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Contact: Carolyn Handschin, Phone: +41 (0)21 728 8812
Email: secretariat@ngocsw-geneva.ch

Women and Water Side Event Highlights Women's Leadership in Water Governance at UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Geneva, Switzerland, April 28, 2026 - The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva today published a report on its April 21st side event [Women and Water](#) during the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Forum on Sustainable Development at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Convened by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women in collaboration with a coalition of partner organizations, the event examined the essential role of water in sustainable development and the urgent need for women's leadership in water governance.

The event brought together representatives of civil society, research institutions, governments, and international organizations to address the links between water access, health, food security, climate resilience, peace, and gender equality. Discussions emphasized that women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate burden where water access is inadequate, while their expertise and leadership remain underrepresented in policy and decision-making structures.

Opening remarks were delivered by Diana Barragán, President and UN Representative of BPW International, who underscored the importance of women's leadership, legal rights, and participation in achieving sustainable development outcomes.

The panel included Dr. Alena Lohrmann, Researcher at the Chair of Energy Systems Analysis at ETH Zurich, who addressed the water-energy nexus and the critical interdependence of water as a strategic resource. Ruth A. Richardson, Secretary General and Advisor at the International Network of Liberal Women and Founder of the Women's Network VIEW at the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, spoke on the role of women's organizations in bridging policy and practice in water management, and Mariia Anapreichyk, Legal Advisor and Research & Advocacy Assistant at Women's Federation for World Peace International who highlighted the dangers of micro and nano plastics. The session was moderated by Sheerah Kim, UN Representative of BPW International and member of the UNECE working group at NGO CSW Geneva.

Participants highlighted the need to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The event also sought to strengthen partnerships, expand women's engagement in water policy dialogues, and contribute to a concise policy brief capturing recommendations and commitments emerging from the discussions.

"NGO CSW Geneva welcomes the strong collaboration demonstrated at today's event and reaffirms that women's full participation in environmental governance is essential to equitable and sustainable solutions," said Carolyn Handschin, NGO CSW Geneva President.

About NGO CSW Geneva

For over 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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