S/2024/671, para. 42.

<sup>d</sup> S/2022/740, para. 43.

<sup>e</sup> Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, “Gendered impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic on women and girls”, 12 June 2023).

<sup>f</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Needs Overview: Yemen* (New York, 2024); and United Nations, “Motherhood on the brink in Yemen”, 26 March 2021.

<sup>g</sup> S/2024/671, para. 70.

288. Alongside access to justice, comprehensive services for survivors of violence, including safe spaces, healthcare and psychosocial support, are essential for meeting immediate needs and enabling recovery and long-term well-being. Some 44 per cent of countries reported having increased access for conflict-affected, refugee or

displaced women to violence prevention and protection services, including through the establishment of safe spaces in refugee camps and specialized centres to coordinate the provision of physical, sexual and mental healthcare services, peer support and case management, with language interpretation provided in some contexts. There has been a growing focus on victim identification and services for trafficked women and girls (see sect. IV).

## **D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation**

289. In a global context that has become markedly less peaceful over the past five years, the persistent underrepresentation of women in the decision-making arenas in which war and peace are decided is an ongoing threat to peaceful and inclusive societies. At the same time, women remain at the frontlines of crises demanding that parties to conflict silence the guns, disarm and respect international law. Despite their calls, the world is seeing rising militarization and conflict, a steady erosion of international legal obligations and unrelenting challenges to multilateralism. Three priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts.

*Strengthen financing and implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security, and fund local women's organizations in conflict settings*

290. Increased political support is needed to ensure that all adopted plans are fully financed for effective implementation at the national and local levels and codified into national law. Those processes also require stronger coordination between various ministries, departments and agencies in order to implement gender-responsive budgeting and monitor and report on the plan. Action is also required to ensure compliance with international norms and frameworks and to reduce military expenditures, by redirecting a portion of the funds from military budgets towards a greater allocation of resources to the implementation of women and peace and security commitments and investments in economic and social policies and infrastructure that advance gender equality (see [S/2024/671](#)).

291. Donors should also prioritize accessible and flexible funding for diverse and local women's organizations in conflict settings. The changes needed include making more flexible funding accessible for women's organizations working on more sensitive and contested issues, such as sexual and reproductive rights and transformative strategies to combat the dominant discriminatory gender norms and narratives. In 2023, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund launched a campaign endorsed by the Secretary-General to mobilize new financing for 3,500 local women's organizations by the end of 2025, as well as the protection of women human rights defenders. The Gender Equality Acceleration Plan also commits to raising \$300 million for women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings over the next three years through existing financing mechanisms, such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

*Ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security and humanitarian action, including through the adoption of targets and quotas*

292. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security and humanitarian action must be the norm. In 2023, the United Nations committed to advocating and supporting an initial minimum target of one third of participants in mediation and peace processes being women, while aiming for parity, including through the adoption of special measures, targets and incentives, and this commitment should be matched by States. A similar approach should be applied to increase women's representation at all levels in government bodies and decision-

making mechanisms, especially those working on peace and security matters, the security sector and humanitarian action. The enforcement of minimum quotas and other targeted measures can help to move the needle more quickly, as progress in this area has been slow.

*Embed accountability mechanisms on peace and security and monitor systematic violations of women's rights in conflict-affected countries*

293. States should embed accountability mechanisms into their own policies and frameworks on peace and security and should also monitor systematic and gross violations of women's rights in conflict-affected countries through such human rights platforms as the universal periodic review and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and through international courts, such as the International Criminal Court or the International Court of Justice. States should build on the international jurisprudence relating to conflict-related sexual violence and on attention having been drawn to a broader spectrum of women's and girls' experiences of war, from reproductive violence to gender-based persecution, by delivering consequences for perpetrators, from sanctions to sentences, and relief for survivors, whether in the form of justice, reparations, services or asylum. There is also a need to protect the work of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, who are particularly vulnerable in contexts of conflict and crisis.

## VII. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building

### Key messages

- Environmental and climate crises have intensified over the past 30 years, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Greenhouse gas emissions, largely produced by the burning of fossil fuels, are more than 60 per cent higher than in 1990.
- Climate change, environmental degradation and related disasters magnify existing gender inequalities and pose unique and urgent threats to the rights, livelihoods, health and well-being of women and girls. In the worst-case climate scenario, an additional 158 million women and girls could be pushed into poverty by 2050. More than a quarter of all women globally, or more than 1 billion women, lacked access to safely managed drinking water services in 2022.
- Women's participation and leadership make for stronger and more effective environmental and climate policymaking and governance, but women continue to be underrepresented at all levels.
- Women and girls, often from rural, local and Indigenous communities, are at the forefront of environmental and climate action and advocacy, risking their lives and livelihoods as environmental human rights defenders, with little protection, support, resources and funding.
- States have reported increased actions across many areas in the past five years, but gaps remain:
  - (a) More than half (53 per cent of States) reported that they had introduced or strengthened gender-responsive laws and policies on disaster risk reduction and climate and environmental resilience, up from 39 per cent in 2019. Only 56



per cent of national biodiversity strategies and action plans prepared under the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity mention women or gender. The lack of financing of gender-responsive policies also remains a challenge;

- (b) 70 per cent of States have taken steps to strengthen women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management, up from 61 per cent in 2019. Yet threats and violence against women environmental defenders have reached alarming proportions;
- (c) Globally, 48 per cent of States reported having taken action to increase women's access to land, water, energy and other natural resources, an increase of 10 percentage points compared with 2019. 28 per cent of States have taken steps to value women's Indigenous and local understandings and approaches to nature and environmental and climate action, up from 23 per cent in 2019;
- (d) Even though the proportion of States that have taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy increased from 27 to 34 per cent between 2019 and 2024, more action is needed to achieve equality of opportunity and access.

## A. Introduction

294. In the Platform for Action, it is emphasized that environmental degradation affects all, but that it has a particular impact on women's and girls' poverty, health and livelihoods, and on those of rural and Indigenous women most of all. It is further noted that unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially in industrialized countries, are at the root of global environmental degradation, poverty and inequalities.

295. Thirty years later, the triple planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – has accelerated and intensified, highlighting the urgency of action aimed at environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation. Historic patterns of unsustainable production and consumption undergird the triple planetary crisis and are exemplified by the exploitation of land and resources, the destructive dependency on fossil fuels and the accumulation of wealth, principally by industrialized countries. Because the crisis exacerbates underlying gender inequalities, women and girls are disproportionately affected, especially those in situations of poverty and food insecurity or those who must contend with health risks, a lack of sustainable water and energy, precarious livelihoods and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.<sup>271</sup> The 2030 Agenda makes an integral link between the achievement of all the Goals and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (see [E/CN.6/2022/3](#)). Achieving the Goals by 2030 appears highly unlikely, however, owing to growing global inequalities and environmental and climate emergencies that are of particular concern.<sup>272</sup> As such, ensuring a focus on

<sup>271</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Summary for policymakers", in *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Hoesung Lee and José Romero, eds. (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>272</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* (United Nations publication, 2024).

gender equality in the key transitions needed in food systems, energy access and affordability and in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution will be pivotal for accelerating impact across the Goals.

296. Since 2020, States have continued to make normative commitments to integrate gender equality and women's rights in environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building. The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women was devoted to this issue. In the agreed conclusions of its sixty-fifth, sixty-sixth and sixty-eighth sessions (see [E/2021/27](#), [E/2022/27](#) and [E/2024/27](#)), the Commission called for gender-responsive strategies, policies and programmes to address environmental and climate challenges and to build the resilience of women and girls and their communities, including through the provision of sustainable energy and water, land and resource security and gender-responsive just transitions.

