

42nd session of the Human Rights Council

Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms

Theme: Gender-responsive initiatives to accelerate gender equality

Concept note (draft as of 2 September 2019)

Date and venue: 23 September 2019, 4 - 6 p.m., Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)

Objectives: The panel discussion will focus on gender parity as a key element of gender equality and how it contributes to the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. The session will also analyse initiatives for gender-responsive assemblies that have the potential to drive effective change within the Council.

The **panel discussion aims:**

- **To take stock** of developments since the last annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective with a focus on gender parity held in September 2015;
- **To discuss** new gender-responsive initiatives and successful practices and how they have the potential to drive change in the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms;
- **To analyse remaining challenges** to achieve parity in international human rights bodies, in particular the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and to ensure more balanced participation of men and women in decision-making processes.

Chair: H.E. Mr. Carlos Mario Foradori, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council

Opening statement: Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Moderator: Ms. Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, Founder of Women@TheTable

Panellists:

- Ms. Elizabeth S. Salmón, Chair of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee
- Ms. Alejandra Vicente, Member of the Secretariat of the GQUAL Campaign and Head of Law at REDRESS
- Panellist no. 3 (tbc)

Outcome: The expected outcomes of this discussion are:

- The Human Rights Council, States and relevant stakeholders will learn from shared experiences, new initiatives and successful practices that have helped to improve gender equality.
- The Human Rights Council, States and relevant stakeholders will be better informed about remaining challenges to achieve parity and recommendations on concrete measures to accelerate gender balance in international human rights bodies, in particular in the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, and to advance gender equality on agendas and outcomes.

Mandate: In 2007, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 6/30 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, in which it decided to incorporate into its programme of work an annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout its work and that of its mechanisms, including the evaluation of progress made and challenges experienced.

In this resolution, the Council encouraged Member States to promote gender balance by, inter alia, taking all the necessary measures, including budgetary and institutional

measures, to guarantee the full participation of women in medium- and high-level ranks, regularly nominating more women candidates for election and appointment to the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, international courts and tribunals, the specialized agencies and other organs, including the Human Rights Council subsidiary bodies. In accordance with its decision 6/102 on the follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, in electing members of the Advisory Committee, the Council should give due consideration to gender balance and appropriate representation of different civilizations and legal systems.

Format: The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists, the latter guided by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots and chaired by the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council.

A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, moderator's introduction and panellists' presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two slots of interventions from the floor, for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).

The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Background: Equality and non-discrimination are the bedrock of the international human rights system. The Human Rights Council is mandated to make these principles a reality in peoples' lives, and to ensure broader protection and promotion of human rights for all. The equal representation of women and men in all levels and their equal participation in decision-making processes is a fundamental matter of rights. They must be equally empowered to voice their opinions and argue for their needs. The Council and its mechanisms have made notable efforts to improve gender integration in its working methods and composition in the last years. However, challenges remain despite certain progress. Women are still underrepresented in human rights mechanisms; the majority of delegates continue to be men and women tend to speak up less than their male counterparts in Human Rights Council sessions, during panels and in side events. Women experts remain overrepresented in panels or in Human Rights Council mandates that focus on women or child rights issues, while discussions on other topics seem to be still reserved for men.¹

Several international initiatives on gender equality have been launched since the first annual discussion on gender parity panel at the Human Rights Council took place in September 2015.² These initiatives have the potential to create a more inclusive environment, encouraging gender balance on delegations, promoting meaningful participation of women in deliberations, and advancing gender equality on agendas and outcomes.

The following topics were covered during the previous Council annual discussions on gender integration:

- Integrating a gender perspective into the work of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (2008);
- Integrating a gender perspective in the universal periodic review (2009);

¹ Report of the Advisory Committee on its twenty-first session [A/HRC/AC/21/2](#).

² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session30/Pages/30RegularSession.aspx>

- Integrating a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council: lessons learned, shortcomings and future challenges – 2007-2010 (2010);
- Promoting gender equality as institutional practice: from policy to action (2011);
- Economic, social and cultural rights of women (2012);
- Civil society’s contribution to the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms (2013);
- Gender integration in the country-focused work of the Council (2014);
- Gender parity and its contribution to gender integration in the work of the Human Rights Council (2015);
- Gender integration in the resolutions and recommendations of the HRC (2016);
- The universal periodic review and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5) (2017);
- Gender integration and human rights investigations: strengthening a victim-centred approach (2018).
- [Human Rights Council resolution 6/30](#) entitled “Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system” (*adopted by consensus on 14 December 2007*)
- [General Assembly resolution 69/151](#) entitled “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly” (*adopted by consensus on 18 December 2014*)
- [General Assembly resolution 70/1](#) entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (*adopted by consensus on 25 September 2015*)
- [Human Rights Council resolution 41/6](#) entitled “Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls” (*adopted by consensus on 11 July 2019*)

Background documents: