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Forum of Women Parliamentarians
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GENDER ACTIVITIES

c) Update on recent IPU activities for the promotion of gender equality

IPU cooperation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

I. The IPU and the CEDAW Committee

1. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) plays an active role in promoting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention) and its Optional Protocol within the parliamentary community.
2. As part of its cooperation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee), the IPU Secretariat urges parliamentarians to keep track of whether their countries have ratified the CEDAW Convention and its Optional Protocol as well as whether their countries may have issued any reservations. This information is available at indicators.ohchr.org: it is broken down by country and includes entries for any declarations or reservations made.
3. In 2023, the IPU and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched their [handbook for parliamentarians on the CEDAW Convention](#). This was the second edition of the handbook, which is based on the substantial guidance of the CEDAW Committee and on a wide range of parliamentary good practices. The handbook is available in several languages.
4. Promoting gender parity in political decision-making has been at the core of the collaboration between the IPU and the CEDAW Committee for many years.

In October 2024, the CEDAW Committee issued [General recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems](#) (GR 40). The IPU was a key partner in this endeavour. GR 40 is based on seven transformative pillars:

1. **Fifty-fifty parity:** Parity is not temporary but a permanent norm for governance.
2. **Youth leadership:** Young women co-lead in building a sustainable and equal future.
3. **Intersectionality:** Women in all their diversity access leadership roles.
4. **Comprehensive systems:** Parity applies to all decision-making spaces, levels and fields.
5. **Equal power and influence:** Tokenistic representation is wrong; women must hold an equal number of senior roles and other decision-making roles with the same influence across sectors.
6. **Structural transformation:** Gender stereotypes and care work inequalities must be eliminated to enable women's full and equal participation.
7. **Civil society engagement:** Spaces need to be established for women's organizations and women human rights defenders to have a voice, and notably in all policy areas, not just "women's issues".

In March 2025, close to 380 parliamentarians from 56 countries gathered at the IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians in Mexico and adopted a plan of action for achieving gender parity in parliaments. This vision reflects a parliamentary perspective on GR 40. The IPU [Plan of action for gender parity in parliaments](#) was endorsed by the IPU Governing Council on the occasion of the 151st IPU Assembly in October 2025.

The IPU will continue to advance GR 40 implementation by raising awareness among, and mobilizing, its Member Parliaments, as well as by providing direct support for their efforts in this area.

5. In 2025, the CEDAW Committee decided to develop new guidance on gender stereotypes in the form of a new general recommendation: General recommendation No. 41 on dismantling gender stereotypes and the unequal power relations that sustain them (GR 41). The [draft of GR 41 was made available online](#) for consultation. As part of its collaboration with the CEDAW Committee, the IPU provided inputs to GR 41, which is due to be published in October 2026.
6. In this context, the [IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians](#), held in Belgrade, Serbia, on 2–4 June 2026, brought together 410 participants from 61 countries, including 193 parliamentarians (155 women and 38 men), under the theme *Advancing parity: Breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes and negative social norms*. Participants examined how stereotypes and negative social norms on women in politics shape attitudes, perceptions and systems that perpetuate women's political exclusion, and identified actions to address them and transform them towards a culture of parity. The Conference's [outcome document](#) set out these actions, further contributing to the development of GR 41.