297. In a landmark resolution adopted in 2021, the Human Rights Council recognized the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including respect for gender equality and the rights of environmental human rights defenders (Human Rights Council resolution [48/13](#)). Subsequently, the General Assembly, in its resolution [76/300](#) on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, recognized the importance of gender equality, gender-responsive climate and environmental action, the leadership, decision-making and full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls, and the role of women as managers, agents of change and defenders of natural resources and the environment. In its general recommendation No. 39 (2022), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women asserted the right of Indigenous women and girls to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the need for States parties to require the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous women and girls before authorizing extractive and climate mitigation and adaptation projects on their lands and territories; and the need to ensure their meaningful and effective participation in environment and climate decision-making. In the Declaration on Future Generations, Member States also recognized the rights of Indigenous Peoples in relation to their lands and ecosystems.

298. As well as advances on environmental human rights, the movement for the rights of nature has gained momentum with the international recognition of the rights of nature and the rights of Mother Earth, along with the protection of environmental human rights defenders, in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in December 2022 at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP/DEC/15/4). That framework also includes a dedicated target on gender equality: ensure gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for biodiversity action.<sup>273</sup> At the regional level, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted in Escazú, Costa Rica, in 2018, entered into force in April 2021. It is the first agreement to include explicit provisions to prevent the criminalization of environmental human rights defenders.

## B. Global and regional trends

*Environmental and climate crises have intensified over the past 30 years*

299. Greenhouse gas emissions, which are largely produced by the burning of fossil fuels, are more than 60 per cent higher than they were when international climate

<sup>273</sup> See <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/23>.

negotiations began in 1990.<sup>274</sup> Extractive industries are responsible for over 55 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and over 90 per cent of biodiversity loss.<sup>275</sup> Human pressures are pushing 1 million species towards extinction in the coming years, with the catastrophic risk of losing between 30 and 50 per cent of all species by 2050.<sup>276</sup> Pollution is closely linked to and magnifies climate change and ecosystem destruction.

300. Those least responsible for climate change and environmental degradation are often the most adversely affected.<sup>277</sup> The climate impacts of high-income countries are 10 times greater per capita than those of low-income countries.<sup>278</sup> The least developed countries and small island developing States, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change, contribute only 3.3 per cent and less than 1 per cent, respectively, of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>279</sup> Human influence has heated the atmosphere, oceans and land, while climate change exacerbates poverty and inequalities, especially those linked to gender, race, class, caste, age, indigeneity, migration status and disability, putting at risk all human and non-human life on earth.<sup>280</sup> Globally, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the urban poor and women and girls disproportionately suffer the effects of biodiversity loss.

*Climate change, environmental degradation and related disasters magnify existing gender inequalities and pose unique and urgent threats to the rights, livelihoods, health and well-being of women and girls*

301. Discriminatory laws, policies and practices persist in impeding women's full and equal participation in the economy, environment and agriculture. On average, across 190 economies assessed in 2023, women have less than two thirds of the legal rights that men enjoy.<sup>281</sup> Women's land and resource rights are critical for livelihoods and resilience. Less than 15 per cent of agricultural landholders globally are women, with the proportion of women who own land ranging widely across countries, from 6.6 per cent to 57.8 per cent.<sup>282</sup> Fewer women than men have ownership and/or secure tenure rights in 40 of 46 countries with available data.<sup>283</sup> In 43 economies, equal inheritance rights are still not granted to surviving spouses, which means widows are often dispossessed of property and left destitute, and in 41 countries, daughters lack the same inheritance rights as sons.<sup>284</sup>

302. Climate and environment emergencies are escalating and are simultaneously increasing gender disparities. In the worst-case climate scenario, an additional 158

<sup>274</sup> Isak Stoddard and others, "Three decades of climate mitigation: why haven't we bent the global emissions curve?", *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 46 (2021).

<sup>275</sup> UNEP, *Global Resources Outlook 2024: Bend the Trend – Pathways to a Liveable Planet as Resource Use Spikes* (Nairobi, 2024).

<sup>276</sup> Laura Ferguson, "The extinction crisis", *Tufts Now*, 21 May 2019.

<sup>277</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Summary for policymakers", in *Climate Change 2023*.

<sup>278</sup> UNEP, *Global Resources Outlook 2024*.

<sup>279</sup> UNDP, *The State of Climate Ambition: Snapshot – Least Developed Countries (LDCs)* (New York, 2023); and UNDP, *The State of Climate Ambition: Snapshot – Small Island Developing States (SIDS)* (New York, 2023).

<sup>280</sup> Joern Birkmann and others, "Poverty, livelihoods and sustainable development", in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability – Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Hans-Otto Pörtner and others, eds. (London, Cambridge University Press, 2022); and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Summary for policymakers", in *Climate Change 2023*.

<sup>281</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.

<sup>282</sup> FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* (Rome, 2023). Range reflects latest figures for countries with available data. See FAO, "The gender gap in land rights", policy brief, 2018.

<sup>283</sup> FAO, *Tracking Progress on Food and Agriculture-Related SDG Indicators 2023* (Rome, 2023).

<sup>284</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.

million women and girls could be pushed into poverty by 2050 (see sect. III).<sup>285</sup> Disasters related to natural hazards lower women's life expectancy and increase their mortality to a greater degree than is true for men.<sup>286</sup> Heat stress widens the income gap between women-headed and men-headed households by \$37 billion a year, and floods increase the income gap by \$16 billion a year.<sup>287</sup> The gender gap in moderate or severe food insecurity widened significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 1.4 percentage points in 2019 to 3.6 in 2021, as women's livelihoods and incomes diminished and unpaid care and domestic work intensified, falling to 2.3 in 2022 and 1.3 in 2023, close to pre-pandemic levels.<sup>288</sup>

303. These crises have severe consequences for human health, including increases in food insecurity and malnutrition, infectious diseases and maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Air pollution and extreme heat are linked to pregnancy and birth complications, adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes and respiratory and other diseases.<sup>289</sup> Every year, 3.2 million deaths, disproportionately of women and children, are attributable to household air pollution produced by inefficient polluting fuels and technologies.<sup>290</sup> Emerging evidence suggests that racialized minorities disproportionately suffer the health effects of cumulative exposure to environmental hazards such as air and water pollution.<sup>291</sup> Accelerating climate change and environmental degradation have also been linked to heightened risks of gender-based violence and child, early and forced marriage (see E/CN.6/2022/3).<sup>292</sup>

*Women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work is intensified by climate change*

304. The triple planetary crisis has heightened women's and girls' already disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care, domestic and communal work, encompassing care for children, the sick and the elderly and caring for community resources, and work related to the provisioning of food, water and energy.<sup>293</sup> Water, sanitation and energy services, infrastructure and supply, all of which are critical for women's livelihoods, well-being and resilience, are at risk in a dramatically changing climate and environment, with wide variation between developing and developed countries (see E/CN.6/2024/4).

305. Women and girls are primarily responsible for provisioning water for their families' survival – for drinking, cooking, sanitation and hygiene – in many developing countries and in remote, rural and impoverished areas worldwide. In the absence of water services, particularly during droughts, women and girls must cope by queuing and walking long distances to collect water. Worldwide, 1.8 billion people

<sup>285</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2023*.

<sup>286</sup> Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981–2002", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 97, No. 3 (2007).

<sup>287</sup> FAO, *The Unjust Climate: Measuring the Impacts of Climate Change on Rural Poor, Women and Youth* (Rome, 2024).

<sup>288</sup> FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in All its Forms* (Rome, FAO, 2024).

<sup>289</sup> WHO, *Protecting Maternal, Newborn and Child Health from the Impacts of Climate Change: A Call for Action* (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>290</sup> WHO, "Household air pollution", 16 October 2024.

<sup>291</sup> Alique G. Berberian, David J.X. Gonzalez and Lara J. Cushing, "Racial disparities in climate change-related health effects in the United States", *Current Environmental Health Reports*, vol. 9, No. 3 (2022).

<sup>292</sup> Duerto-Valero and Kaul, *Gendered Impacts of Climate Change*.

<sup>293</sup> UN-Women, "The climate-care nexus: addressing the linkages between climate change and women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work", November 2023.

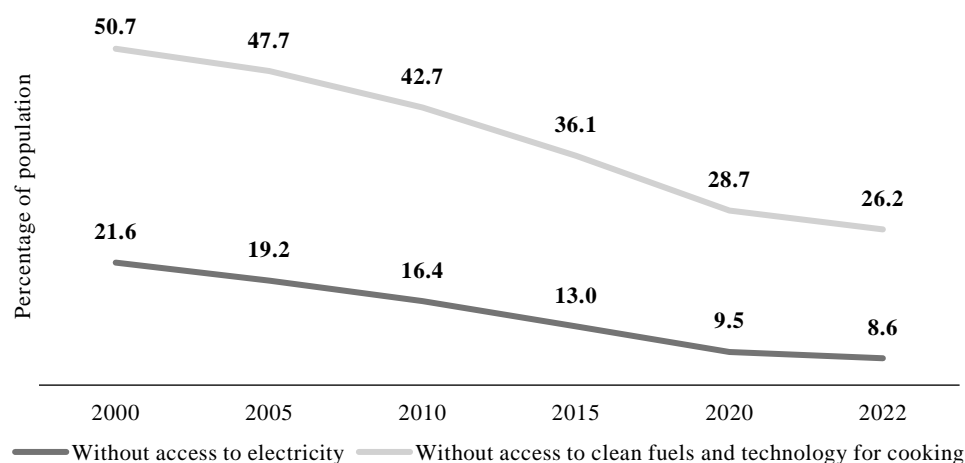
rely on drinking water from supplies off premises, with women and girls collecting water in 7 out of 10 households.

306. More than a quarter of all women globally, or over 1 billion women, lacked access to safely managed drinking water services in 2022, compared to a third of women without access in 2000.<sup>294</sup> In 2023, some 380 million, or nearly 10 per cent of the world's women and girls, lived with high or critical water stress, which is estimated to increase to 674 million by 2050. While 3.4 billion people still lacked safely managed sanitation in 2022, the global coverage of basic hygiene services increased by 8 percentage points since 2015, which means that in most of the 50 countries with data, over 80 per cent of women and adolescent girls have a private place to wash and change during menstruation.<sup>295</sup>

307. Although data on access to energy and clean cooking are not disaggregated by sex, women and girls are most affected by the lack of access, given prevailing gender roles and household power relations. The percentage of the population worldwide without access to electricity more than halved from 2000 to 2022 (see figure XIV), which is partly attributable to the growth of solar energy. However, disruptions in energy supply caused by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate change resulted in an absolute increase in the population lacking electricity worldwide for the first time in a decade, from approximately 675 million in 2021 to around 685 million in 2022. The percentage of the population without access to clean cooking almost halved from 2000 to 2022, at 26.2 per cent of the global population (see figure XIV), or 2.1 billion people worldwide in 2022. Women and girls continue to be responsible for collecting biomass for heating and cooking in the absence of electricity and clean cooking options.<sup>296</sup>

Figure XIV

**Population without access to electricity and clean cooking, 2000–2022**



Source: UN-Women calculations based on World Bank, World Development Indicators, available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> (accessed December 2024).

<sup>294</sup> UN-Women and United Nations, *The Gender Snapshot 2023*.

<sup>295</sup> UNICEF and WHO, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2022: Special Focus on Gender* (New York, 2023).

<sup>296</sup> International Energy Agency and others, *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2024* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2024); and UN-Women and United Nations Industrial Development Organization, *Gender Equality in the Sustainable Energy Transition* (New York and Vienna, 2023).

*Gendered impacts of megaprojects and the debt crisis*

308. Despite their environmentally destructive impacts, dominant economic models and financial power continue to drive megaprojects for energy and water infrastructure, both conventional and renewable, and for resource extraction, agriculture, forestry, industry and transport, all of which disproportionately affect women and girls (A/74/197). The unintended consequences of large-scale projects that have climate and environmental goals can also be negative. Land acquisition for renewable energy biofuel plantations has accelerated deforestation, reduced biodiversity and increased carbon emissions, while displacing local and Indigenous communities and depriving women and their households of livelihoods. Similar negative effects are associated with reforestation initiatives when they are designed and implemented without the free, prior and informed consent of those affected, particularly Indigenous women and communities. The skyrocketing demand for lithium used in green technologies and electric vehicle batteries requires huge quantities of water, and chemical leaks from the mines pollute water sources, thereby significantly increasing women's unpaid care work of providing clean water and food (see E/CN.6/2022/3).

### **C. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action**

309. The national reports and surveys highlight trends in implementation in five areas: (a) integrating gender perspectives into environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction policies; (b) strengthening women's participation and leadership; (c) increasing women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources; (d) valuing Indigenous and local women's knowledge and practices; and (e) supporting gender-responsive just transitions.

#### *(a) Integrating gender perspectives into environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction policies*

310. Over the past five years, States have increasingly recognized the linkages between achieving gender equality and environmental sustainability. Globally, more than half (53 per cent) of States reported that they had introduced or strengthened gender-responsive laws and policies on disaster risk reduction and climate and environmental resilience, including 77 per cent of States in Latin America and the Caribbean, 62 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 64 per cent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, one State is consulting women on climate adaptation policies and the climate strategy in another State calls for integrating gender-responsive actions into all climate change instruments. States in Oceania are also integrating gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction and climate preparedness, including support for women and girls who may be subjected to gender-based violence.

311. States have strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation and climate change on women and girls, as part of necessary steps to inform policies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (79 per cent), Central and Southern Asia (64 per cent) and Oceania (55 per cent). In Oceania, one State conducted a survey on the gendered impacts of drought so as to assess the unique challenges faced by women and girls, such as a lack of access to menstrual hygiene. Supporting women's participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction and climate and environmental resilience is indispensable for gender-responsive policies and programmes, as reflected in responses from Oceania (all States), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (79 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (74 per cent).

312. States have elaborated climate change and biodiversity strategies and plans, including those mandated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, from a gender perspective. As at 31 July 2024, 81.5 per cent of States parties to the Paris Agreement referred to gender in their nationally determined contributions, a notable increase since 2016, when very few States parties did so (see [FCCC/CP/2024/5](#)). These references covered multi-stakeholder engagement, inclusive and participatory processes involving national gender equality mechanisms and women's civil society organizations, institutional strengthening for gender mainstreaming and national gender action plans to address the vulnerabilities of women across sectors. Further analysis is needed, however, in order to assess the integration of gender equality considerations into policy and budgetary frameworks and the impact on women's and girls' resilience.

313. In a complementary undertaking, 23 countries to date have developed climate change gender action plans, supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, through participatory, multi-stakeholder processes involving local women's organizations to identify gender issues in priority sectors and strengthen climate action for all.<sup>297</sup>

314. Regarding the national biodiversity strategies and action plans prepared under the Convention on Biological Diversity, only 56 per cent mention women or gender, an indication of the challenges ahead for many countries in integrating the gender targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the "Gender Plan of Action" for the period 2022–2030. The lack of sex-disaggregated data is a significant concern in gender-responsive reporting on national biodiversity strategy and action plan targets.<sup>298</sup>

315. Progress on gender-responsive policy frameworks has not been matched by the financing necessary to transform the resilience of women and girls, their communities and environments. The share of climate-related bilateral allocable ODA with gender equality as a principal objective has not increased since 2015, when the Paris Agreement was signed.<sup>299</sup> In 2022, just 2 per cent of ODA for mitigation and 4 per cent of ODA for adaptation had a principal gender equality objective.<sup>300</sup> Out of \$2.4 billion of climate ODA channelled through civil society organizations, mostly in donor countries, only \$43 million went to feminist and women's organizations and movements,<sup>301</sup> reflecting the huge challenge in building climate resilience by and for women and girls. At the twenty-ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Member States agreed to raise at least \$1.3 trillion each year from a wide range of sources, including private investment, by 2035, for developing countries, which presents an important opportunity to significantly increase the resources available for gender-responsive climate action.

