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NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
AFFAIRS, FAMILY AND DEMOGRAPHIC
POLICY UNDER THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

SIDE-EVENT

“ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION: GENDER-RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE OF CRITICAL MINERALS IN KAZAKHSTAN AND BEYOND”

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)
UN HQ, New York | 12 March 2026

Organizer: The Government of Kazakhstan with support of UNEP, UNDP and Sweden

Venue and Time: CR-9 (45 people); 11:30AM-12:45PM

Format: In-person

Background

The **70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)** places access to justice for all women and girls at the centre of the global gender equality agenda, calling for the development of inclusive and equitable legal systems, the elimination of discrimination, and the removal of structural barriers that prevent women’s rights from being realized in practice. As the global energy transition accelerates, these justice-related challenges are becoming increasingly visible in sectors located at the intersection of environmental governance, corporate influence, and community interests—particularly in the extraction and processing of critical minerals.

In the context of critical mineral extraction, gaps in access to justice typically manifest across three interrelated areas: limited access to remedies for environmental harm and health impacts; discrimination, harassment, and violence in workplaces and surrounding communities; and the exclusion of women and vulnerable groups from decision-making processes across all stages of the mineral value chain. These challenges are often compounded by environmental pollution, unsafe working conditions, and weak grievance mechanisms, resulting in disproportionate adverse impacts on women, children, and marginalized populations.

The **UNEA-6 process and the ongoing preparations for UNEA-7** advance a lifecycle approach to minerals and metals governance—from extraction and processing to waste management and secondary resource recovery—grounded in the principles of inclusivity, gender

responsiveness, scientific integrity, and justice. This approach directly aligns with the CSW70 justice agenda by linking environmental protection with women’s access to remedies, participation in decision-making, and accountable governance.

Women’s access to justice is also a core element of the implementation of the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)**. Under the UNGPs, companies are responsible for conducting human rights due diligence (HRDD), including the identification, prevention, and remediation of gender-related risks, while States have the duty to protect human rights through effective legislation, oversight, and enforcement. In the context of digitalization, access to justice in the critical minerals sector has also acquired a pronounced digital dimension. Online grievance platforms, digital channels for company–community engagement, and electronic mechanisms for ESG risk monitoring expand potential access to remedies, while simultaneously creating new risks for women and vulnerable groups.

In this context, the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, in cooperation with national companies in the energy, ICT, and industrial sectors, has conducted a series of diagnostics on the application of gender equality standards, covering human resources policies, grievance mechanisms, and community engagement systems. The findings of these diagnostics point to concrete opportunities for formal commitments and for translating standards into tangible improvements—particularly with regard to women’s access to remedies, protection from harassment and violence, and participation in decision-making processes.

As Kazakhstan strengthens its position as a partner in global critical mineral supply chains while advancing key reforms—including the removal of restrictions on women’s employment—the integration of gender-responsive HRDD and access-to-justice mechanisms into corporate practice is a critical prerequisite for a just, inclusive, and sustainable energy transition.

Key Challenges

- **Rapid market transformation and the role of the private sector.** New opportunities and the fast pace of sectoral growth create risks of reinforcing inequality, environmental harm, and gender-based violence in the absence of systematic strengthening of corporate human rights due diligence (HRDD), effective grievance mechanisms, and accountability systems.
- **Environmental pollution and methane emissions across the lifecycle.** The lack of gender-responsive approaches to pollution monitoring and harm remediation across all stages of the critical minerals lifecycle further weakens access to justice.

- **Barriers to access to justice in the mining sector.** Women and girls often face limited or inaccessible grievance mechanisms, complex and costly procedures, and risks of bias or retaliation when seeking remedies for environmental harm, workplace discrimination, harassment, or violence.
- **Data and participation gaps.** Limited availability of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data constrains the identification of differentiated environmental and health impacts and undermines evidence-based policymaking and corporate decision-making.
- **Digital barriers to access to justice and online violence.** The digitalization of grievance mechanisms, public monitoring, and corporate accountability in the extractive sector has not been adequately aligned with gender and intersectional risk mitigation, exposing women and vulnerable groups to new forms of exclusion and online abuse.

Objective of the event

The objective of the event is to present and discuss practical, gender-responsive approaches to ensuring access to justice in the context of the development of the critical minerals sector.

Objectives of the event:

1. To take into account the CSW70 justice agenda and leverage the momentum of UNEA-7 - in particular the environmental dimensions of the minerals and metals agenda, as well as youth engagement and innovation—within national and corporate governance systems.
2. To present UNDP's applied approach to integrating gender equality into business practices in the critical minerals sector.
3. To foster partnerships based on a whole-of-society approach.
4. To facilitate the exchange of practical lessons and good practices among key stakeholders.

Expected Measurable Results

- Actionable recommendations developed based on the presentations and discussions.
- Strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, civil society organizations, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with agreement to continue dialogue beyond CSW70.
- Enhanced role of civil society organizations and youth networks in co-leading community engagement processes.



Intersectionality and Inclusion

The event will apply an intersectional approach to ensure the participation and inclusion of perspectives from youth, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and marginalized communities. This is aligned with UNEA-7 calls for inclusive solutions, as well as the CSW emphasis on removing structural barriers in law and in practice. Particular attention will be given to accessibility, including interpretation, physical access to the venue, sign language interpretation, and the preparation of materials in accessible formats.

Communications and Knowledge Products

Communications and outreach will be treated as a strategic component of the event, aimed at ensuring sustained policy and public impact of the CSW70 discussions beyond the session itself. A coordinated package of analytical and media products will be developed before, during, and after CSW70 for dissemination through websites and social media platforms.

Partnerships

This concept is grounded in a strategic partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, bringing together environmental governance, gender equality, and access to justice agendas in the context of the energy transition and the development of critical minerals. The initiative builds on UNEP's normative leadership in minerals and metals governance under the UNEA-7 track on **Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETM)**, as well as UNDP's operational experience in supporting governments and companies to strengthen gender-responsive and human rights-based practices.