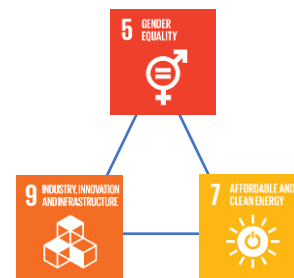




ACCELERATING ENERGY TRANSITION

## CALL TO ACTION/ CAMPAIGN



### Empowering women and youth to accelerate the clean energy transition

With less than ten years until 2030, there is no time to waste. We are at a historical turning point with the potential to become a transformative moment for our society. The time to confront the climate crisis is now! To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must intensify our efforts and work together to build our economies and societies back better after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although women and youth have a critical role to play, they continue to face numerous similar but distinct challenges. Inequalities and discrimination faced by women and youth prevent them from realizing their full potential as agents of change and hinder progress at the right speed and scale.

While there is growing recognition of the importance and benefits of women's equal and meaningful participation in the energy workforce, a wide gender gap remains. In addition, women are at a much greater risk of energy poverty than men.

Despite the barriers that women and youth face, they continue to provide creative sustainable energy solutions and strive for a more sustainable future. In particular, young women and men are at the forefront of creating innovative approaches and demanding tangible actions from policy makers and world leaders. However, they face structural education barriers related to a mismatch between what the education system offers and what the market needs. The market also favors experience over creativity and diversity, which puts youth at a disadvantage. Young women and girls face double discrimination.

The impact of the pandemic widens the gender gap even further, increase the digital divide and severely disrupt the education of and opportunities for young people.

On 12 and 13 January 2021, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in collaboration with the Vienna Energy Forum (VEF) partners, the Global Women Network for the Energy Transition (GWNEN) and the SDG7 Youth Constituency (SDG7 YC), convened an expert dialogue with specialists from governments, development cooperation agencies, donors, academia, the private sector and civil society. Experts and representatives discussed how to break the barriers and unlock the opportunities for women and youth. Discussants recommended to build adequate skills and develop a conducive environment that supports progress and avenues to fully utilize the potential of women and youth to contribute to the clean energy transition.

We are recognizing that the full and active engagement and leadership of women and youth is central to the achievement of the clean energy transition and the advancement of sustainable development. Therefore, the partners call on organizations,

governments, private sector, academia and civil society to take urgent action to ensure that the transition is not only fair and equally accessible to all women and men, girls and boys but that it is also led by women and youth.

More specifically, the partners call for actions to:

### **1. Bridge the education gap:**

(Women and youth) Support youth and women and work with educational institutions, private sector, and governments with a view to narrow the education gap by providing entry level training and reskilling on technical, entrepreneurial, and soft skills and competencies relevant to the clean energy transition and the job market of tomorrow, including in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Moreover, foster the enhancement of transferable skills, such as communication, creativity, and emotional intelligence, in addition to business incubation and acceleration.

### **2. Bridge the gender digital divide:**

(Women and youth) In developing countries, girls and women often have less access to technology and the internet compared to boys and men. To achieve gender equality, girls and young women need equal access to technology, digital training and online safety. Therefore, we must ensure that girls and women have equal access to relevant technical skills and digital literacy to be able to take advantage of the essential technology and digital tools for the clean energy transition.

### **3. Enhance engagement and career advancement avenues:**

(Women and youth) Create awareness and enhance the visibility of women and youth leaders and experts to inspire through role models, mentoring and networking to promote solidarity and overcome common issues and challenges.

(Women and youth) Foster collaboration between the government and the private sector to establish innovation labs that are accessible to women and youth and promote social enterprises that deliver societal and environmental impact.

(Youth) Foster young talents. Institutionalize programmes, including at the graduate level, that provide young women and men with ample job opportunities at entry-level.

(Women) Develop and implement policies, frameworks and programmes that enhance gender equality in the workforce and at managerial level, such as flexible working arrangements, paternity leave, targeted qualification campaigns, preparatory courses and policies that support the entry, retention and development of women in careers in the clean energy sector.

### **4. Inclusive Policies:**

(Women and youth) Put women and youth at the center of the economic recovery. Integrate incentives into program funds and green recovery packages to encourage employers to employ, retain and advance more women and youth in the clean energy sector.

(women) Provide equal opportunities for women to lead, participate in, and benefit from decision-making and the development of inclusive policies for climate action and green recovery.

(Youth) Open avenues for youth activists, associations and advocates to channel their voices to high levels of decision making in climate action and green recovery and provide youth an equitable share in the decision-making process.

**5. Responsible investments and procurement:**

(Women and youth) Provide equal access to affordable financial mechanisms as well as tenders and other business opportunities for women and youth-led enterprises, non-profit projects, and other initiatives, e.g. through gender-responsive procurement and budgeting.

(Women) Integrate a gender lens into investment decisions in clean energy projects.

**6. Ownership of assets:**

(Women) Shed light on the importance of access to and ownership of renewable energy assets, knowledge and information resources as critical tools to change social perceptions and gender norms, particularly in rural areas, where the energy access gap for women is wider than that of men.

**7. Social norms:**

(Women and youth) Challenge social norms and redefine the role of men to empower women and youth. Gender diversity, equality and inclusion in the clean energy transition is not just a women's issue – it is central to long-term value creation and sustainability and to leaving no-one behind.

**8. Results accounting and monitoring:**

(Women and youth) Adopt tools, targets and metrics to track gender mainstreaming, youth engagement and equitable access, and enforce regular and transparent reporting on adopted targets and indicators, both quantitative and qualitative.

The partners will work to build on the session outcomes and the call to action and develop a campaign with specific targets and an associated target framework. The campaign will be launched at the Vienna Energy Forum in July 2021. All governments, organizations and individuals wanting to contribute to the campaign are invited to write to [VEF@unido.org](mailto:VEF@unido.org)

*We #StandTall for Equity in the energy transition!*