*(b) Strengthening women's participation and leadership*

316. Crucially correlated to more gender-responsive policy frameworks are women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in environmental governance

<sup>297</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gender Programme, "Climate change gender action plans", email to authors, 25 November 2024.

<sup>298</sup> Christina Supples and others, "Gender equality, women's empowerment, and leadership in national biodiversity planning, monitoring, and reporting", UNDP, 2024.

<sup>299</sup> OECD, *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024*.

<sup>300</sup> Beata Cichocka, Sam Hughes and Ian Mitchell, "Are providers of climate finance tackling gender effectively?", Centre for Global Development, blog, 7 March 2024.

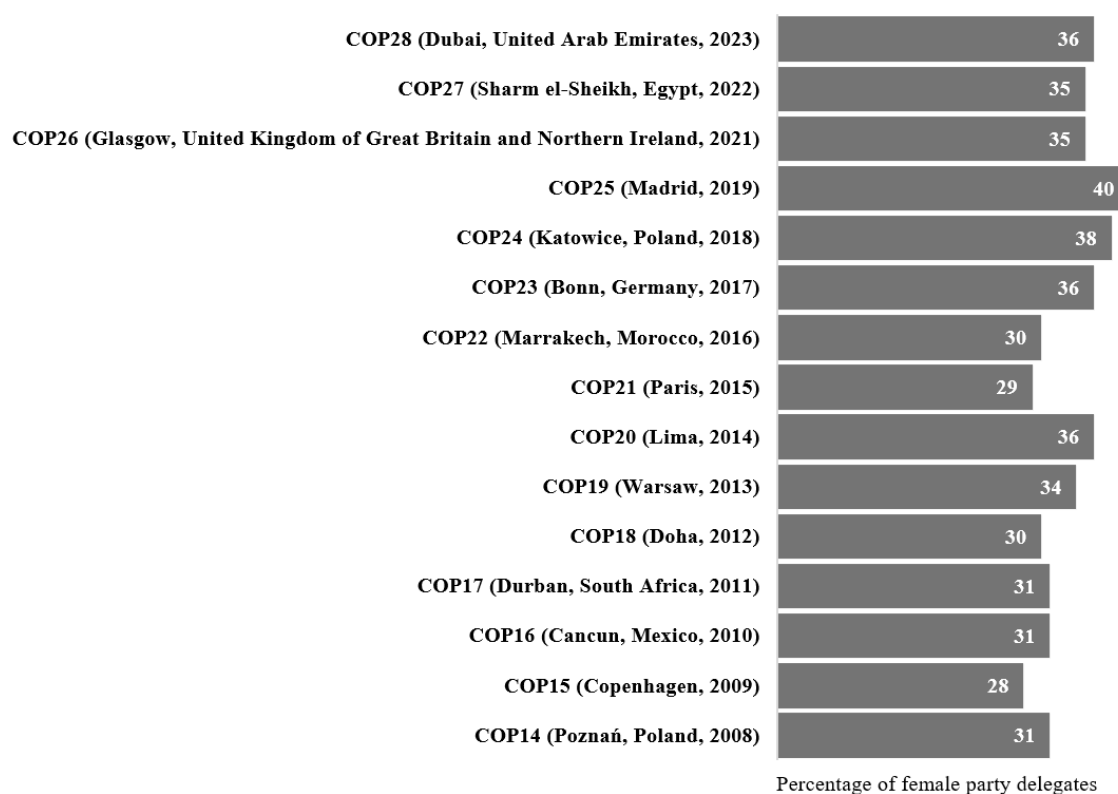
<sup>301</sup> OECD, "Development finance for gender-responsive climate action", OECD Development Perspectives, No. 16 (Paris, 2022).



and decision-making. Women and girls are taking action on the environment and climate in all regions, yet gender parity and commensurate policy influence are far from achieved. Few data and monitoring mechanisms exist to assess and support women's and girls' environmental and climate action. In international climate meetings under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 36 per cent of delegates and 27.5 per cent of heads or deputy heads of delegation were women at the twenty-eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention and related meetings, in 2023 (see [FCCC/CP/2024/4](#)), compared with 40 and 27 per cent, respectively, at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and related meetings, in 2019 (see [FCCC/CP/2020/3](#)) (see figure XV). At the national level, the proportion of environment ministers who are women increased from 12 per cent in 2015, to 15 per cent in 2020<sup>302</sup> and almost doubled, to 28 per cent, in 2024.<sup>303</sup> It remains to be seen if this progress can be sustained. At the local level, 41 per cent of 68 countries have quotas for women's participation in land governance, and only 22 per cent of 104 countries have high levels of women's participation in water management.<sup>304</sup>

Figure XV

**Women's participation in delegations to Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2008–2023)**



Source: Women's Environment and Development Organization, "Statistics by bodies", Gender Climate Tracker database. Available at <https://genderclimatetracker.org/statistics-bodies> (accessed September 2024).

Abbreviation: COP, Conference of the Parties.

<sup>302</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature, "New data reveals slow progress in achieving gender equality in environmental decision making", 1 March 2021.

<sup>303</sup> UN-Women, "Women political leaders 2024", poster, January 2024.

<sup>304</sup> FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.



317. Closing these gender gaps is critical, since achieving more equitable participation by women and more women in leadership roles would not only fulfil women's human rights but make climate, environmental and disaster risk governance more effective. Women's representation in national parliaments is associated with more stringent climate change policies, resulting in lower emissions. Women's participation in local natural resource management leads to better governance and conservation outcomes, and the application of gender quotas, for example in land governance and forest user groups, enhances sustainability and leads to a more equal sharing of benefits (E/CN.6/2022/3).

318. Some 70 per cent of States, including over 90 per cent in Oceania, 86 per cent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and 76 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, have taken steps to strengthen women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management. In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, countries are undertaking training and capacity development of women-led civil society organizations, including on gender-responsive forestry management. Gender quotas have enhanced women's leadership in local natural resource management councils and the participation of women experts in national environmental protection councils in Central and Southern Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, one State's public extension services have assisted almost 1 million farmers (51 per cent of whom are women) with respect to women's empowerment in climate adaptation and resource management.

319. Women's participation and leadership in environmental matters, as vital as it is, comes at a cost: an intensifying burden of unpaid care, domestic and communal work; tensions due to discriminatory gender norms and unequal power relations between women and men; and at the frontlines of climate and environmental action to protect land and resources, women's safety and security and even their lives are at risk.<sup>305</sup> Threats, assaults, criminalization, gender-based violence and femicides against women environmental human rights defenders have reached alarming proportions.<sup>306</sup>

320. In the past decade, 3,000 killings of human rights defenders have been documented. In 2023, at least 300 human rights defenders were killed, in 28 countries, with Indigenous Peoples, environmental and land, women and LGBTIQ+ rights defenders the most targeted.<sup>307</sup> Those violent acts are a direct reflection of the escalating climate and environmental emergencies, the impunity of powerful interests and the shortcomings of civil, legal and judicial protections.<sup>308</sup> As of January 2022, the Environmental Justice Atlas,<sup>309</sup> a global database of socio-environmental conflicts, documented at least 3,545 socio-environmental conflicts worldwide. Almost a quarter of these conflicts (842 cases) visibly involved women environmental defenders, including 81 cases that led to the assassination of women environmental defenders.<sup>310</sup>

321. Some States have taken steps to protect women environmental defenders, including through: national protection units that offer bodyguard and transportation services and early warning systems in high-risk contexts; police protection, safe houses, security escorts, legal aid and public campaigns and advocacy for defenders at risk, especially for Indigenous women defenders; support and funding for community-based environmental and climate justice organizations; and recognition

<sup>305</sup> UN-Women, "The climate-care nexus".

<sup>306</sup> UN-Women, "Women environmental human rights defenders", 2024.

<sup>307</sup> Front Line Defenders, *Global Analysis 2023/24* (Dublin and Brussels, 2024). In descending order of magnitude, although these categories overlap.

