MEDIA CONTACT:
Ariana Rodriguez-Gitler
comms@wedo.org
1-202-455-0182
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PRESS RELEASE

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Making the Gender Action Plan a Reality

The adoption of the nine-year Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP) was a hard-won achievement for feminist movements and a significant commitment to advancing gender equality in climate action. At COP31, the focus must shift from adoption to implementation.

> *"We saw [the adoption of the Belém GAP] not just as a victory for gender equality, but the kind of multilateralism we desperately need — grounded in solidarity, accountability, and the willingness to stand together when fundamental rights are being challenged.*
>
> *That is not an easily afforded form of multilateralism, and it certainly can be temporal. We see the same attacks surfacing again here at this COP, and often without the same solidarity to push back against the tide.*
>
> *But the adoption of the Belém Action Plan was never the end goal. The real measure of its success will be what happens next."*
> ***— Bridget Burns, Executive Director, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)***

> *"I do remember the effort over a decade ago to get the first gender into the agenda at the climate talks. I didn't expect to have to defend that language 10 years later. This backlash is alive and kicking at this COP too. There are reports of Parties attempting to block references to gender action across several negotiating streams. ... This Gender Action Plan has been adopted by all of the countries in Belém. It's not up for renegotiation. It must be implemented."*
> ***— H.E. Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland, Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Member of The Elders***

The GAP's impact can only be measured by how governments, institutions, and movements translate its commitments into meaningful change. One of the first opportunities lies in the national assessment process, which invites submissions by March 2027 on the intersections of gender and climate change, including health, violence against women and girls, and care work. These assessments offer an important entry point for building evidence, strengthening national dialogue, and connecting the GAP to broader national climate policies and priorities.

> *"This deliverable lays the foundation for much of what follows … What Parties submit and how robustly will shape the evidence base behind future work, financing decisions and follow-ups across the whole framework. Above all, we see this deliverable as the way to connect the global to the local.*
>
> *We have never believed that a document in a global process on its own delivers resources, opportunities, or transformation to women and girls on the ground. But a strong national assessment can do something important. It can show with evidence how deeply gender and climate are intertwined. … This deliverable is a vehicle to move from rhetoric to implementation."* ***— Claudia Rubio, Policy Coordinator, WEDO***

To meet the potential of the national assessments to implement the GAP, advocates call on Parties to:

1. Treat national assessments as more than a compliance exercise, and link gender, health, environment, finance, and other ministries to take stock of existing data and research.
2. Value civil society evidence as a legitimate source of knowledge, including informal submissions.
3. Connect findings to national climate strategies, project pipelines, and financing mechanisms so that evidence leads to policy change.

This work also requires adequate resources. National Climate and Gender Focal Points need tools, knowledge, and cross-sectoral support to deliver meaningful assessments.

> *"Agreeing the Plan was only the first step. Commitments on paper are not enough. The GAP does not automatically deliver funding, protection, or policy change. Governments must provide the resources needed to ensure women's meaningful participation in climate decision-making, improve women's access to adaptation finance, and support women's resilience to climate impacts."*
> ***— H.E. Mary Robinson***

Protecting women environmental defenders

The Belém Gender Action Plan presents an opportunity to advance the safety, recognition, and participation of women human rights defenders. These defenders continue to face threats, violence, and exclusion — despite their vital grassroots contributions to climate action.

> *"When we enter global climate spaces, too often we are invited to tell our stories without being given the power to shape the decisions. The test of the Belém GAP, especially activity B.4, is whether it changes that reality. Will defenders be safer? Will they have resources? Will our participation carry power beyond the microphone?"* ***— Hira Amjad, Executive Director, Dastak***

Implementation must answer those questions by delivering protections, direct funding, and meaningful participation. The Women and Gender Constituency is hosting local consultations to bring defenders' experiences and perspectives into the process. The UNFCCC must now translate these inputs into concrete commitments — and those commitments into protections, resources, and decision-making power for environmental defenders.

Nationalizing the GAP: Belém to Brazil

In Brazil, where the Belém GAP was adopted, implementation is already underway. The Women and Climate Emergencies Protocol has been developed, offering recommendations and guidelines to incorporate gender and racial perspectives into climate-related risk and disaster management. Brazil has also launched a National Strategy to mainstream gender in national climate change policies (Plano Clima), known as the Women and Climate Transversal Strategy.

In coordination with the National Statistics Office, the Ministry of Women is developing a technical panel to produce gender-, race-, and age-disaggregated climate data.

> *"There is one very important actor, or some very actresses, also on the floor, which are subnational governments and civil society. And this has been the place where a lot of resistance has been developed all over extreme right governments all over Brazil, so we can keep up with this discussion. This is a lesson we have been learning all over Latin America."*
> ***– Michelle Ferreti, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Instituto Alziras, Brazil***

Regional leadership: The Pacific Gender and Climate Pact

In June, Pacific Island countries launched the Pacific Pact on Gender and Climate Action, one of the first of its kind, representing a regional political commitment to lead and accelerate implementation of the Belém GAP.

It focuses on three interconnected areas: advancing Pacific women's leadership in climate decision-making; strengthening gender-responsive climate data and evidence; and advancing gender-responsive approaches to climate finance.

Importantly, the Pact moves beyond a general commitment to gender equality. It identifies concrete areas for action, including increasing women's representation in national climate delegations and governance bodies, valuing women's traditional and Indigenous knowledge, improving the evidence available on gender and climate impacts, and ensuring climate finance reaches women-led organizations and communities.

> *"We hope that that can be a lightning rod for so many other countries to do the same because we also think it is a vehicle not just for accessing resources and finance, but really delivering for people and communities."* ***— Bridget Burns***

Civil society mobilization

Civil society is mobilizing to ensure the GAP becomes a tool for national policymaking, institutional investment, protection of environmental defenders, and meaningful inclusion in climate decision-making.

> *"We are not waiting for implementation to be delivered to us. We are working to implement."* ***— Bridget Burns***

We are mobilizing to ensure the GAP becomes an organizing tool for national policymaking and action, institutional investment, protection of environmental defenders, and meaningful inclusion in climate change decision-making.

ABOUT WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (WEDO)

The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) is a global women's advocacy organization working for climate and environmental justice. WEDO supports feminist leadership and grassroots movements, connects lived experience to global policy, and builds collective power. For more than 30 years, WEDO has advanced care-centered solutions that address the root causes of today's crises.