

Towards a Nordic Alliance for Gender Equality and Climate Justice

22 Takeaways from the
Nordic Roundtable in Oslo,
January 2022



The Roundtable was convened by FOKUS, UN Women and the Nordic Council of Ministers in Oslo, Norway, on 24 January 2022.

This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at <https://pub.norden.org/nord2022-016>



Anette
Trettebergstuen



Petra Laiti



Sima Sami
Bahous



Katja Iversen

22 takeaways from the Nordic Roundtable on Gender Equality and Climate Justice

1. Scale up cross-sectoral collaboration and alliances for gender equality and climate justice
2. Set tangible ambitions and commitments for a gender-responsive and just transition at the CSW and beyond
3. Learn from others, use knowledge better, and expand evidence
4. Take an all-of-government approach for a more equal and green society
5. Stop looking at the green transformation in economic terms only – it must be just for all genders
6. Ensure a rights-based, intersectional approach to gender equality in climate justice
7. Push for equal representation in leadership and decision-making and analyze how gender norms influence climate policies
8. Raise awareness, train managers, and set company targets
9. Make gender equality a hard-hitting policy area
10. Hold everyone in government accountable to deliver on gender equality
11. Assess the impacts of climate and energy strategies
12. Entrench diversity and sustainability into every business decision
13. Build on the Nordic strengths in welfare and family policies for green jobs
14. Make sustainability the business model of today with products and services relevant to all

15. Use the green transition as an opportunity to reduce social and gender inequality
16. Make women's voices heard and harness the expertise of women's organizations
17. Focus on lifelong learning and the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow
18. Analyze and act on why women and girls do not choose STEM careers
19. Be smart in hiring, promoting, remunerating, and training inclusive talent
20. Nurture a community of a new generation of activists
21. Bridge the digital gender gap also at home
22. Transform actions, attitudes, and structures

Climate change and gender inequality are interlinked and constitute some of the most pressing issues of our time. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier in a world that is facing a surge in crises. Those leading demand for climate action are not only looking for better informed climate policies and proactive action. They are also calling for climate justice, which considers the unequal burdens and opportunities for people in all their diversity. Inclusive leadership which addresses both climate change and structural injustices is needed, as gender equality is a central element of climate justice.

For climate justice to become a reality, we must acknowledge that climate change can have different "social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations"¹ and reinforce and magnify existing inequalities also based on gender. Climate justice activists are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on by way of "holistic and integrated policies and programmes that uphold human rights, build resilience and foster regenerative green and blue economies and gender-responsive, just transitions".²

The first-ever cross-sectoral Nordic³ roundtable with a spotlight on gender equality and climate justice in the region was convened by FOKUS, UN Women and the Nordic Council of Ministers in Oslo, Norway, on 24 January 2022. The objective of the roundtable was to: form an alliance; provide a platform for knowledge exchange; identify challenges and find solutions to the climate justice and gender equality nexus; and promote a joint Nordic voice for gender equality.

Moderated by Katja Iversen, Executive Advisor and Author, representatives of five Nordic governments, in addition to changemakers from civil society, the United Nations, the private sector, trade unions, and research and academic institutions put their heads together in this first move to identify challenges and

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In the past century, Nordic countries have pioneered gender equality in society. But still, public and private policies and strategies on climate are lacking a clear gender equality perspective. Every political initiative we take must be for people and for planet.

– **Anette Trettebergstuen, Minister of Culture and Equality of Norway** and chair of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI in 2022

solutions to the climate and gender equality nexus. It was also a key step to create a regional alliance on gender equality and climate. Why now? 2022 offers a range of opportunities – including the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), Stockholm+50 and the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) – for the Nordic countries and stakeholders to be trailblazers in bridging the gap between gender and environmental efforts.

This brief summarizes the discussion and offers 22 takeaways for 2022 and beyond, backed by statements and inputs. It sheds light on important areas of action for people and planet, alike.