<sup>308</sup> Global Witness, "Missing voices: the violent erasure of land and environmental defenders", September 2024.

<sup>309</sup> See <https://ejatlas.org/>.

<sup>310</sup> Turquet and others, *Feminist Climate Justice*.

of the rights and roles of women environmental and land defenders in contesting large-scale development projects. While such measures are promising, they need to be scaled up and replicated globally.

(c) *Increasing women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources*

322. The pace at which women's access to land, water, energy and other natural resources is increasing has not closed gender gaps or responded to women's and girls' needs and priorities, jeopardizing their livelihoods and resilience. Less than half of States that responded to the survey (48 per cent) have taken steps to increase women's access, although in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa (88 per cent) and Central and Southern Asia (64 per cent), States have made greater progress.

323. States have taken diverse measures to increase women's access to resources, particularly land (see also sect. II). In Latin America and the Caribbean and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, States have supported women's capacity to address procedural aspects of land titling and succession, updated administrative regulations so as to integrate gender considerations in land ownership decisions, benefiting rural and Indigenous women, and expanded gender quotas from 30 to 50 per cent in soil management and biodiversity conservation projects. States in sub-Saharan Africa have passed legislation to promote equitable access to land and increase women's land ownership, in addition to surveying communities in order to better understand gender barriers to land ownership, such as gender-based violence or caregiving responsibilities. In Europe and Northern America, one State is increasing the number of women, including Indigenous women, in the natural minerals sector to 30 per cent of the mining workforce by 2030. While these measures demonstrate progress, greater efforts are needed to ensure women's access to and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources, particularly as concerns legal reform.

(d) *Valuing Indigenous and local women's knowledge and practices*

324. Closely related to increasing women's access to and management of land and natural resources is supporting Indigenous and local women's knowledge and practices, which is fundamental for sustainability (see box XIII). Globally, 28 per cent of States have taken steps to value Indigenous and local women's understandings and approaches to nature and environmental and climate action, although this is more significant in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Latin America and the Caribbean (all over 40 per cent). No States in Northern Africa and Western Asia reported any measures to protect and preserve women's knowledge and practices.

325. In Latin America and the Caribbean and in Europe and Northern America, States have developed climate adaptation plans with knowledge derived from all sectors of society, including Indigenous communities, incorporating both scientific evidence and ancestral knowledge; consulted with more than 300 women leaders from Indigenous, rural Afro-Colombian and peasant communities on gender and climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience plans and implementation; held workshops with young and Indigenous women to design climate adaptation projects; and sought recommendations from the national Indigenous parliament to ensure that climate adaptation plans reflect Indigenous peoples' knowledge and practices.

## Box XIII

**Indigenous knowledge and practices for environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building**

Indigenous women and their communities make significant contributions to biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and the sustainable management of land, water and other resources. Their knowledge and practices are an expression of rights and resilience, even as these come under increasing threat. As farmers and producers, they practise agroecology, agroforestry and sustainable agriculture, based on ancestral and modern knowledge of plant, tree and crop diversity, seed preservation and soil health and conservation. As water users and managers, they employ knowledge of local water sources and Indigenous irrigation systems and water-saving methods.

In Kenya, Maasai women, supported by the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust<sup>a</sup> and the Justdiggitt Foundation,<sup>b</sup> are rehabilitating degraded landscapes and helping to recover hundreds of hectares in Amboseli National Park through grass seed banks, water bunds to capture rainwater and native tree regeneration. Grass seed banks serve as repositories of diverse grass species, adapted to local climatic and drought conditions, to be used for pasture and reseeded and revegetation of degraded areas, as well as sources of livelihood through the sale of seeds and grass harvests.

In the Peruvian Andes, Quechua women domesticated a wild tuber and native medicinal plant with antioxidant properties, *cuchucho* (*Lilaeopsis macloviana*), turning to a synergistic combination of ancestral and modern knowledge to source water for cultivation during the 2022–2023 drought. They employed radiesthesia, or divining, to find groundwater, which was extracted by means of small family wells and solar pumps connected to sprinkler irrigation systems. Recognizing this successful innovation, supported by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme,<sup>c</sup> local authorities initiated a \$3.9 million public investment project to install 350 solar-powered wells to supply water and build community climate resilience.

States can support and scale up such Indigenous knowledge and practices for sustainability by incorporating them into environmental laws and policies that are funded and implemented more widely, thereby protecting and promoting the rights of nature and of Indigenous women and their communities.

Source: UN-Women and OHCHR, *Realizing Women's Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2020); E/CN.6/2022/3; and Lorena Aguilar, *Women-Led Solutions for Drought Resilience* (Bonn and Rome, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and FAO, 2024).

<sup>a</sup> See <https://amboseliecosystem.org/our-campaigns/>.

<sup>b</sup> See <https://justdiggitt.org/>.

<sup>c</sup> See [www.ppdperu.org/](http://www.ppdperu.org/).

(e) *Supporting gender-responsive just transitions*

326. Over the past five years, the concept of feminist climate justice has become central to gender-responsive policy and action on the triple planetary crisis, grounded in the Paris Agreement, in which the parties noted: “the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of

the concept of ‘climate justice’, when taking action to address climate change” (see [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), annex). Inherent in feminist climate justice are questions of law and rights, recognition, redistribution and representation and intergenerational and gender equity (see box XIV), which also come to the fore in advocacy and policies for gender-responsive just transitions (see [E/2022/27](#), chap. I, sect. A).

#### Box XIV

##### **Gendered climate litigation led by women and girls**

Climate litigation is a method adopted by a new global grass-roots movement with a view to addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on diverse groups, denouncing violations of human rights and the rights of nature, advocating intergenerational and gender equity and justice, setting precedents and effecting change. In 2023, nearly 2,200 climate cases were brought in 65 jurisdictions and international courts, up from 1,550 cases in 2020 and 884 in 2017. Women and girls are increasingly at the forefront of the movement, bringing cases in over 25 jurisdictions and international courts.

In *Maria Khan et al. v. Federation of Pakistan et al.* (2019), a pending case, a group of women argued that inaction by the Government of Pakistan on climate change violated commitments under the Paris Agreement with respect to renewable energy and the constitutional rights of women and future generations, including the rights to a healthy environment and a climate capable of supporting human life and to equal protection under the law and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.<sup>a</sup>

In *Herrera Carrion et al. v. Ministry of the Environment et al. (Caso Mecheros)* (2020), nine girls in Ecuador claimed that gas flaring is unlawful and violates their rights and the rights of nature, damages the environment and contributes to climate change. The Provincial Court of Justice of Sucumbíos declared that “the Ecuadorian State has ignored the right of the plaintiffs to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment and their right to health by promoting polluting activities, and by refusing to use environmentally clean and energy-efficient technologies” and that gas flares must be progressively eliminated by December 2030.<sup>b</sup>

In *Held v. State* (2020), led by a young woman in the State of Montana, United States of America, 16 young people argued that the State violated their constitutional rights by pursuing fossil fuel development without considering climate change, causing mental and physical harm. In 2023, the District Court ruled that the State was violating their constitutional rights to “a clean and healthful environment”, dignity, health and safety, and equal protection of the law. In the first case in the United States of America on state obligations to protect its citizens from climate change, the Court found that each additional ton of greenhouse gas emissions exacerbates climate impacts and the plaintiffs’ injuries.<sup>c</sup>

In *KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland* (European Court of Human Rights) (2020), Senior Women for Climate Protection, a group of 2,000 women over the age of 64, took their case to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that the emissions reduction trajectory of Switzerland was a human rights violation and that older women are especially vulnerable to climate change-induced heatwaves. In 2024, the Court ruled that Switzerland had “failed to comply with its duties” to combat climate change and meet emissions targets, violating the European Convention on

Human Rights. The Court called upon Switzerland to comply with the 1.5° warming limit and net zero emissions by 2050, in a case that could have wide repercussions for climate policy.<sup>d</sup>

Source: UNEP, *Global Climate Litigation Report: 2023 Status Review* (Nairobi, 2023).

