

**Oral intervention – Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

**Regional Consultation on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
General Comment on Sustainable Development**

**A just and gender-sensitive energy transition**

*8 February 2022*

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomes the Committee's efforts to include the voices of civil society in its new General Comment on Sustainable Development.

This General Comment can be a significant tool to flesh out State parties' obligations in the climate crisis and beyond, as sustainable development covers all social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Energy is a main contributor to the crisis, causing 60% of all global greenhouse gas emissions. State Parties' obligations under CESCR to promote a just and gender-sensitive energy transition and to balance economic needs with social justice and environmental protection must be recognised.

The inaccessibility of sustainable energy has a significant impact on the realization of various rights under the Covenant, especially on marginalised groups such as women and girls. Universal access to safe, modern, and sustainable energy is indispensable to ensure the right to an adequate standard of living, in line with Article 11 of the Covenant, as well as Sustainable Development Goal 7. Without access to sustainable energy, it is also impossible to guarantee the right to health, Article 12 of the Covenant, since without electricity it is difficult to use adequate medical equipment, including refrigeration systems for the preservation of medicines and vaccines, which are crucial to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the right to education under Article 13 of the Covenant: schools and educational centres without access to energy do not have the capacity to provide quality education to their students, as energy is a precondition for virtual learning which has become crucial during the pandemic.

Regarding the economic dimension, access to sustainable energy is indispensable for equitable, safe, and healthy working conditions and economic development. Access to machinery, computer systems, telephony, heating, transportation, and internet is a prerequisite for developing productive economic activities. Access to sustainable energy is thus vital to ensure Article 7 of the Covenant.

Finally, to leave no one behind and ensure the principle of non-discrimination and gender equality under Articles 2 and 3 of the Covenant, States must ensure that renewable energy policies and projects integrate an intersectional gender perspective and promote the participation of women at all levels and spheres of decision-making.



Therefore, to address the three pillars of sustainable development, it is necessary for the Committee to recognize the following obligations of State parties to the ICESCR:

- Implement appropriate measures to promote the rapid and urgent transition to renewable energy as a fundamental measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and counteract the climate emergency.
- Provide access to sustainable energy as an indispensable condition for the realization of ESCR, especially to guarantee the right to an adequate standard of living and to combat structural conditions of gender inequality, marginalisation, and discrimination.
- Incorporate an intersectional gender and human rights perspective in renewable energy policies and projects to ensure that women's needs and contributions are considered from the design and planning stage through implementation.

Thank you.

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