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1. Yale Climate Connections, 2021. "What is 'climate justice'?" See: <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/what-is-climate-justice/>.
 2. United Nations, 2022. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes: Report of the Secretary-General. See: <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2022/3>.
 3. The Nordic Region consists of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.



Anne Beathe
Tvinnereim



Thomas
Blomqvist



Kristin Halvorsen



Svein Tore
Holsether

Setting the scene

Takeaway 1:

Scale up cross-sectoral collaboration and alliances for gender equality and climate justice

Ambition has been described as the path to success and the Nordic Region is determined. **Anne Beathe Tvinnereim, Minister of International Development of Norway**, was clear: With the vision of becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030, now is the time for urgent action. She emphasized that the outcome of this dialogue will be useful, across sectors and stakeholders, and that it will form the basis for a strong Nordic voice internationally, also at the CSW in March which, for the first time, will look at gender equality and climate change. Only by working together, she highlighted, will the goal of building a green, competitive, inclusive, and socially sustainable region be reached.

Takeaway 2:

Set tangible ambitions and commitments for a gender-responsive and just transition at the CSW and beyond

Sima Sami Bahous, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, emphasized how the UN Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda",⁴ without ambiguity, places gender equality and human rights at the center of all actions. *"Climate change and gender equality are two of the greatest and most interrelated challenges of our time. We cannot address one without the other,"* she underlined.

Her political call to action for the Nordic Region was crystal clear. She asked the Nordic countries to approach both the CSW and Stockholm+50 with tangible ambitions and commitments for a gender-responsive and just transition to an inclusive and regenerative green economy. Furthermore, she asked the Nordic public and private sectors to scale up investments in gender-responsive climate solutions, at all levels.

4. United Nations, 2021. Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General. See: <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>.

Takeaway 3:

Learn from others, use knowledge better, and expand evidence

Kristin Halvorsen, Director of CICERO, unpacked the knowledge we have about gendered differences in impacts and attitudes towards climate change. Women have smaller carbon footprints than men. And, if men traveled like women, emissions would be reduced by 30 per cent. Women tend to worry more about climate change and are more supportive of climate policies. However, men under the age of 30 are just as supportive of climate policies as young women.

Whereas how to set climate targets and document greenhouse gas emissions has been a focus, the gendered evidence base has largely looked to women's perspectives in other parts of the world. *"I have to ask. Did we forget the gender perspective?"* Kristin Halvorsen contemplated.



Åsa Regnér



Espen Barth Eide



Gro Lindstad



Julie Rødje

How do we ensure that gender equality is considered and promoted in public and private climate policies and strategies?

Takeaway 4:

Take an all-of-government approach for a more equal and green society

Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, kicked off the discussion on how to make sure gender equality is integral to climate policies and strategies. She pointed to difficulties in expressing caring for people and planet through laws, policies, and finances, given the siloed sectoral approaches of many ministries and institutions. She called for an all-of-government approach to improve coordination and strengthen capacities. For lasting success, gender-responsive climate, environmental, and disaster risk finance must be increased. She stressed that these, along with other areas of work on data, leadership and participation, and building resilience, form part of the blueprint of the Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice, launched as part of Generation Equality. She highlighted the urgency of action: for many countries, climate change is the reality now, affecting women today.

Takeaway 5:

Stop looking at the green transformation in economic terms only
– it must be just for all genders

Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway, stressed that Nordic countries are increasingly trying to tackle climate issues and have a long tradition of fighting against gender inequality. Connecting the dots between these two areas is what is needed now. *"Climate policies will change everything in the economy,"* he argued. *"The green transformation will affect sectors such as energy, transport, construction, production, and consumption – and beyond. It will also have a very strong effect on gender and equality. We must make sure that the concept of just transition is just not only in the economic sense. It must be just for all genders as well as the young and old, urban and rural, rich and poor. As politicians we are responsible for making the equality dimension essential to understand in the climate debate."*

Takeaway 6:

Ensure a rights-based, intersectional approach to gender equality in climate justice

Petra Laiti, Saami rights advocate, shared the perspectives of Nordic and Arctic indigenous communities. *"When exploring the link between the climate crisis and gender equality, there is no more appropriate example than that of indigenous peoples,"* she explained. *"Loss of land is the most severe cause of social problems in indigenous communities, leading to social exclusion, substance abuse, and suicide, to name a few. This is also an effect of the climate crisis."*

Gro Lindstad, Executive Director of FOKUS, reminded participants that, to address climate justice, it must be put in a rights-based context that looks not only to what policies and strategies are in place, but also to what Nordic countries have committed to and putting these commitments into action. She urged participants to remember that 50 per cent of the global population cannot be looked at as a vulnerable group, but that they must be looked at as part of the solution and as agents of change.

Julie Rødje, President of Spire, highlighted the many possibilities of connecting gender equality and climate action in Nordic development cooperation. She underlined political participation and empowerment as essential to understand gender, young peoples', and indigenous peoples' aspects, to name a few.

Takeaway 7:

Push for equal representation in leadership and decision-making and analyze how gender norms influence climate policies

Sólvit E. Nolsø, Minister of Social Affairs of the Faroe Islands, called for equal representation to fill gaps in climate change and gender equality policies and decision-making, arguing that this has been proven as the best way to succeed.

Victoria Iris of the Danish Green Student Movement, however, invited participants to go beyond representation and called for more analysis on how gender norms and perceptions are influencing and being influenced by climate policies. *"Gender equality is not just a numbers game. Representation does not automatically guarantee non-gender-blind climate policies,"* she argued.

Takeaway 8:

Raise awareness, train managers, and set company targets

Svein Tore Holsether, President and CEO of Yara International, shared how the company is approaching gender and sustainability. All managers are being trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion. To ensure accountability for delivery on gender equality in Yara, diversity targets are set alongside financial targets. *"Ensuring a gender balance and raising awareness of its importance and how it increases value creation is not difficult. In Yara now, five out of nine members of the executive management team are women. All our operations in markets are headed by women,"* he explained.



Naaja H.
Nathanielsen



Rasmus Cruce
Naeyé



Victoria Iris



Árni Oddur
Þórðarsson

What concrete examples are there of gender equality being integrated into public and private climate policies and strategies?

Takeaway 9:

Make gender equality a hard-hitting policy area

In Greenland, the Minister of Gender Equality is also in charge of finance, mineral resources, and justice, i.e., policy areas previously dominated by men. This demonstrates a shift in the weight and status given to gender equality, across key policy areas, also through the allocation of more funding. *"As long as we view gender equality as a mere sociological matter, it does not have the full effect, so we need to put it up on the agenda, up where the power is,"* argued

Naaja H. Nathanielsen, Minister of Finance, Mineral Resources, Justice and Gender Equality.

Takeaway 10:

Hold everyone in government accountable to deliver on gender equality

Sweden is committed to implementing and fulfilling both the binding and the non-binding principles of the Paris Agreement, including inclusion, gender equality, and the empowerment of women. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is developing a proposal for a national strategy aimed at integrating a gender perspective in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Some 60 government agencies, including those for energy, transport, climate, and the environment, form part of the gender mainstreaming program, and all ministers are being held accountable for mainstreaming gender within their areas. *"If they forget that they too are responsible for mainstreaming gender, they get a friendly but firm reminder from our ministry,"* stressed **Rasmus Cruce Naeyé, State Secretary of the Ministry of Employment.**

Takeaway 11:

Assess the impacts of climate and energy strategies

Finland's Government is preparing its climate and energy strategy, as shared by **Thomas Blomqvist, Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Equality.** To make sure gender perspectives form an integral part of climate actions, Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment commissioned a gender-impact assessment of this strategy, which offers insight into the gendered impacts of the proposed climate and energy policy opportunities. Measures will have a direct impact on economic activity and employment in several male-dominated sectors, while some jobs, especially those related to fossil fuels, may be lost. The assessment also highlights the need for training more women so that more, in turn, are better equipped to enter climate and energy sectors.