<sup>a</sup> See <https://climatecasechart.com/>.

<sup>b</sup> See <https://www.r2heinfo.com/>.

<sup>c</sup> OHCHR, “‘This is about our human rights:’ U.S. youths win landmark climate case”, 29 August 2023; and Amber Polk, “Montana kids win historic climate lawsuit – here’s why it could set a powerful precedent”, *The Conversation*, 15 August 2023.

<sup>d</sup> Sarah Schug, “How a human rights case brought by Swiss women could reignite climate policy”, *The Parliament*, 12 April 2024.

327. The triple planetary crisis threatens decent work and livelihoods, particularly for women in informal and vulnerable positions, with 1.2 billion jobs that are dependent on the environment and ecosystems at serious risk. Women are expected to be severely affected, given their high participation in sectors prone to climate change impacts, such as agriculture. As countries pursue decarbonization to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, ILO estimates that with supportive policy measures, a shift to low-carbon and circular economies could create some 100 million jobs by 2030, although mostly in male-dominated sectors.<sup>311</sup> Just transitions can rectify such gender inequalities in the labour market through the creation of decent jobs for women in the green, blue and care economies more broadly (see sect. II).<sup>312</sup> Gender-responsive social protection systems also play a key role in responding to shocks and supporting disaster resilience (see sect. III).

328. Countries are taking steps in this direction: 63 per cent of countries surveyed have promoted women’s and girls’ education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and in other disciplines relating to the natural environment, which is important preparation for work in the green and blue economies. Fewer countries (41 per cent) have enhanced women’s access to sustainable time- and labour-saving infrastructure and climate-resilient agricultural technology, which are critical for alleviating paid and unpaid care, domestic and productive work and for the greening of agriculture. Even fewer countries (34 per cent) have taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy, but that proportion is promising, nonetheless. States have promoted green jobs for women and youth by deliberately recruiting women, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and migrants in the forestry sector or by training women as energy auditors to support the renewable energy transition and supporting women’s sustainable, climate-resilient businesses. However, these efforts are still sporadic and limited in scope.

## D. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

329. Despite women’s and girls’ heightened visibility as environmental activists and defenders, their voice and agency continue to be underrecognized, undervalued, undersupported and underresourced in environmental and climate decision-making and policy. Three priorities for urgent action emerge from the review of implementation efforts.

<sup>311</sup> ILO, *Achieving a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>312</sup> Carla Kraft and Seemin Qayum, “A gender-responsive just transition for people and planet”, UN-Women, 2023; and UN-Women, “The climate-care nexus”.

*Centre women and girls in a global just transition to benefit equally from jobs in the green, blue and care economies*

330. Transitions away from economies based on the exploitation and extraction of fossil fuels and natural resources are imperative in order to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation. To be just, States must ensure that transition policies give priority to decent work and livelihoods and minimize and mitigate negative impacts on people and the planet by protecting and promoting human rights, gender equality and the rights of nature.<sup>313</sup> Improving women's and girls' education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics related to the environment and climate and ensuring that women benefit equally from environmental and climate policies and programmes and from decent jobs in the green, blue and care economies are also urgent priorities for accelerating gender-responsive just transitions.

331. Central to a just transition is the recognition that developing countries, which are the most negatively impacted by the climate crisis, have contributed the least to the problem. Developed countries have a responsibility to ensure adequate financing and the redistribution of resources is key. In this respect, the decision to set up the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage was a significant development at the twenty-eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention. However, it will be important to ensure that the implementation of the Fund considers the gendered dimensions of both economic and non-economic losses.<sup>314</sup> Financing, primarily from developed, industrialized countries, should be significantly increased so as to make such efforts viable and effective in redressing climate and environmental injustice.

*Accelerate women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making related to natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and response, environmental governance and climate action*

332. Dedicated efforts are needed to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and leadership roles for women in environmental and climate decisions, policies and programmes as a lever for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. States should adopt temporary special measures and prioritize action to remove barriers to women's participation in all aspects of environmental decision-making. Enabling women and girls to participate in and lead collective action for environmental and climate resilience and protecting women environmental defenders are both crucial for a more equal and sustainable present and future for all. Achieving those goals will also require ensuring that gender-responsive environment and climate finance is directly channelled towards funding feminist and women's organizations. Women's participation is pivotal to the success of the key transition in the area of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution in order to catalyze impact across the Goals (see [E/2024/52](#)).

*Realize women's land and resource rights and equal inheritance rights*

333. In order to ensure women's access to and control over land and natural resources, States should increase support for feminist, grass-roots organizations working on women's land and resource rights and tenure security at the local level. At the national level, gender-responsive data, policies and budgeting on land and resources should be strengthened in order to bolster women's access, control and

<sup>313</sup> Emanuela Pozzan, Elena Dedova and Gabriela Balvedi Pimentel, "Just transition policy brief: gender equality, labour and a just transition for all", ILO, October 2022; and Kraft and Qayum, "A gender-responsive just transition".

<sup>314</sup> Nidhi Tewari and others, "Gendered dimensions of loss and damage in Asia", Oxfam International, December 2023.

ownership. Accelerating legal reform on women's land and resource rights, including to equal inheritance, and promoting their involvement in sustainable land use and management also support the gender-responsive implementation of the Rio conventions.

## VIII. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations

334. The urgency of accelerating progress on gender equality has never been greater. As the world struggles to recover from the ongoing effects of multiple and interlocked crises and escalating conflict, the vision of the Platform for Action is more relevant than ever to the achievement of gender equality, peace and sustainable development.

335. While the cascading crises of the past five years have created a challenging environment, the lack of progress, and stagnation in most areas, can also be attributed to a mismatch between normative commitments, on the one hand, and the resources and political will needed to deliver results, on the other. The persistence of discriminatory laws, patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes also continues to hold back progress. While new laws and policies have been introduced by Governments, investments in implementation have been insufficient to make a difference at scale. For example, paid parental leave policies will have limited impact on women's labour force participation without an investment in comprehensive care services to alleviate unpaid care and domestic work over the life cycle. Similarly, laws criminalizing intimate partner violence will have limited impact without large-scale efforts to prevent violence from happening in the first place and investments in comprehensive services to enable victims/survivors to heal and recover. Too often, equality under the law is undermined in practice by a lack of resources for implementation, weak accountability mechanisms, discriminatory social norms, institutional barriers and women's lack of power and resources. Furthermore, growing economic inequality between and within countries and the persistent drive towards fiscal austerity have undermined the availability, affordability and quality of public services that are critical to the achievement of the Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

336. In the past five years, attention has increasingly been focused on the synergies between the critical areas of concern and across the Goals. For example, social protection schemes are increasingly taking the impact of gender-based violence into account. Furthermore, there is greater recognition of the links between women's unpaid care and domestic work and the impact of climate change. Nevertheless, an uneven focus across the areas and siloed approaches to implementation remain common. For example, the focus on girls' education has not systematically resulted in better access to decent work and economic independence for women, signalling the need for greater coordination with gender-responsive economic policies. While there is a greater focus on more integrated approaches to addressing gender in humanitarian settings, that has not materialized in the form of comprehensive approaches across the board that integrate women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights and broader health needs and participation in decision-making.

