

WOMEN & GENDER CONSTITUENCY

Gender Responsive COP Venue

Introduction

Annually, UNFCCC hosts the Conference of Parties (COP), the highest decision making body of the Convention which brings together more than 190 governments (parties) and non-state actors (observers) from across the world. COP28 was the largest COP with more than 100,000 delegates.

As part of the UNFCCC tradition, COPs rotate from one country and continent to the other. COP rotation creates opportunities for different governments to host these critical global climate change negotiations. Equally, it creates a unique challenge in ensuring COP venues are designed and constructed to meet the needs of all delegates including people with special needs, lactating and menstruating women and infants. Aware that UNFCCC and host governments have construction standards to ensure COP venues are inclusive, this brief therefore is to re-emphasize the need to prioritize the needs of women and other groups in the spirit of creating gender responsive COP venues.

Overall issues

1. **Construction integrity:** Over and above engineering standards, the COP venue should strictly follow human rights labor and environmental protection standards: This translates to; unequivocal ban on slave labor, the exploitation of workers during construction and maintenance of the venue and ensuring there is no gender/racial pay gap among other fundamental human rights violations, environmental damage, or construction-induced displacement.
2. **Sustainable Venue:** The COP venue and facilities within it should aim to be fossil fuel free and committed to zero waste, prioritizing instead the use and demonstration of renewable energy, best practice processes for minimizing harmful consumption and production patterns and effective recycling processes, as well as the use of reusable materials and the showcase of green spaces. Critically, the COP venue should have no or limited use of plastics.
3. **Strengthening inclusive participation:** Since the COVID19 pandemic, the size of the rooms have been used as an excuse to limit delegate participation, particularly Observers. The COP Presidency should ensure adequate space for all delegates to comfortably access and follow negotiations in the rooms (as opposed to just following a webcast).
4. **Disability justice:** People with disabilities have specific accessibility and engagement needs which need to be prioritized for them to have dignified access to negotiation rooms,

side event rooms, pavilions, washroom facilities, food courts and check in and out of the venue including having accessible drop-off and pick-up points and disability friendly transport.

5. **Advancing gender equality:** The COP venue should be designed to be gender responsive, accommodating unique needs of women and girls in all their diversity as well those of LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans, inter, queers persons) and preventing sexual harassment, racial profiling and ensuring safety.
6. **Food inclusivity, accessibility and water:** With delegates from across the world who have varied dietary needs and requirements, the COP venue should have accessible and affordable plant based, halal, vegan, vegetarian and diverse food options. Adequate provision of drinking water is absolutely essential with less use of plastic bottles.

Checklist

Security

Please note that while COPs may have minimum standards according to the UN on efforts to “secure” the venue, not all forms of security are defined as needing or requiring a militarized or securitized response. Below, we identify multiple ways to ensure security as both freedom from harm, but also from discrimination, harassment or intimidation.

1. Ensure gender balance in hiring of security officers/ peace keepers, both from UN and private security forces, aiming for 50% women security officials onsite;
2. Manage/minimize the presence of heavily armed officers around meeting rooms;
3. Ensure security officials receive training in gender equality and racial justice and how to devise security protocols, including gender-responsive and culturally appropriate processes at security check-points, including being mindful of cultural dress, as well as medical needs, breastfeeding needs and menstrual products;
4. Ensure safety protocols inside the COP venue and particularly at pick-up and drop-off points against instances of discrimination and harassment. Specifically, all pathways and parking areas should have appropriate lighting. A toll free number/ contact can be made available for delegates to report security incidents inside and outside COP venues.
5. Ensure/guarantee delegates cyber security by, protecting their assets from cyber intrusions; and provide timely communication when there are threats or systems compromises.
6. Outline a clear process and contact beyond the UNFCCC to address security issues especially violence, abuse and harassment against women and gender-diverse and LGBTIQ+ persons promptly
7. Ensure delegates to the COP can safely return home from the COP without harassment / discrimination

Accessibility

8. Pathways leading to main entrance or latrines/bathrooms are accessible and free of obstacles;

9. The entrance is reachable for all people, including people with different types of disabilities;
10. Clear and accessible signage, in multiple languages and with diagrams, for easy navigation of COP space and multiple venues;
11. Doors and windows are accessible for every body;
12. Steps, stairs and ramps can be used easily;
13. Handrails are installed to provide support and security;
14. Space inside is sufficient to circulate;
15. Wheelchair access to working tables throughout room;
16. Accessible toilets.

Additional facilities

17. Accessible, adequate and functioning nursing rooms with required amenities like water sinks, fridge and chairs;
18. Child care rooms with functioning facilities/items;
19. Ensure free sanitary products are easily accessible;
20. Allocate “all gender” toilets .

Engagement

21. Use of large font and captioning;
22. Ensure the temperature of the venue is regulated to provide comfort to everyone, including pregnant women, menstruating women or women who may be wearing more restrictive clothing;
23. Use headsets for pavilion events so the space is more peaceful (and that it isn't a case of the only voices heard are those with the loudest mics);
24. Ensure the acoustics of the venue are optimized to minimize background noise and echo, and ensure that sound equipment is available to ensure clear communication;
25. Ensure adequate interpretation services are available for language justice.

Accountability Note

- ☐ The WGC will have a dedicated focal point leading Gender Responsive COP space engagement with the COP presidencies
- ☐ Upon written submission, the WGC will request one in-person meeting with the COP Presidency team during SBs to discuss Gender Responsive COP space among other issues and one virtual meeting close to COP.
- ☐ The WGC will keep track and timely update members and advocates on the progress and what to expect during COPs.
- ☐ During COPs, the WGC will assess the extent to which the COP venue is gender responsive based on the outlined principles and criteria.
- ☐ The WGC will publish the above assessment with recommendations for the next COP soon after the conclusion of the current COP.