

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Geneva, Switzerland, 31 March 2026** – The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (NGOCSWG) convened a consultation on Women and Water for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region ahead of the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (20–21 April 2026, Geneva). The report is published today. The consultation brought together civil society organizations to examine key challenges and emerging issues in water access, governance, and sustainability affecting women and girls.

The consultation addressed a wide range of interconnected women and water issues, including education, health, water governance and law, pollution, oceans and plastics, climate change, emerging contaminants, care work, and digital dimensions of water management. Discussions were structured across breakout sessions on governance; education and health; pollution and climate change; and future planning.

“The issues raised in this consultation underscore the urgency of coordinated action. The UNECE Regional Forum in April presents a critical opportunity to advance gender-responsive water policies, strengthen accountability, and ensure that women are fully represented in decisions that directly affect their lives and communities,” said Zarin Hainsworth, Chair Widows Rights International..

Breakout group reflections underscored the scale of investment required, estimated at \$1 trillion annually for sustainable water resource management, alongside concerns over contamination from pesticides and aging infrastructure, including lead pipelines, and the increasing impact of flooding and extreme weather. Participants highlighted the health and economic consequences of inadequate water access, particularly for women and children, as well as the need for stronger regulation, climate-resilient systems, and a transition away from polluting energy sources. Emphasis was placed on the role of local action, coordinated international policy, and the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making, supported by strengthened political will and financing.

“The challenges discussed reflect the need for integrated approaches that connect water access, health, education, and infrastructure, supported by sustained investment and coordinated policy action”, said Carolyn Handschin-Moser, President NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva.

### **Contributing Organizations**

The consultation featured presentations and contributions from a wide range of civil society organizations, including: Business and Professional Women; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Charities; Graduate Women International; Green Women (Sweden); International Council of Women; Make Mothers Matter; National Alliance of Women’s Organisations; National Council of Women; Soroptimist International; United Voices for Global Impact; WACUNA; Widows Rights International; Women’s Federation for World Peace International; Youth with a Mission; Welcome Clubs International; and World Council of Churches. Additional contributions were received from Afghan Women’s Council for Justice and Action for Justice. Participants also represented a broader network of organizations, including the Swedish Women’s Lobby, European Women’s Lobby, ADVANCE, Equally Ours, Rotary Finland, and the University of Helsinki.

### **About NGO CSW Geneva**

For 50 years, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva has worked to promote gender equality and the advancement of all women and girls. Our member organizations share a vision of elevating and improving the lives of women and girls, in a world where women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, having an equal voice in creating strong, healthy and peaceful communities.

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