337. The lessons from implementation across the six thematic areas point to four guiding principles that must inform the implementation of the recommendations set out in paragraphs 344, 346, 351, 355 and 358:

(a) **Centring human rights and substantive equality.** Laws, policies and actions must be grounded in international human rights standards and principles, prioritizing the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and all global and regional human rights instruments. The adoption of global norms and standards does not correspond to

women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights in practical terms; urgent attention is required in order to bridge that gap and achieve substantive equality for women and girls, including through effective accountability mechanisms and ending impunity;

(b) **Equality and non-discrimination.** In drafting legislation and developing policies and actions, decision makers should intentionally seek to understand and respond to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, by addressing differences among women and girls and recognizing that while all women and girls have the same human rights, women and girls in different contexts have particular needs and priorities, which require appropriate responses. Addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination also requires looking beyond "averages" to use disaggregated data in order to monitor the impact of laws and policies for women and girls who experience those forms of discrimination;

(c) **Adopting holistic and integrated approaches.** Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action requires breaking silos and addressing the uneven attention across the critical areas of concern and the Goals. Integrated approaches are needed to maximize the synergies between both frameworks and to realize all human rights, including the right to development for all women and girls, in line with the principles of interdependence, universality and indivisibility of rights. Multi-stakeholder partners can play a role in enabling integrated approaches;

(d) **Acknowledging the role of States as the main duty bearers.** Governments remain responsible for the implementation of global commitments and norms. Governments also have a role in creating an enabling environment for all actors to play their part in achieving gender equality, inter alia, by strengthening and properly resourcing national gender equality machineries, ensuring participatory processes for women's and feminist organizations and ensuring that the private sector protects, respects and fulfils the human rights of women and girls.

338. Alongside Member States, the United Nations system has a critical role to play in developing integrated approaches and harnessing synergies to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action and to put efforts to achieve the Goals back on track. The Gender Equality Acceleration Plan launched by the Secretary-General sets out how the United Nations system must recalibrate and pivot in order to place gender equality and women's rights at the centre of United Nations work and ingrain it across all its endeavours. It puts a spotlight on accountability, leadership and political will as critical drivers to deliver on the United Nations system's gender equality commitments and ambitions. In the light of the growing pushback on women's and girls' rights, the Plan includes a clarion call for leaders across the United Nations system to reinforce a strong normative policy stance for gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of all women and girls everywhere. Calling for intentional collective efforts to reinforce gender equality and human rights as central to the core values and obligations of the United Nations, the Plan aims to recentre the United Nations system's role in advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls as a central prerequisite to peace and security and sustainable development. In positioning gender equality as a collective responsibility and calling for a whole-of-system approach, the Plan recognizes that the commitment to gender equality starts at the top and demands accountable leadership across all United Nations entities.

339. The present report has highlighted the importance of resourcing, which is similarly critical for the United Nations system. With its minimum target of 15 per cent, the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan seeks a transformative increase in budgetary allocations of all United Nations entities to be dedicated to gender equality initiatives by 2030. Finally, the Plan emphasizes the importance of strategic and inclusive partnerships with Member States, civil society and the private sector to drive the change that is urgently required.



340. The review of measures taken by States in sections II–VII above highlights the need for prioritized and focused actions to accelerate progress. In addition to the priorities for accelerated implementation identified at the end of each thematic cluster, five cross-cutting priorities for action are set out below.

**Closing the accountability gap and fortifying institutional mechanisms for gender equality to lead and coordinate gender equality policies**

341. Efforts to achieve the objectives of the Platform for Action have been hampered by the absence of strong institutional mechanisms to ensure implementation and the lack of accountability mechanisms to hold decision makers accountable for their actions. Key institutions and mechanisms for advancing gender equality and implementing policies, such as national gender equality machineries, have been weakened and repurposed and remain underfunded, without the mandate and recognition they need to effectively fulfil their role. The weakening of participatory processes and oversight mechanisms in the context of democratic erosion also undermines the ability of women’s organizations to hold decision makers answerable for their commitments. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, establishing inclusive and participatory processes and systematically embedding gender mainstreaming are all key to ensuring that all policy and programme areas contribute to achieving gender equality across all the Goals. Further, in line with the commitment made at the five-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, removing discriminatory provisions under the law is a long overdue priority.

342. The growth of online spaces characterized by misogyny and gender-based hate speech, the spread of disinformation and misinformation that undermine women’s human rights, the increasing attacks on women in public and political life and shrinking space for civic action all have a silencing effect on women as individuals and on the collective voice of women’s and feminist organizations, denying their role in driving positive change towards gender equality. The private sector, including big technology companies, have a responsibility to fight disinformation and misinformation and to end violence against women both online and offline.

343. While there has been some progress in closing data gaps to monitor progress made towards achieving the Goals, the lack of quality and comparable trend data remains a challenge. In particular, there is insufficient availability of disaggregated data to monitor trends and patterns that affect women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting inequalities. The lack of global data on the role, resourcing and effectiveness of national gender equality machineries also stands in the way of monitoring progress on gender equality.

**344. States should urgently review and strengthen national gender equality machineries and prioritize sustainable funding so they can fulfil their role. States should also strengthen inclusive and democratic processes, including participatory processes for women’s and feminist organizations, so as to ensure accountability and responsiveness to gender equality and women’s and girls’ human rights. Legislative reform to remove discriminatory provisions, particularly in family law, is long overdue. States should also strengthen regulatory frameworks for the private sector based on due diligence principles, so that private sector stakeholders respect, promote and fulfil the human rights of women and girls. States should increase investments in statistical capacity in order to regularly produce gender statistics, with a focus on comparable trend data and the availability of disaggregated data to measure multiple and intersecting inequalities.**

### **Accelerating gender parity and women's full and equal participation, leadership and influence in decision-making across sectors and at all levels**

345. While there has been some limited progress, men continue to dominate decision-making at all levels and across all sectors, including local governments, national parliaments, peace processes, climate and humanitarian decision-making and global governance. Women's participation is of critical importance, both as a matter of equality and because the active presence of women tends to result in positive decisions and outcomes that support gender equality. In recent years, the importance of women's participation in decision-making was thrown into sharp relief in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Stronger feminist movements, higher levels of participation of women in politics and more robust democracies were associated with a more gender-sensitive response to the pandemic. Although women's participation in decision-making across sectors is on the rise, it is important to recognize women and girls in all their diversity by supporting their full participation. Accelerating gender equality also requires the participation and influence of feminist and women's organizations in shaping and monitoring policies across all policy areas and at all levels of decision-making, as well as a safe and enabling environment for women human rights defenders.

**346. States should urgently address all barriers to the full and equal participation of women in order to achieve gender parity at all levels of decision-making. Temporary special measures, such as legislated gender quotas and targeted appointments, are a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in decision-making and should be implemented with parity targets and strict enforcement provisions. Enhancing the political representation of marginalized groups of women and girls, including Indigenous and minority women, also requires specific quotas. States should ensure enabling and participatory processes and spaces for women's rights organizations to influence priorities and decision-making and should also protect women human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.**

### **Closing the financing gap and investing in catalytic interventions to drive impact**

347. Dire levels of financing for gender equality persist as a major barrier to progress. While countries are increasingly tracking budget allocations for gender equality, national gender equality strategies and plans remain significantly underresourced, thereby hindering the full implementation of the Platform for Action. Economic policies and regressive tax policies that have decreased the resources available for public services and social policies have also undermined progress on gender equality commitments. At the global level, international financing for gender equality has decreased since 2020. The current international financial system is also failing to effectively scale up financing for gender equality. Skyrocketing debt service payments in developing countries continue to crowd out investment in public services, especially for the poorest, among whom women and girls are overrepresented.

348. There is an opportunity to boost domestic resource mobilization for gender equality, based on solidarity and redistribution through a focus on progressive taxation, taxing those with the highest ability to pay, including through wealth and corporate taxes. In the wake of successive crises, a renewed investment in gender equality can play an important role in reinvigorating the social contracts between people and governments that have come under strain. In addition to gender-responsive public finance management, mobilizing resources will require gearing macroeconomic, fiscal and monetary policies towards investments in essential public

services and social policies, as well as transforming economies to achieve progress in gender equality, sustainability and social justice.

349. An enabling and equitable global financial architecture based on solidarity, fairness and redistribution is also critical. Reforms to the international financial architecture are required so as to lift constraints on developing countries in mobilizing resources for gender equality, including social protection and public services, with a focus on sustainable debt solutions and global tax cooperation. Harnessing international climate finance for gender equality and increasing the share of ODA targeted towards gender equality objectives across all sectors is critical.

