The Commission on the Status of Women

PROMOTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP WORLDWIDE

-Committee Guide-

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I.INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and the empowerment of women. It was established as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by the ECOSOC resolution 11 (II) on June 21, 1946.

The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's and girls' rights, documenting the reality of their lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

In 1996, ECOSOC expanded the Commission's mandate in resolution 1996/6 and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organisations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up.

2.INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Women's political participation and leadership are essential for inclusive governance, democratic resilience, and sustainable development. While global awareness of gender equality has increased, women remain underrepresented in political institutions due to persistent barriers such as discriminatory laws, gender stereotypes, lack of access to resources, and political violence.

This underrepresentation limits the diversity and responsiveness of decision-making bodies. Ensuring women's involvement in political life not only upholds their rights but also improves policy outcomes, especially in areas like education, healthcare, and social welfare.

To address these challenges, effective measures must be taken, such as implementing gender quotas, strengthening leadership training, and promoting safe and inclusive political spaces. Advancing women's leadership aligns with the CSW's mission and is central to fulfilling international commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

II.FACTS AND CURRENT SITUATION

1.FACTS

- Only 26.5% of national parliamentarians worldwide are women (as of 2024), according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This shows progress, but still reflects major underrepresentation of women.

- Just 11.3% of countries have a woman as Head of State or Government, showing how executive leadership remains largely male-dominated.

- With over 60% Rwanda holds the highest percentage of women in parliament, due to the implementation of strong gender quota laws.

- Countries with legislated gender quotas typically have significantly more women in political office compared to those without quotas. For example, Bolivia and Mexico have over 50% female representation due to such policies.

- Violence against women in politics is an increasing concern. Women face harassment, threats, and discrimination, especially on social media and during election campaigns.

- Barriers to political participation also include lack of funding, fewer networking opportunities, lower media visibility, and restrictive cultural norms.

- UN Women and the Beijing Platform for Action identify women's equal political participation as both a human right and a necessity for achieving gender equality and good governance.

2.CURRENT SITUATION

While women's political representation has improved in many parts of the world, progress remains uneven and slow. Many women, especially in developing regions, still face structural barriers that prevent full participation in political life. These include limited access to education and campaign funding, discriminatory social attitudes, and lack of legal protections. In many countries, political environments remain unsafe for women due to gender-based harassment and violence, both online and offline. Young women, women with disabilities, and those from marginalised groups often face double discrimination, making it even harder to access leadership roles. However, some nations have shown that change is possible through measures like gender quotas, support programs, and grassroots movements advocating for women's rights. To ensure lasting impact, more inclusive, protected, and supportive systems for women's political participation must be established globally.

III.DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Political participation:** Involvement in political processes such as voting, running for office, or participating in public debates.
- **Gender quotas**: Rules or laws that require a certain number or percentage of women in political positions.

- **Leadership**: The act of guiding or managing others, particularly in government or organizations.

- **Empowerment**: Helping someone gain power and confidence to make decisions and lead.

- **Violence against women in politics**: Physical, psychological, or online attacks targeting women because of their political engagement, aimed at discouraging their participation.

IV.MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

North America:

The **United States of America** has demonstrated active engagement in increasing women's political participation. Government-backed initiatives like "She Should Run" and "VoteRunLead" support and train women to run for office, especially at the local level. Additionally, bipartisan movements and legal advocacy groups work to remove structural barriers, such as unequal campaign financing and online harassment.

Canada has taken a leadership role by promoting gender-balanced cabinets and encouraging female participation through campaigns like "Equal Voice." Government funding and education programs aim to engage young women and girls early in political life, especially those from indigenous and minority communities.

Europe:

The **European Union (EU)** has been a strong advocate for women's political empowerment across its member states. Through frameworks like the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, it funds initiatives that support leadership training, research, and policy reforms.

France and **Germany** have implemented gender parity laws requiring equal representation on electoral lists, resulting in significantly higher female participation in politics. **Scandinavian countries like Sweden** and **Norway**

continue to be global examples of success, with high levels of women in parliament and cabinet, fostered through public funding, gender quotas, and progressive cultural norms.

Asia:

The People's Republic of China has a relatively low representation of women in top political bodies, but local governments and women's federations are beginning to promote participation through education and leadership programs.

India, although facing challenges such as patriarchal structures and regional disparities, has introduced quotas for women in local government (Panchayati Raj), successfully bringing millions of women into decision-making roles at the grassroots level.

Indonesia and the **Philippines** have taken steps to support female leadership through national action plans and civil society partnerships, with the Philippines having had multiple female heads of state and strong women-led political movements.

Africa:

Rwanda is a leading example, with women occupying over 60% of parliamentary seats due to constitutional gender quotas. **South Africa** and **Senegal** also show strong female representation, driven by quota systems and efforts by women's rights organizations.

Nigeria and **Kenya**, while facing structural and cultural barriers, have active NGOs and civil society movements pushing for legal reforms and leadership development for young women in politics.

Latin America:

Many Latin American countries, including **Mexico, Bolivia,** and **Costa Rica**, have adopted gender parity laws that require political parties to include equal numbers of men and women candidates. These legal reforms have made significant progress in increasing women's representation at all levels of government.

V. Evaluation of Previous Attempts

Over the past decades, various international and national efforts have been made to promote women's political participation. Gender quota systems have been especially effective in raising the number of women in legislatures, as seen in Rwanda, Mexico,

and Sweden. Initiatives by UN Women, the CSW, and local NGOs have also contributed through leadership training, awareness campaigns, and advocacy work.

However, many programs remain limited in their impact due to weak implementation, lack of political will, and cultural resistance. Moreover, while numbers may increase, many women in politics still face discrimination, exclusion from decision-making, and threats to their safety. These issues show the need not just for numeric representation, but also for meaningful participation and leadership.

VI.POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

To promote fair representation of women in government, it is essential to introduce or strengthen mandatory gender quotas at all levels of government. This ensures that women have equitable opportunities to participate in political leadership.

Providing leadership and campaign training for women and girls, particularly those from marginalized communities, can empower them with the skills and confidence needed to run for office successfully.

Enforcing laws against violence and harassment targeting women in politics,both offline and online,is crucial to create a safe environment where women can engage in political activities without fear.

Increasing public funding for female candidates helps reduce financial barriers, making it more feasible for women to compete in elections.

Media campaigns that promote positive images of women leaders and challenge existing gender stereotypes can help change public perceptions and encourage broader acceptance of women in leadership roles.

Finally, supporting mentorship and networking programs that connect experienced female leaders with young aspiring politicians can provide guidance, support, and inspiration for the next generation of women leaders.

VII. Useful Links

- UN Women – Leadership and Political Participation
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Women in Politics
- [Beijing Platform for Action – Political Participation](#)
- CSW – Commission on the Status of Women