

**PERMANENT MISSION OF CAPE VERDE &
PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE PAN-AFRICAN
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR WATER AND SANITATION
IN AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS:
WATER JUSTICE**

Implications for a Science-Based Solutions Approach to
Water and Sanitation Equity for Women and Girls

18 March 2026 | 4:45 PM – 6:00 PM

Conference Room 11
General Assembly Building
United Nations Headquarters, New York



*This event will advance dialogue on structural barriers, water justice,
and the role of science-based solutions in promoting equitable access
to water and sanitation for women and girls.*

CSW70 SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

Organized by: Permanent Observer Mission of the Pan-African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations and Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cabo Verde to the United Nations

Theme: Addressing Structural Barriers and Advancing Gender Justice: Implications for Science-Based Solutions to Gender Equity

Underlying Concept

The struggle for gender equality and justice remains a defining challenge of our time one that demands systemic transformation, not incremental change. Despite significant progress, women and girls across the world continue to face structural barriers that limit their access to justice, leadership, and opportunity. These barriers, rooted in laws, social norms, economic inequalities, and institutional bias, undermine the full realization of human rights and sustainable development.

Background and Rationale

As the world approaches the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched, particularly in science, technology, and policy-making spaces. Structural barriers rooted in

patriarchy, colonial legacies, economic exclusion, and discriminatory norms continue to hinder women and girls from accessing, contributing to, and benefiting from technological advancements.

At the same time, science-based solutions are increasingly recognized as essential for addressing global challenges, from transformative change to gender security. Yet, without gender-just frameworks, these solutions risk reinforcing existing inequities.

This CSW70 session will explore how dismantling structural barriers and advancing gender justice can unlock the full potential of science, technology, and innovation (STI) to serve all of humanity.

In alignment with the Priority Theme of the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) “Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers,” the Permanent Observer Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cabo Verde to the United Nations seeks to create a high-level discussion on how gender justice can be advanced along the Priority Theme of the CSW70 Session.

Thematic Focus

- Dismantling structural barriers addressing systemic discrimination in laws, institutions, and practices, and tackling intersecting inequalities based on gender, race, class, disability, and migration status.
- Promote Inclusive Legal Systems to reform laws and policies that hinder women’s rights and ensure legal frameworks uphold international human rights standards.

- Strengthen access to justice and expand legal aid, especially for marginalized women and girls, and make justice systems survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive.
- Advance accountability and participation that will increase women's representation in justice institutions and ensure meaningful participation of civil society and grassroots women in legal reform.
- Accelerate the implementation of SDG commitments, especially SDG 5, translate +global gender equality goals into national laws and budgets, and monitor progress through gender-disaggregated data and inclusive evaluation.

Science-Based Solutions for Gender Equity -The WATERHer Inclusion and Approach: The WATERHer Inclusion is a transformative initiative that integrates science-based solutions with gender justice in the context of water access, climate resilience, and sustainable development. It aligns with the CSW70 theme by addressing structural barriers that exclude women and girls from decision-making, innovation, and resource control, especially in water-scarce and climate-vulnerable regions.

CSW70 Better Together, Addressing Structural Barriers, Gender Justice Implications for Science-Based Solutions to Gender Equity

About the WATERHer Initiative

WATERHer is a Pan-African flagship initiative addressing systemic inequities in water and sanitation through the lens of justice, science, and gender-responsive governance. It seeks to dismantle barriers that restrict

women's access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), promote equitable policy frameworks, and enhance women's leadership in environmental governance and innovation.

In the CSW70 context, WATERHer will be presented as a model of intersectional justice linking environmental sustainability, public health, and women's participation in science and decision-making, thereby embodying the CSW call to "eliminate structural barriers and ensure women's access to justice in all spheres of life."

Within this broad framework, the WATERHer Initiative will be spotlighted as a signature program representing the intersection of gender, environment, science, and policy innovation while also aligning with the purpose of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cabo Verde to the United Nations' contribution to the intended CSW70 agreed conclusion. on the priority theme

Objectives of the Side Event

- To contribute to the CSW70 priority theme by exploring pathways to dismantle structural barriers that hinder gender access to justice, equity, and inclusion.
- To promote cross-sectoral dialogue on inclusive systems of governance, innovation, and empowerment.
- To amplify women's voices across disciplines, including law, science, policy, environment, and youth advocacy.
- To showcase WATERHer as a best-practice model connecting gender justice with sustainable and science-based policy frameworks.

- To reinforce commitments toward women’s participation and decision-making in alignment with the CSW65 Agreed Conclusions.
- To strengthen partnerships across governments, civil society, academia, and multilateral organizations for shared action.

Program Format for CSW70 Side Event

Moderator: Prof. Ada JUNI Okika, Senior Adviser, Permanent Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation for Africa to the United Nations

S/N	Key Priority Focus	Thematic Topic for Presentation	Speakers
01	Statement on the agenda of Gender Justice from the Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations Statement on the agenda of the Mission of the Republic of Cabo Verde	Addressing Structural Barriers and Advancing Gender Justice: Implications for Science-Based Solutions to Gender Equity CSW70 Side Event	H.E Dr. Nabhit Kapur Permanent Observer Ms. Tania Serafim Yvonne Romualdo Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative
02	Picturing Structural Barriers and Advancing Gender Justice	Advancing Gender, Legal, and Justice from the Beijing Declaration: Reforming	Athena Manley, Founder, The Flexible CEO Dr. Joy Elise Macci, President & CEO, Joy of Sports
03		systems that perpetuate discrimination,	

04		<p>exclusion, and violence.</p> <p>Gender Advocates, dismantling structural barriers, addressing systemic discrimination in laws, institutions, and practices, and tackling intersecting inequalities based on gender, race, class, disability, and migration status.</p> <p>Promote Inclusive Legal Systems to reform laws and policies that hinder women’s rights and ensure legal frameworks uphold international human rights standards.</p> <p>Strengthen access to justice and expand legal aid, especially for marginalized women and girls, and make justice systems survivor centered, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive.</p> <p>Representation and Leadership:</p>	<p>Sylvia Paulig, Founder and CEO, PAULIG EYE & HEALTH Munira Rahman, CMO & Director, Al Haramain Perfumes</p> <p>Dr. Linda Salvin, Entrepreneur & Founder, Wicks of Wisdom Rory Kilmartin, Founder, Archetypal Relationships Academy</p> <p>Dr. Ajjaya Kumar, Author & Speaker. Dr. Monica Romelina Sijabat, Founder & Managing Partner, MRS Business Professional</p> <p>Aditii Handa, Chairman & Managing Director, Forttuna Group</p>
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		Amplifying women's voices in public institutions, science, diplomacy, and civil society.	Myrto Mangrioti, Transformational Coach & Author
05	Science-Based Solutions for Gender Equity	<p>The WATERHer Inclusion and Approach: The WATERHer Inclusion is a transformative initiative that integrates science-based solutions with gender justice in the context of water access, climate resilience, and sustainable development.</p> <p>It aligns with the CSW70 theme by addressing structural barriers that exclude women and girls from decision-making, innovation, and resource control, especially in water-scarce and climate-vulnerable regions.</p>	<p>Prof. Ada JUNI Okika Senior Adviser, Permanent Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation for Africa to the United Nations</p> <p>Charles Roberts, Founder & Executive Director, Rhode Island Slave History Medallions Melanie Warner, Founder, Defining Moments Press Brooklyn Dicient, Media Personality</p>
06	A Call to CSW70 Action for Science- Based Solutions and Gender Justice	CSW70 Better Together: Addressing Structural Barriers, Gender Justice Implications for Science-Based Solutions on Gender Equity	Maryna Bilousova, Author & Leadership Speaker Anum Mir, Founder & CEO, YOLO Pret
	Input to CSW70 Agreed	The Shifting Paradigm Next Agenda	H. E Dr. Nabhit Kapur,

	<p>Conclusion and Closing Remarks</p>		<p>Permanent Observer, Permanent Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations</p> <p>Ms. Tania Serafim Yvonne Romualdo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cabo Verde</p>
<p>07</p>	<p>Call to CSW70</p>	<p>Better Together Next Agenda on “Addressing Structural Barriers and Advancing Gender Justice: Implications for Science-Based Solutions to Gender Equity”</p>	<p>Prof. Ada JUNI Okika Senior Adviser, Permanent Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation for Africa to the United Nations</p>

Relevance to CSW70, Beijing+30 and Expected Outcome.

This side event directly contributes to the priority theme of CSW70 on access to justice and supports the vision of Beijing+30 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By integrating gender justice, environmental stewardship, and inclusive governance, the event embodies the spirit of “Better Together” ensuring that gender justice has the right, the voice, and the means to shape a just and equitable future.

Recommendation for a Better Together and Sustainable Outcome to CSW70 Session:

Permanent Observer Mission of the Pan African Intergovernmental Agency for Water and Sanitation in Africa to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cape Verde to the UN will be pleased to hold CSW70 Side Event under the theme: “Addressing Structural Barriers and Advancing Gender Justice: Implications for Science-Based Solutions on Gender Equity” and recommend to CSW70 Session Bureau for consideration the need for Science based solutions and approaches for women and girls in Africa and Pan-African communities to enjoy full legal recognition and protection, with no discriminatory laws or practices, and a harmonized legal framework with international human rights standards on gender justice, inclusive of gender issues for the continued advancement of Beijing@30 and 2030 Agenda.

Justice institutions are physically, culturally, and economically inclusive of gender justice and should be made accessible to all women and girls. Women and girls should be allowed to actively participate in legal processes, policymaking, and peacebuilding To have their voices shape laws, institutions, and community norms that concern them, Gender justice systems should be made transparent, gender-sensitive, and accountable to the communities of women and girls. Training, monitoring, and reform should be ongoing to ensure responsiveness

and fairness. Elimination of structural barriers, including poverty, illiteracy, and geographic isolation, and integrated support systems (education, health, social protection, empowerment) should be legally reinforced.

Cultural and normative shifts, such as highly placed harmful gender norms, by values of equality, dignity, and mutual respect, enable communities to become active agents in promoting justice and protecting rights. This should be achieved through collaborative action with governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, and international partners working together to build justice systems for gender justice.

The UN Secretary-General's "Shifting Paradigms: United to Deliver" initiative is a bold reform agenda launched under the UN80 framework to realign the United Nations system for greater coherence, impact, and justice across its peace, development, and human rights pillars. It aligns with the priority theme of CSW70 with respect to inclusive and equitable legal systems, the elimination of structural discrimination, Science based, solutions-driven justice models, and the integration of gender justice into national and global frameworks.