350. States should centre gender equality within global normative financial frameworks and fulfil existing commitments and obligations, including under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and its follow-up processes. These commitments must be strengthened in the outcome document of the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms must be discussed and adopted.

**351. States should urgently strengthen efforts to mobilize more domestic and international resources for gender equality, including through progressive tax systems as well as official development assistance. Those efforts will require the reorienting of fiscal and monetary policies to increase public investments in gender equality and the use of systematic gender-responsive budgeting to monitor allocations. Public investments in universal and gender-responsive social protection systems and public services are critical for reducing inequalities and providing meaningful opportunities for all women and girls. All developed countries should meet their ODA commitments, including the commitments to the least developed countries, while ensuring a stronger focus on gender equality, with attention across all sectors. As envisaged in the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, United Nations system entities must aim to gradually increase expenditure to a minimum of 15 per cent on all programmes for outputs where gender equality is the principal objective. International finance institutions must be held accountable for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights.**

#### **Harnessing the transformative power of technology to advance gender equality and bridging the gender digital gap**

352. Technological advances are part and parcel of everyday life, with many important benefits for enhancing productivity, providing access to knowledge, information and education and improving the reach and availability of services. Technology has significant potential to be further harnessed for gender equality, for example to deliver programmes that prevent gender-based violence or provide services at scale, or to support the delivery of health services and social protection, including in rural and remote areas and during crises.

353. However, the risks that technological change carries must also be carefully managed. For example, legal, policy and regulatory reform will be needed to address violence against women and girls that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology and to avoid violations of privacy for individuals using technology-based public services. Further actions, including regulatory frameworks, are needed to respond to the risk of bias and discrimination being entrenched in generative artificial intelligence-based platforms related to the delivery of services and employment. Increasing women's representation in the technology sector is also crucial.

354. For the full benefits of technology to be harnessed, in addition to investing in technological solutions to advance gender equality, the gender gaps in digital access and connectivity must be addressed. There is also an urgent need to bridge the

development divide so as to ensure that women and girls across all countries benefit from technological developments. For digital tools to work for women, they should be devised based on consultation with users and key experts, including women's organizations. Furthermore, laws, policies, accountability mechanisms and capacity-building are all needed to guard against the risks of technology leading to increased gender inequalities and vulnerabilities.

**355. In order to harness the potential of technology to improve women's and girls' lives, States should prioritize gender equality in efforts to close the digital divide and put in place gender-responsive digital transformation, and systematically integrate gender analysis, targets and disaggregated data collection into their digital policies. States should also strengthen accountability and human rights in the digital age. States must implement laws, policies and regulations to combat the risks of technology for gender equality, including the risk of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, threats to privacy rights and bias in artificial intelligence.**

**Ensure that systems, policies and infrastructure to respond to crises centre women's and girls' human rights**

356. The widespread, deep and lingering effects of successive crises, including the pandemic, food and fuel crises, protracted conflicts and climate-related natural disasters, have all exacerbated or intensified gender inequalities. A key lesson from the past five years is that gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities, such as heightened exposure to violence against women and girls and disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work, tend to increase during crises. Nevertheless, gender concerns are not systematically integrated into crisis prevention and response plans. At the same time, existing services and systems have not been robust enough to withstand the shocks associated with crises. The repeated failure to protect people against shocks and crises has also fuelled the sense of insecurity and declining trust in public institutions.

357. A positive lesson from the past five years has been the impact of adaptations to services and systems as a result of crises. Social protection systems across many countries demonstrated flexibility in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to address gender-specific vulnerabilities and needs, for example through income support for single mothers and expanding eligibility to include informal workers. Furthermore, services to support victims/survivors of violence against women and girls also adapted during COVID-19 in order to provide remote support and access to justice, such as protection orders. These adaptations should be designed into policies and programmes so as to shock-proof services and infrastructure and ensure that crises do not adversely affect women and girls. At a broader level, services and systems should strengthen resilience and the ability to withstand sudden reversals and provide support and protection for women and girls across the life cycle, including through the stronger integration of social protection, support for women's access to decent work, care and other essential services.

**358. States should design and implement crisis prevention and response plans that are gender-responsive, flexible and inclusive, based on a robust understanding of women's and girls' risks and needs over the life cycle. States should integrate lessons from crisis responses and advance coordination between national gender equality machineries and agencies responsible for crisis response in order to ensure an integrated approach. States should prioritize a comprehensive and integrated approach to gender equality in the context of humanitarian responses.**

## Annex

## National reports and survey responses by region

<i>Economic Commission for Africa</i>	<i>Economic Commission for Europe</i>	<i>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	<i>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</i>	<i>Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</i>
Algeria	Albania	Antigua and Barbuda	Australia	Bahrain
Angola	Andorra	Argentina	Bangladesh	Iraq
Benin	Armenia	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Bhutan	Jordan
Botswana	Austria	Brazil	Brunei Darussalam	Kuwait
Burundi	Azerbaijan	Chile	Cambodia	Lebanon
Cabo Verde	Belarus	Colombia	China	Oman
Cameroon	Belgium	Costa Rica	Fiji	Qatar
Central African Republic	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Cuba	India	Saudi Arabia
Chad	Canada	Dominican Republic	Indonesia	Syrian Arab Republic
Comoros	Croatia	Ecuador	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	United Arab Emirates
Congo	Cyprus	El Salvador	Japan	State of Palestine
Côte d'Ivoire	Czech Republic	Grenada	Kiribati	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Denmark	Guatemala	Lao People's Democratic Republic	
Djibouti	Estonia	Honduras	Malaysia	
Egypt	Finland	Jamaica	Maldives	
Eswatini	France	Mexico	Marshall Islands	
Ethiopia	Georgia	Nicaragua	Micronesia (Federated States of)	
Gambia	Germany	Panama	Mongolia	
Ghana	Greece	Paraguay	Nauru	
Kenya	Hungary	Peru	Nepal	
Lesotho	Iceland	Saint Lucia	New Zealand	
Liberia	Ireland	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Pakistan	
Madagascar	Italy	Suriname	Palau	
Malawi	Kazakhstan	Uruguay	Samoa	
Mali	Kyrgyzstan	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Singapore	
Morocco	Latvia		Solomon Islands	
Mozambique	Malta		Sri Lanka	
Namibia	Netherlands		Thailand	
Niger	North Macedonia		Philippines	
Nigeria	Norway		Republic of Korea	
Rwanda	Portugal		Timor-Leste	
Senegal	Republic of Moldova		Tonga	
Seychelles	Romania		Tuvalu	
Sierra Leone	Russian Federation		Vanuatu	
Somalia	Slovenia		Viet Nam	
South Africa	Spain			
South Sudan	Sweden			
Sudan	Switzerland			
	Tajikistan			

<i>Economic Commission for Africa</i>	<i>Economic Commission for Europe</i>	<i>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	<i>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</i>	<i>Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</i>
Togo	Türkiye			
Tunisia	Ukraine			
Uganda	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
United Republic of Tanzania	Ireland			
Zambia	United States of America			
Zimbabwe	Uzbekistan			
<b>44/54</b>	<b>44/56</b>	<b>25/33 (46)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>35/43 (53)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>11/12 (21)<sup>c</sup></b>

*Notes:* A total of 159 national survey responses/reports were received by UN-Women, either directly from States through the online platform or through the regional commissions. The table reflects the distribution by regional commission. National survey responses/reports have been listed under one region only. The number in parentheses reflects the total number of members of the corresponding regional commission.

<sup>a</sup> The membership of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean includes 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and 13 countries in Asia, Europe and North America.

<sup>b</sup> The member countries of the Economic Commission for Africa that submitted reports and are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Morocco, Somalia, the Sudan and Tunisia.

<sup>c</sup> The member countries of the Economic Commission for Europe that submitted reports and are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.