



Shaping the International Agenda:

Raising Women's Voices in Intergovernmental Forums

PANEL and LAUNCH of PUBLICATION

2 May 2017, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Conference Room 12

United Nations Headquarters

Webcast available at: <http://webtv.un.org/>

Organizer: UN-Women

Background

Women's right to full and equal participation is anchored in international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, yet women remain under-represented in policy or intergovernmental fora decision making processes. There are only 19 women Heads of State or Government¹ and women ministers represent only 17 per cent of ministerial posts, mostly in social sectors². The unequal participation of women at the national level translates into gender imbalance and limited visibility of women at the international level. Reflecting women's under-representation in ministerial positions, government delegations rarely comprise equal numbers of women and men, and heads of delegations are predominantly men. As of 2016, only three women have served as President of the United Nations General Assembly, and two as President of the Economic and Social Council. Women are also under-represented among permanent representatives to the United Nations (20 per cent in New York, 27 per cent in Geneva). On the average, the participation of women in conferences and meetings of the governing bodies of many UN organizations has stagnated at around 30 per cent, with a low of 16 per cent as head of delegation in some instances

There is increasing awareness of the importance of gender balance and women's participation in international forums. To fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, concrete actions and commitments from governments, the UN System and other stakeholders to improve women's participation and representation are needed.

¹ As of January 2017

² As of January 2015

The United Nations Governing Bodies Secretariat (UNGBS)³, at its 8th annual meeting, had a focused discussion on gender balance in the governing bodies of international organizations and agreed to support efforts to promote women’s participation and advance the goal of gender balance across their conferences and meeting delegations, including through a publication.

Launch of the publication

This event marks the launch of the publication “Shaping the international agenda: Raising women’s voices in intergovernmental forums” produced by UN-Women, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the International Gender Champions. The publication aims to build knowledge on women’s participation and leadership in meetings of international organizations’ governing bodies and is based on responses to a questionnaire addressed to members of the UNGBS and of the International Gender Champions–Geneva in late 2016. Although the results of the questionnaire may not be representative of all UN organizations, they have yielded important information on the policies and strategies of the 23 entities that took part. This information is complemented by an overview of intergovernmental and inter-agency frameworks and presents trends in women’s participation in national Governments and intergovernmental forums and good practices in promoting women’s participation at the subnational, national and multilateral levels.

The research demonstrates that some international entities have pursued similar approaches to encourage women’s participation. Measures that have proven to be effective and the lessons learned from these experiences highlight the importance of **(a) explicit policies and mandated targets, (b) tracking and reporting, (c) training and capacity-building, (d) financial support, (e) advocacy and networking, and (f) communication strategies**. Based on these good policies and practices, the publication provides a set of concrete recommendations on the way forward to realize gender balance in international organizations’ governing bodies.

Panel discussion

The panel on **Raising Women’s Voices in Intergovernmental Forums** gathers leading figures in the intergovernmental arena to bring greater visibility to the imperative of promoting women’s participation and achieving gender balance in intergovernmental decision-making processes. In an interactive discussion, participants may intervene to share their experiences – either in the form of best practices or gaps/challenges in increasing women’s participation in international conferences and governing bodies’ delegations. The panel and the participants may also address the specific recommendations contained in the publication.

³ The United Nations Governing Bodies Secretariat is a network of specialized agencies, programmes and departments of the United Nations that meets annually in an informal session to discuss issues specific to the governance of their respective organizations.

Draft programme

Introduction and Chair: President of UN-Women's Executive Board H.E. Ms. Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations

Keynote address: President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson

Presentation of the publication's key findings: UN-Women Deputy Executive Director Ms. Lakshmi Puri

Other guests:

H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations representing the International Gender Champions – New York

H.E. Ms. Laura Elena Flores Herrera, Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations representing the Group of Friends for Gender Parity

Interventions from the floor

Guiding questions:

- What are some measures and strategies that have proven effective in increasing women's participation in decision-making processes and promoting gender balance in governing bodies?
- What are some identified challenges and gaps in increasing women's participation and leadership and what can be possible solutions to addressing these obstacles?
- How can Governments increase the participation of women in national delegations to international processes, including as heads of delegations?
- How can the secretariats of United Nations organizations provide support to Member States to promote gender balance in governing bodies' meetings?

Closing remarks by Chair (summary of discussion)

For more information, please contact Mr. Jean-Luc Bories, Secretary of the UN-Women Executive Board, at jean-luc.bories@unwomen.org, copy weiting.luo@unwomen.org