



# The Hague International Model United Nations

**Forum:** Sustainable Development Commission 2

**Issue:** Measures to achieve equal representation of genders in national parliaments  
[SDG5]

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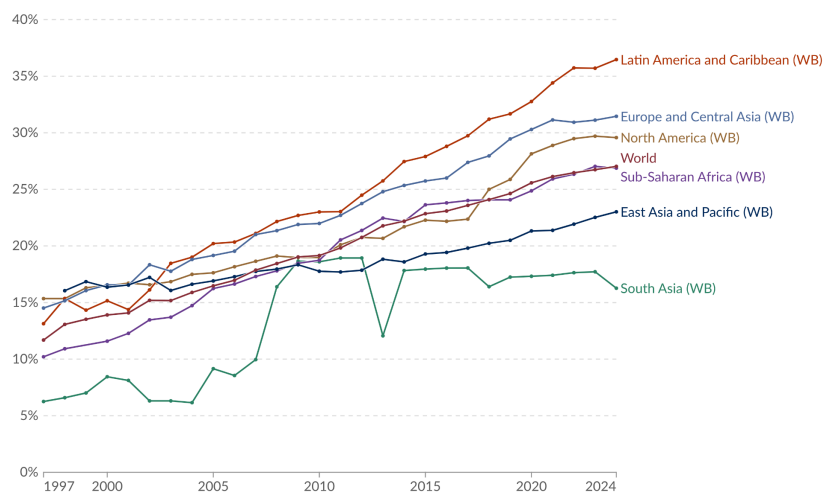
**Position:** Deputy President

## Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, “Gender Equality”, aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”<sup>1</sup>. Increasing the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments is the key indicator, as recognized by the United Nations, to ensure that women are able to fully participate and integrate into public life. 2024, the superelection year, was a powerful opportunity to elevate the role of women in national parliaments. Yet, as World Bank data also shows<sup>2</sup>, around the globe, only 27% of seats in national parliaments are held by women.

### Share of women in parliament, 1997 to 2024

Percentage of seats in lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women.



Data source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), via World Bank (2025)

OurWorldinData.org/women-rights | CC BY

Ensuring that all genders have equal opportunities to enter national parliaments and influence the

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parliament's working procedures is the gateway to combat gender inequality on a wider range. National parliaments are the key components in driving legislation that will oppose gender inequality in the public space, hence it is detrimental for them to be inclusive in nature; not only for women, but for all genders.

According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment for Women (UN Women), at the current rate, gender inequality will not be eliminated in the highest positions of power until 2155<sup>3</sup>. The situation is much more problematic for the LGBTQI+ community, considering that many non-binary and genderfluid people are not recognized by the law, let alone form part of their national parliaments.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Gender Parity

"Gender parity is a numerical concept related to gender equality. Gender parity concerns relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, and is often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator. In the context of gender equality, gender parity refers to the equal contribution of women and men to every dimension of life, whether private or public."<sup>4</sup>

### Gender Sensitive Parliaments

Gender sensitive parliaments are "institutions that are founded on gender equality, where women and men have an equal right to participate without discrimination or recrimination."<sup>5</sup>

### Gender Quotas

Gender quotas are "positive measurement instrument[s] aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria."<sup>6</sup>

### Political Violence

Political violence is "the deliberate use of force or intimidation by state or non-state actors to achieve political objectives".<sup>7</sup>

## Background Information

The Finnish Parliament was the first national parliament in the world with female members of parliament. Although Australia had already given equal electoral rights to women in 1894, none were elected before the Finns were in 1907. After this first initial election, 9.5% of seats in parliament were held by women.

Since this groundbreaking movement the key indicator regarding this issue being the number of seats in parliament held by women has increased until the 2000s. Yet, the persisting lack of equality and gender sensitivity in certain areas of the world is concerning, and one of the reasons why the broader goal of

combatting gender inequality relies on politics.

The UN Decade for Women, starting in 1975, encouraged more academic, policy, and advocacy work that impacted policy and related legislation. With the consequent UN World Conferences on Women, governments' policy makers, activists, and scholars highlighted issues confronting women across the board, and reinforced the need to account for and address women's inequality.

While this international attention to the issue has been beneficial in the developed world, bringing seats of women in parliament to around 30% in Europe and North America, the situation especially in regions such as South Asia remain problematic. Violence against women in politics present in countries such as India, Nepal, and Pakistan, deteriorates the gender sensitivity of national parliaments. More than 60% of women report not being able to participate in politics due to fear. The European Union also highlights this problem as a manifestation of both political violence and gender-based violence.

For the inclusivity of other genders, less data and international effort exists. The [lgbt.mp](#) project in the United Kingdom reports that 75 of the 650 Members of Parliament in the House of Commons are openly LGBT+ members, yet it is not specified whether they are cisgender or not. However, in countries that fail to recognize the existence of LGBT+ individuals, let alone their political rights, their inclusion remains a step beyond comprehension in a world where women have still not reached gender parity.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### United Nations and UN Women

The United Nations (UN) deems equal representation of genders in national parliaments to be a necessary indicator of sustainable development. UN Women, as the lead UN entity on gender equality, is the driving force of international action to increase the gender sensitivity of national parliaments. UN Women has programs in place that focus on women's leadership and political participation, including training for political candidates, and collaborations with UN country teams for local advocacy and electoral campaigning.

The UN has passed multiple resolutions and declarations that consider the drastic nature of the situation and propose collaborative action:

- Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 31 March 1953, [Ch XVI 1](#)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, [A/RES/34/180](#)

This resolution is one of the first in a historical tradition of international commitment to women's participation. Not only does it consider women's rights as citizens and civilians, but also discusses political rights, as a reiteration of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Women and political participation, 19 December 2011, [A/RES/66/130](#)

This resolution discusses further steps to be taken by national governments to promote inclusivity, by suggesting mechanisms to monitor and elevate women's participation in parliament.

## Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the global organization of national parliaments, which was founded in 1889. The IPU's mission is defined as "facilitating parliamentary diplomacy and empowering parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development around the world."<sup>8</sup>

The IPU, believing and advocating for the link between strong democracies and gender equality, specifies its work on quota and parliamentary caucus solutions as well as building gender sensitive parliaments. They produce comparative, monthly data, on women's role in national parliaments, and have produced regional reports assessing women's role in parliament. IPU Member Parliaments have adopted an action plan towards achieving a more gender sensitive structure.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
31 March 1953	Convention on the Political Rights of Women is held in New York
19 June- 2 July 1975	World Conference of the International Women's Year is held in Mexico City, to set off the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985)
18 December 1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is held in New York
14-30 July 1980	World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women is held in Copenhagen
15-26 July 1985	World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women is held in Nairobi
4-15 September 1995	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is adopted unanimously by 189 nations at the Fourth World Conference on Women
5-9 June 2000	23rd Special Session of the General Assembly is held to review the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
September 2000	Millennium Development Goals are defined with a target date of 2015
January 2016	The 17 Sustainable Development Goals come into force with a target date of 2030
1 October 2023	The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) comes into force

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As outlined so far in the report, many suggestions to resolve the issue have been presented by the international community over the years. However, the lack of impact of these solutions lies in the lack of global implementation and the lack of change in mentality. This section will review a selection of programs implemented internationally as a result of said conferences and evaluate their effectiveness.

### iKNOW Politics

iKNOW Politics was established as a joint program between UN Women, United Nations Development Programme, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, and the European Union, in 2007. The program aimed to combat the lack of inclusivity towards women in political participation.

### Gender Quotas

Gender quota systems, explained in general above (see Definition of Key Terms), aim to increase the proportion of women in parliament to at least that of a critical minority, 30-40%. Over a hundred countries have already implemented reserved seats or legislated candidate quotas for women<sup>9</sup>. These quotas do not discriminate but compensate for the discrimination faced by women in the pursuit of political participation. However, quotas also imply that equal opportunity is not given to men for specific seats in parliament. Quotas also imply that a person is elected for their gender rather than their capabilities and qualifications. Hence, this practice is considered to be against liberal democracy, despite its positive repercussions.

## Possible Solutions

Action to resolve this issue falls mainly on three stakeholders: (a) governments, (b) political parties, and (c) international and non-governmental organizations. Hence, proposed solutions should try and address how each stakeholder can work for the benefit of the wider international community.

Implementing gender quotas, as has been the case in Argentina, Rwanda, and many other countries, can be a possible solution to increase the number of women included in parliament. The governments should take the burden in encouraging political parties to integrate women in electoral and non-electoral public positions.

The electoral systems themselves should be considered as a possible setback towards a more inclusive parliament. Reviewing legislation with an eye to political participation could be a potential source of reform.

Quantitative and qualitative data collection is key to monitor and track the progress in parliament.

The UN's advised period of yearly data collection should be taken into consideration by delegates. Data collection and the support of research on women studies is how governments can pave the way for a more just parliament.

Reconciliation of family and personal life is important to ensure women are not negatively affected by their maternal obligations, and that parental responsibilities are shared equitably to allow women to participate in the political atmosphere.

Recruitment and career development programs, as well as educational programs for the public, should be tailored to fight against gender based discrimination. Leadership and self-esteem trainings for those considering political participation could also be a beneficial way to empower them.

## Endnotes

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