

# **Call to action**

## **Women Guardians of the Ocean**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We, women leaders of the marine-coastal communities of the Americas and the Caribbean, have gathered on Isla Chira in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, recognizing the vital importance of the oceans for life on our planet, the well-being of humanity, and the prosperity of our nations and peoples.

We define marine-coastal women as those who live in, use, care for, conserve, and depend directly and indirectly on marine-coastal areas. We are aware of the fundamental role women play in the sustainable management of marine resources and the disproportionate challenges we face concerning gender and ethnic inequality, the consequences of pollution, over-exploitation, and poor natural resource practices, wage inequality, and gender-based violence, which constitute a crisis and a global emergency.

We see a great opportunity to continue ensuring the socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically sustainable development of marine-coastal areas, reaffirming our commitment to conservation, the responsible use of marine ecosystems, and the care for biodiversity and communities.

We turn to the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and the Global Framework for Biodiversity; our global goal is to accelerate the achievement and sustainability of protecting 30% of the ocean through equitable and inclusive governance processes and schemes, ensuring the participation of marine-coastal women, and creating enabling spaces for their full involvement in decision-making (Target 23/GBF) with the necessary resources for financing.

We are determined to strengthen our leadership and work together to address the challenges we, our oceans, and marine-coastal areas face, integrating a regional and organized perspective. However, we call on governments, international organizations, civil society, local governments, private companies, academia, and other interested sectors to raise our voices regarding the following issues:

### **1. Violence**

- Combat and eradicate the stigma, prejudice, and stereotypes towards marine-coastal women in their daily lives, promoting actions that contribute to changing binary and sexist imaginaries towards their role and, in turn, strengthen the integration of women in their territories based on equality, non-discrimination, and non-violence.
- Effectively bring institutional mechanisms and routes for addressing and protecting against gender-based violence closer to the territorial and geographic areas to promptly, safely, and without re-victimization, attend to marine-coastal women in their territories, recognizing their needs, vulnerabilities, and specific impacts.
- Guarantee land tenure for marine-coastal women in their territories and communities so that resources can be democratized for use, benefit, and collective appropriation.

## **2. Care**

- Preserve and generate actions to protect the ancestral knowledge and wisdom of marine-coastal women to strengthen the bonds of care between women and their social, political, and historical environments, as well as their relationship with the space, their knowledge, and local expertise.
- Recognize and make visible the care economy as one of the elements that sustain fishing and biodiversity conservation in the territories, with women being the fundamental pillar for sustaining local, regional, and national work and economies. Likewise, recognize the double and triple burdens that care represents for women and the need to promote actions that lead to shared responsibility on this matter.
- Create enabling conditions for the efforts and actions of women in environmental conservation in their territories, ensuring the permanence and sustainability of their processes according to the political, social, and economic context of the sector.

## **3. Work**

- Dignify the working and labor conditions of marine-coastal women in terms of: a. Salaries, fees, and wages b. Working hours and time allocated to work c. Roles and responsibilities d. Other burdens that increase the vulnerability of marine-coastal women and expose them to risks or impacts based on their sexual and gender identity in the sector.
- Promote actions and employability and entrepreneurship programs designed from the regional, local, and community particularities to mitigate the economic dependence of marine-coastal women in the sector.

- Guarantee full access for marine-coastal women to effective social protection systems designed from an intersectional perspective, recognizing the vulnerabilities in the sector and providing possibilities for dignified aging and decent living conditions.
- Support the leadership and ancestral and local knowledge of women, providing specific resources and capacities, especially in communities, for the sustainable management of marine resources and the development of alternative livelihoods.

#### **4. Health**

- Guarantee access and coverage to quality, dignified, and decent healthcare in coastal areas for women in those territories, both from specialties and from addressing mental, physical, and sexual/reproductive health.
- Ensure access to potable water in coastal communities, recognizing the vulnerabilities and differentiated impacts on marine-coastal women, which limit disease prevention and proper hygiene and care tasks.

#### **5. Leadership**

- Guarantee the full, equitable, inclusive, effective, and gender-focused participation of marine-coastal women at all levels of action and decision-making related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, respecting their idiosyncratic structures, worldviews, rights over land, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge, including that of indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local women.
- Promote actions that affirm the commitment of States to counteract prejudices and customs based on the premise of the inferiority or superiority of any gender or stereotyped roles, which legitimize or exacerbate violence against women, especially marine-coastal women; this aims to create spaces that validate leadership based on their knowledge and experience.
- Increase research with a gender and intersectional focus on marine and coastal issues, generating and using this data to create effective policies that address inequalities, discrimination, and violence while promoting the environmental, economic, political, and bodily autonomy of women in the sector.
- Integrate the gender perspective and promote equality by adopting concrete measures in policies, programs, and projects related to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and marine biodiversity. This includes fostering and recognizing the environmental, economic, political, and bodily autonomy of women, in line with the Belém do Pará Convention.

- Promote actions that establish clear, efficient, and comprehensive protocols in coastal areas to ensure human security and the protection of leadership, especially for marine-coastal women who bear differentiated impacts and violence.