



## **Interactive Expert Panel on the priority theme: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls**

### **The role of rural women's land rights and land tenure security in reaching the SDGs**

**Friday, 16 March 2018, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., United Nations Headquarters**

#### ***Introduction***

Under the priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls,” the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 62) will hold an interactive expert panel on “The role of rural women’s land rights and land tenure security in reaching the SDGs.”

The interactive expert panel is an opportunity for an exchange of views, experiences and new insights on the role of rural women’s land rights and land tenure security for the achievement of the SDGs, and to identify key policy initiatives and strategies in order to accelerate implementation. Emphasis will be placed on results achieved, to strengthen dialogue and commitment for further action. Reference is made to the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme (E/CN.6/2018/3).

#### ***Background***

The extent to which rural women have secure access, use and decision-making control over land and natural resources is a significant determinant of the level to which they can enjoy their human rights. In addition to the importance of land to livelihoods, health, security, cultural and community rights, secure access and control over land can reduce the impact of discrimination and even reduce levels of violence against women. Ensuring women’s rights to land and other productive resources is correlated with improved household welfare and a broad range of benefits for rural women and girls. Women acquire more decision-making power and economic independence in their families, households, and communities. Secure land tenure increases women’s social and political status and offers an avenue to economic justice.

Rural women’s land rights encompass ownership, control, access, or use of land and its resources in diverse land tenure systems, including community, customary, collective, joint or individual. Not only do women have fewer land rights than men, but they are often restricted to so-called secondary land rights, meaning that they hold rights through male family members and risk losing them in the case of divorce, widowhood, or the migration of the male relative. The land rights of many women are curtailed by customary law even when recognized by statutory law or legal reform. Women rarely have full and direct rights to land but must negotiate as secondary claimants through a male relative.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See E/CN.6/2018/3 for references

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1) places land rights at the core of global development priorities, recognizing its foundational link to eradicating poverty (Goal 1), ensuring food and nutrition security (Goal 2), achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5), fostering sustainable cities (Goal 11) and protecting life on land (Goal 15). Secure land rights also contribute to achieving other SDGs, including peaceful and inclusive societies. The 2030 Agenda advances seven targets and six indicators on land rights and tenure security across the SDGs, progress against which is to be measured and monitored through sex-disaggregated data. Three indicators particularly relevant to women's land rights and tenure security are: SDG 1.4.2 on secure land rights; SDG 5.a.1 on rights over agricultural land; and SDG 5.a.2 on legal frameworks, including customary law, that guarantee women's equal rights to land and/or control over land.

The interactive expert panel will explore these and other themes to better understand the role of rural women's land rights and tenure security in achieving the SDGs.

### ***Format, topics and proposed questions***

The interactive expert panel will be moderated by a member of the Bureau of the Commission. It will start with short presentations (8-10 minutes) by five experts from academia, civil society, and the UN system, followed by comments, questions and contributions from Member States and other stakeholders addressed to the panelists.

### ***Questions for consideration:***

1. How can different stakeholders (national governments, civil society organizations, community leaders, women's organizations, gender equality advocates, and international organizations) ensure rural women's rights to land and tenure security?
2. What are examples of effective national laws, policies and programmes that promote and protect rural women's land rights and tenure security, including examples of access to justice in both customary and statutory legal frameworks? What has been the impact of such measures, and how have results been tracked?
3. What are examples of evidence as to how rural women's land rights and tenure security contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals? What steps are needed, by local and national stakeholders, to strengthen measurement of progress on realizing rural women's land rights and tenure security?

### ***Outcome***

The outcome of the discussion will be in the form of a summary by the Chair of the Commission, prepared in consultation with the regional groups, through the members of the Bureau.