



Closing the Gender Gap: Achieving Gender Parity in UN human rights bodies

SIDE EVENT – Commission on the Status of Women - 62th Session

CONCEPT NOTE

ORGANIZERS: GQUAL; Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), International Development Law Organization (IDLO), International Disability Alliance (IDA), International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), International Gender Champions Initiative, Sight Savers

SPONSORS: Uruguay, Sweden, Liechtenstein, The Gambia, and the Diplomatic Courier

WHEN: Tuesday, March 13, 2018, 11.30AM to 12:45PM

WHERE: Conference Room D, United Nations 405 East 42nd Street, New York, NY, 10017

WHAT: The sixty second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will take place from 12 to 23 March, 2018. This event is one of the largest gatherings of global leaders, NGOs, private sector actors, and representatives of United Nations agencies and bodies focusing on the rights and empowerment of women. As such, the event constitutes a unique opportunity to bring together a diverse group of experts and stakeholders to discuss and elaborate on sustainable solutions to issues affecting women's right to equality.

A critical component of women's empowerment and equality is the representation of women in international adjudicatory and monitoring bodies, such as international tribunals, international and regional human rights commissions, United Nations Treaty Bodies, United Nations Special

Procedures, United Nations Groups of Experts and Commissions of Inquiry. Such bodies make important and wide-reaching decisions for society and individuals, yet women are woefully underrepresented in the vast majority of them.

In particular, this situation affects critical United Nations bodies and mechanisms, as shown by facts gathered as of January 2018:

- only 1 out of 18 members of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a woman;
- only 5 out of 18 members of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are women;
- only 3 out of 10 members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances are women;
- 18 out of 57 Special Procedure mandates of the Human Rights Council have never been held by a woman, including the Special Rapporteurships on the right to health, racial discrimination, torture, and freedom of expression.

Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures are founded on the principle of equality. Several treaties and UN resolutions refer to the importance of achieving gender balance in the composition of each body, and equal participation and representation is a key consideration in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs. However, existing national and international nomination and voting procedures and practices fail to sufficiently include gender as a criteria. As a result, women are frequently not equally represented in the pool of nominees and in the final composition.

Studies conducted by the GQUAL Campaign show that the participation of women in these bodies is not experiencing linear nor sustainable improvement. Furthermore, the data shows that regressions are frequent, making it unlikely for this imbalance to correct itself over time. In light of this information, it is imperative that concerted measures and efforts are implemented to increase the participation of women in international tribunals and bodies.

Promoting gender parity in international tribunals and bodies strengthens their legitimacy and impact. Fundamentally, it constitutes a necessary measure to guarantee the right to equality of all. Adopting measures that promote gender equal representation in international bodies falls within Member States obligations to eradicate gender discrimination and could be an important achievement under the Beijing Action Plan and SDG 5.5.

This side event will bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities of achieving gender parity in the UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures.

FORMAT: The event will feature a presentation of the GQUAL Campaign and the Campaign's Action Plan and a conversation with panelists on the concrete measures that need to be implemented to achieve gender parity in the UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures. Participants will discuss different measures and approaches that Member States, UN agencies, and civil society could adopt to do so.

A Questions and Answers session will follow to allow for broader stakeholder engagement.

At the conclusion of the event, participants in the side event will be invited to join the GQUAL Campaign by signing the Action Plan. Should official government signatures be confirmed, protocol will be followed in to reflect the importance of these pledges.

WHO:

OPENING REMARKS:

- **Viviana Krsticevic**, Member of the GQUAL Campaign Secretariat, Moderator and introduction
- **Irene Khan**, Director- General, International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

PANEL:

- **Mamadou Tangara**, Permanent Representative of The Gambia to the United Nations and Chair of the African Union (March 2018)
- **Karima Bennouna**, Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- **Ana Pelaez Narvaez**, Former Member of Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **Agnès S. Callamard**, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- **Melissa Upreti**, Member of the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice
- **Ana Maria Menendez**, Senior Adviser on Policy to the UN Secretary General (TBC)

PARTICIPANTS:

The following stakeholder groups will be invited to participate in the side event:

- National delegations participating in CSW
- Civil society delegates
- Legal professionals
- Gender experts
- Academics
- UN Officials

ABOUT GQUAL:

[GQUAL](#) is a global campaign aimed at achieving gender parity representation in international tribunals, monitoring and adjudicatory bodies. With the support of high level government representatives, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Ms. Margot Wallström, the President of Chile, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís, diplomats, internationally renowned scholars, Nobel Peace Laureates, lawyers, jurists, activists and members of international bodies from all over the world, GQUAL has become a leading platform advocating for gender parity in international justice.

Hosted by the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), the campaign deploys three main strategies:

- Changing how States nominate and vote for international candidates by promoting the adoption of national mechanisms, guidelines, and practices that take gender into account and parity as the objective.
- Developing legal standards, guidelines, and mechanisms at the international level that include gender as mandatory criteria of selection processes, and parity as the desired result of elections.
- Fostering an engaged and active network to coordinate, strengthen and globalize the campaign's actions through targeted research, advocacy and communications.

These strategies are highlighted in the [GQUAL Declaration](#), and are further developed in the [GQUAL Action Plan](#), which was adopted in The Hague in October, 2017. The Action Plan notes that achieving gender equality on international bodies is not solely a policy of fairness and institutional legitimacy but an action mandated by law. The document serves as a road map and a call for action to motivate, inspire and inform all the stakeholders involved in pursuing gender parity across international bodies. It was endorsed by State representatives, the ICC President, ICTY President and Registrar, the Office of Public Counsel for the Defence of the ICC, and the ICC Bar Association, amongst many others.

Only by taking action, we will collectively #ChangethePicture within these institutions that have been historically affected by a dearth of women.

PLEASE NOTE: The United Nations security arrangements during the Commission on the Status of Women are particularly tight, therefore access to the UN building for non-UN pass holders will only be granted to those who have RSVPed by Monday, March 12th, through the link below. Please bring your government issued photo ID and UN pass (should you have one).

The day of the event (Tuesday, March 13), participants are kindly requested to come to the meeting checkpoint located at 45th street and 1st avenue from 10:30 to 11:15 am to collect their special event pass

Security screening is a several-step process and will take time to complete. To ensure smooth access through the security check point at the entrance of the UN Headquarters, please do not bring large bags, large cameras, tripods or food items.