II. IPU involvement in the CEDAW reporting process

7. The CEDAW Convention is an important benchmark for gender equality and is comprehensive in scope. The IPU therefore endeavours to ensure that parliaments and their members provide effective oversight of the Convention and contribute to its full implementation. The IPU has consistently argued for more parliamentary involvement in the Convention's reporting obligations, particularly in the work required to follow up on the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee.
8. At each CEDAW Committee session, the IPU presents a report on what it has done to promote respect for, and implementation of, the CEDAW Convention, including disseminating information about the role played by parliaments in the reporting process. This is partly done by inviting parliaments from the countries whose periodic reports are to be reviewed at the next Committee session to fill in a questionnaire. The questions cover parliamentary involvement in the reporting process and in the follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations.
9. On 2 September 2026, the IPU organized the [IPU webinar for parliaments of States recently reviewed or scheduled for review by the CEDAW Committee in 2026 and subsequent sessions](#). This webinar, the sixth in the *Parliamentary Engagement in State CEDAW reporting* series, was intended for parliaments of countries scheduled for review at the 93rd session of the CEDAW Committee in October 2026, as well as those of countries tentatively scheduled for review at the 94th session, to be held in 2027. The session was also aimed at parliaments whose countries had yet to be scheduled for review, those that had recently engaged in their country's review by the Committee, and those that receive IPU technical support in the area of gender equality, including in CEDAW implementation.
10. The webinar was attended by 58 participants, including 22 MPs (18 women and 4 men). Overall, 22 parliaments were represented. The event was moderated by Ms. Marianne Mikko, Vice-Chair of the CEDAW Committee and CEDAW focal point for the IPU, and a former parliamentarian from Estonia. Presentations on the upcoming GR 41 were made by Ms. Rhoda Reddock, Vice-Chair of the CEDAW Committee, and by Ms. Bandana Rana, member of the CEDAW Committee.
11. The following States parties are scheduled to be reviewed by the CEDAW Committee in October 2026 and tentatively scheduled to be reviewed in 2027:

93rd session (5–30 October 2026)

- Angola, Cabo Verde, Cook Islands, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Togo

Detailed information is available on the [OHCHR website](#).

94th session (1–19 February 2027) (to be confirmed)

- Austria, Bangladesh, Cyprus, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, Malta, Mauritius, Monaco, Romania, Trinidad and Tobago

Detailed information is available on the [OHCHR website](#).

III. The CEDAW Committee and parliaments

12. At its 41st session (June–July 2008), the CEDAW Committee adopted a standard paragraph on parliaments. It was added into its concluding observations to draw the attention of State parties to the importance of involving parliaments both in the reporting process under article 18 of the Convention and in the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. At its 45th session (January–February 2010), the Committee issued a statement on its relationship with parliamentarians that aimed to clarify and strengthen the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the Convention. The statement also aims to clarify the relationship between the Committee and the IPU. (See the annex for the text of the statement.)

**ANNEX: Statement adopted by the Committee on
the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**

National parliaments and the Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. At its forty-first session, the Committee adopted a standard paragraph on “Parliament” in its concluding observations in order to draw to the attention of State parties, the importance of involving its parliament in the reporting process under article 18 of the Convention and the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention.

2. The aim of the present note is to clarify and strengthen the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the Convention. The note is also aimed at clarifying the relationship between the Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

I. Role of Parliaments in the process of ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and withdrawal of reservations

3. The procedure for ratification/accession to international instruments as well as the withdrawal of reservations varies from State to State. In most States, approval by Parliament is necessary before the deposit of the instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Similarly, decisions concerning reservations as well as their withdrawals are also taken in Parliament. This Parliamentary procedure also applies to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Consequently, Parliaments have a strategic role to play with respect to the ratification/accession of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. As the Convention and its Protocol have not attained universal ratification, Parliament can play a significant role in encouraging their State in becoming a party to the Convention and its Protocol. Similarly, as the Convention is the treaty body with the largest number of reservations, Parliament can also play a significant role in their withdrawal.

II. Parliaments and the implementation of the Convention

4. Parliaments and their members have a vital role to play in ensuring respect for the principles enunciated in the Convention and they have a wide range of tools at their disposal to do so. In discharging their traditional duty of overseeing the work of Government, Parliament can ensure that States parties comply fully with the provisions of the Convention. Parliaments and their members have a fundamental responsibility in their role of “constituency”, which is the basis of the legal system. The functions of Parliaments — notably legislative and budgetary functions and oversight of the executive branch of the Government — are at the heart of the implementation of the principles and rights enshrined in the Convention. The implementation of the Convention includes the incorporation of the principle of non-discrimination against women in national legislation, including in the Constitution of the State party. It also imposes an obligation on the State Party to condemn discrimination against women, to abolish all discriminatory laws and to adopt, whenever appropriate, temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality between women and men. It also obligates States Parties to adopt appropriate policies and establish mechanisms aimed at promoting equality between sexes. As such, Parliamentarians can take active measures to ensure that national laws, policies, actions, programmes and budget reflect the principles and obligations in the Convention.