Takeaway 12:

Entrench diversity and sustainability into every business decision

"The strongest tool we have is to embed diversity and sustainability into every decision made, and to have diversity and sustainability scorecards in all innovation projects, all major capital investments, and all operational model changes. The most difficult step is to start the journey. Companies that focus on how to serve its customer needs, their footprint, and well-being of people, tend to show a good track record of long-term value creation for shareholders," explained **Árni Oddur Þórðarsson, CEO of Marel.**

Naaja H. Nathanielsen urged more businesses to match their appetite for green projects with diversity expectations, arguing that business should scale up diversity investments to ensure fairness and to better understand the reality of the societies in which they work.



Peggy Hessen
Følsvik



Sólvit E. Nolsø



Kristin Skogen
Lund



Mats Granryd

What does it mean to use a gender lens in the creation of green jobs, and why is it needed?

Takeaway 13:

Build on the Nordic strengths in welfare and family policies for green jobs

Peggy H. Følsvik, President of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, kicked off the discussion by sharing five elements crucial for a just transition, essential to both men and women workers. This includes respect for workers' and human rights, social dialogue, skills and lifelong learning to ensure women can access green jobs on an equal footing with men, social security and welfare, and investments in technology and society. She stressed that the Nordic longstanding tradition in ensuring encompassing welfare and family policies should be promoted to build a green future.

Takeaway 14:

Make sustainability the business model of today with products and services relevant to all

Kristin Skogen Lund, CEO of Schibsted, argued for making sustainability the business of today rather than starting new things in the creation of green jobs. This means re-thinking positions, promoting sustainability within that line of business, and making products and services applicable to the entire population, also as technology and digitalization will be drivers of the future job market.

Takeaway 15:

Use the green transition as an opportunity to reduce social and gender inequality

Anette Trettebergstuen highlighted that, with the right tools, we have an opportunity to reduce inequalities through the green transition. Women tend to be more concerned with climate change, and women who are attracted to engineering professions tend to be more interested in environmental and social issues than men. To counter a segregated labor force, more women need to be recruited in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, and more men should be enticed to enter female-dominated sectors.



Makia Ahmed



Inese Podgaiska



What can be done to ensure that women and girls in all their diversity are represented in decision-making processes during the green shift?

Takeaway 16:

Make women's voices heard and harness the expertise of women's organizations

Gro Lindstad opened the discussion by framing the state of play of gender equality in climate justice efforts. Today, women and girls are still not adequately represented, nor are their voices sufficiently heard. She argued that, largely, gender elements have been absent from intergovernmental climate discussions, with the 2010 Cancun Climate Change Conference being one of the first to explicitly mention gender in agreements, although the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the need for gender equality in environmental justice.

She welcomed the discussion and that it brought more players, and the right players to the table, across sectors. She expressed hope that, going forward, that the vast experience of women's organizations will be brought into decision-making fora and

delegations. She urged governments to fund the participation of women from other parts of the world in key international fora, to ensure their voices are also heard. Countering the shrinking space, with civil society as equal partners, will make actions take hold, she highlighted.

Takeaway 17:

Focus on lifelong learning and the skills needed for the jobs of tomorrow

Rasmus Cruce Naeyé explained how Sweden is putting in place new reforms – based on negotiations between social partners⁵ – making it possible for women and men to train and study throughout their work life, with a decent income.

This also requires a close look at what skills are needed. *"We tend to say 'we need skills' right now, but we don't look directly at what kind of skills are needed. If you look particularly at the circular economy today, we need to invest in research on the demand for skills for a green transition and see if our educational system and universities are ready to provide these new skills,"* argued **Inese Podgaiska, Secretary General of the Association of Nordic Engineers.**

5. 'Social partners' is a term used to refer to representatives of management and labour (employer organizations and trade unions), and, in some contexts, public authorities that engage in social dialogue.

Takeaway 18:

Analyze and act on why women and girls do not choose STEM careers

Sólvit E. Nolsø asked how to, in practice, ensure access to the full talent pool in STEM fields, to which Inese Podgaiska suggested looking at our education systems closely, as they may not be inclusive or attractive enough. More research is needed to understand the lack of self-confidence, which is the largest barrier for women and girls to choosing a STEM career.

Kristin Skogen Lund explained that many girls' reticence to take up work in technology stems from views that it is not people-centered work. What is needed, she argued, is good role models and better communication around the many ways in which technology is key to helping people and solving some of society's largest problems.

Makia Ahmed of the Danish Green Student Movement

recommended talking more about what are 'normal' fields for girls and boys to enter, suggesting normalizing gender perception conversations among friends, at home, and in school.

Takeaway 19:

Be smart in hiring, promoting, remunerating, and training inclusive talent

Inese Podgaiska called for inclusive actions in hiring, wages, and promotions to attract and retain the best talent pool. Mentoring, networking, training, and role modelling work need to be further developed and used, she argued.

Takeaway 20:

Nurture a community of a new generation of activists

Makia Ahmed stressed the importance of ensuring a community for the next generation of activists. The Green Student Movement in Denmark brings together young climate activists in the fight for a green, fair future for all genders. A sense of community is key to the movement. In order to foster a new generation of activists, they prioritize outreach that shows the many ways in which young people can step up as climate fighters and campaigners. They strive to be an inclusive movement. Representation does matter. *"The thing about gender equality, especially in organizations, you have to talk about it, have a conversation about it, and, while you're having these conversations, you have to make sure you are doing something about it,"* they argued.

Julie Rødje, encouraged more efforts to counter negative reactions, in person and online, faced by women, and young women in particular, when they speak up and out for key causes such as gender equality and climate justice, as it can deter young women and girls from sharing their views and taking their rightful place as leaders.

Takeaway 21:

Bridge the digital gender gap also at home

Mats Granryd, Director General of GSMA, shared how the mobile network provider industry was one of the first to commit to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2020, GSMA connected another 112 million women to the internet. However, 15 per cent fewer women than men have online access today and this gender gap requires a much more concerted effort to bridge. Several participants spoke up for examining our own behaviors, also at home, to make sure women, too, learn and adapt to new technologies.

Takeaway 22:

Transform actions, attitudes, and structures

Inese Podgaiska encouraged participants to look within to implement needed structural changes and mindset shifts to address perceptions, segregation, and discrimination at work, while Petra Laiti argued for being critical about existing structures and identifying harmful workplace structures that cannot be made sustainable.

Espen Barth Eide highlighted how the move from a linear and extractive to a circular economy does require putting an end to certain practices. He argued that, for lasting impact, certain actions must be stopped, while others may need to be started.



Closing the discussion and opening for action

While this dialogue was a first for the Nordic Region, it will not be the last, nor a one-off. Seen as a start to raise the level of knowledge, coordination, collaboration, solutions, and action, all participants shared their takeaways and what they commit to, individually, in order to make new Nordic alliances for gender equality and climate justice a reality.

Gro Lindstad summarized the event by stressing how when the SDGs were formulated, it was clear that they will not be attained without a three-part cooperation that brings together the state, the private sector, and civil society. The SDGs tie us together, she highlighted, and, if we succeed in collaborating across sectors, the Nordic Region can be a role model for other parts of the world. Lastly, she urged all participants to keep this discussion going, think of actions before action plans, and not just focus on flagship moments, such as the CSW, to avoid perpetuating the *status quo* and to ensure that all voices are heard.

About this publication

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

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