

Oral Statement to the 47th UN Human Rights Council, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women – Gender-equal socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, and thank you to the panelists for the discussion.

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomes this year's annual discussion. The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the critical role that energy has played in powering societies and further put to attention the strong need for energy for the effective realization of women's economic, social and cultural rights.

The pandemic has exposed the structural vulnerabilities and inequalities of the largely gender-blind fossil fuel-based energy system disproportionately affecting women and girls.

- Many healthcare facilities lack access to reliable sources of energy, rendering the storage of medical supplies, including vaccines, nearly impossible.¹ These healthcare disruptions were further exacerbated through the pandemic, leaving millions without adequate medical care.²
- Given the wide gap in women and girl's energy access, numerous women and girls are confronted with significant obstacles to continuing their work and education remotely since their households do not have access to electricity.
- This lack of electricity in households further increases the already enormous burdens of care and domestic work for women and girls.

Renewable energy solutions provide clean, reliable, easy to mobilise and cost-effective energy for essential services. As countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, renewable energy is an opportunity to redefine our energy systems into ones that protect the environment, respect human rights, and advance gender equality. Clean energy sources offer new possibilities not only to combat climate change, but also to diversify the ownership, financing, management, and delivery of sustainable energy with more gender-equal, decentralized, and democratic models of generation and distribution.

To do so, the full and effective participation of women, including indigenous and rural women, is crucial. States must ensure that women have equal access to decision-making processes related to the renewable energy sector and are actively involved in all stages of related project planning. States must ensure that policies and laws connected to the renewable energy transition are gender-mainstreamed and take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls. Moreover, they must promote the transition to renewable energy as an opportunity to reshape models of energy governance so that they better protect the environment, respect human rights, and advance gender equality.

Thank you.

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¹ The World Bank, Modern Energy Access and Health, 2017

² The World Health Organisation, COVID-19 continues to disrupt essential health services in 90% of countries, 23 April 2021. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/23-04-2021-covid-19-continues-to-disrupt-essential-health-services-in-90-of-countries>, last accessed 29 June 2021