The budgetary functions and the monitoring of governmental action are vital for a better implementation of laws relating to equality between sexes, through the approval of adequate budgets and a regular oversight of the impact of governmental measures with respect to the condition of women.

Parliament, as an organ representing the population as a whole, reflects the diversity of opinion and interests in the country by reason of its privileged access to the whole population. As such, Parliamentarians can be key players in raising awareness of the Convention and its Protocol to the population at large and to women in particular.

III. Role of Parliaments in the drafting of reports and follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee

5. States are not legally obliged to involve Parliaments in the drafting of reports under article 18, as it is the State which has the primary responsibility of doing so. However, as the Convention is binding on all branches of Government, it is desirable that States parties involve Parliament in the reporting process under Article 18 of the Convention, the implementation of the Convention and the follow up to the concluding observations of the Committee. States parties are strongly encouraged to establish an appropriate mechanism to facilitate collaboration between Parliament and Government with regard to the input of its Parliament in the elaboration of reports, and its role in following up on the concluding observations of the Committee. The monitoring role of Parliament with respect to the compliance by the State of its international obligations could considerably enhance the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee.

6. Consequently, it is necessary for States parties to urge Parliament, many of which now have some structures in place, such as Parliamentary Committees focusing on human rights including gender equality, to take an active part in the work of the Committee in general, as well as in the implementation of its provisions in their own country.

IV. Action of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its relationship with the Committee

7. IPU has always strived to bring a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation and the work of the Committee. It is playing a key role in disseminating the Convention and its Optional Protocol among parliamentarians. During its conferences and the sessions of its Assembly, the organization regularly invites States that have not ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol to do so. It also encourages States parties that have made reservations to the Convention to withdraw them and to fulfil their obligations. The Secretary- General of IPU writes to the presidents of the legislative assemblies to inform them about the upcoming consideration of the report of their country by the Committee. Once the Committee's concluding observations are available, a letter is sent to the parliament concerned to bring to its attention the recommendations adopted. In 2003 IPU, with the assistance of the Division for the Advancement of Women, published a practical guide for the use of parliamentarians on the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Every year, IPU organizes briefings on the Convention, addressed to women parliamentarians in particular. IPU also provides, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, technical assistance programmes in order to build the capacities of parliaments and help them fulfil their role regarding the implementation of Convention and its Optional Protocol. Since 2006, IPU also provides Committee with country specific information including data on the political participation of women in Parliament and in Government as well as at the local level with regard to States whose reports are under consideration by the Committee.

V. Recommendations

8. The Committee recommends that States parties ensure the full participation of Parliament and its members in the reporting process and the full implementation of the Convention and its Protocol.

9. Given the key role of Parliament, the Committee recommends that States parties ensure that Parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, be made aware and informed of the Committee's work so that they may take it into account in their legislative functions and relay it to their constituencies and to the public at large.

10. The Committee recommends that State parties ensure that all relevant information is made available to Parliamentarians on a regular basis through appropriate Parliamentary support services.

11. The Committee further recommends that information received by Government on its obligations as a State party and other matters of concern are brought to the attention of Parliamentarians.

12. The Committee recommends that whenever members of the Committee are invited to visit a State party, it is desirable that the State party organize meetings with Parliamentarians.
13. The Committee encourages States parties to include in their reports, information on all parliamentary initiatives in the elaboration of laws in order to ensure full incorporation of CEDAW provisions into domestic legislation.
14. The Committee reiterates the importance of strengthening the national machinery dedicated to equality at the level of Parliament, such as Commissions on gender equality, missions and information on inquiries relating to violence against women, and improvement of legislation on equality between women and men.
15. The Committee draws the attention of States parties to the fact that institutional linkages and informal relations with civil society and women's organizations are fundamental to the promotion of women's rights by the Parliament.
16. The Committee encourages States parties to include in their delegation before the Committee for the examination of their report, members of Parliament as well as a special advisor in charge of relations between the Government and the Parliament in order to improve the visibility of parliamentary responsibilities.
17. The Committee calls on State parties to evaluate its collaboration with its national Parliament and other Parliaments and to take appropriate measures to enhance cooperation between Parliaments in order to exchange best practices on the implementation of the Convention.