



# 141<sup>st</sup> IPU Assembly

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Forum of Women Parliamentarians  
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## Panel Discussion *Eliminating discrimination in law*

**Sunday, 13 October 2019, 2.30–4.30 p.m.**  
**Amphitheatre (ground floor), Building B, Sava Centre**

This year, 2019, marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It represents an opportunity to celebrate many achievements for women and girls in all parts of the world, in particular in the areas of education and health.

However, many obstacles remain, including in the law, and no country can claim to have achieved gender equality across the board. Over 2.5 billion women and girls around the world are still affected by gender-discriminatory laws in a wide range of areas. According to the World Bank, 104 countries still have laws that prevent women from working in specific jobs, and in 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working. Gender-based violence against women is widespread in both the private and the public spheres. Yet, 45 countries do not have laws on domestic violence and in 59 there are no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace.

CEDAW is one of the most widely ratified international treaties. By ratifying it, States have committed to abolishing existing discriminatory laws and adopting new laws to promote gender equality in all areas of life – from economic and family life to political decision-making and access to justice.

How do we fill the gap? How do we make equality of men and women a reality in our laws for it to become a reality in the lives of women and girls?

The panel discussion will focus on the role of parliaments in lifting legal barriers to the enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. It will mark CEDAW's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary while preparing for the forthcoming 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020. It should serve as a parliamentary contribution to national and global efforts in this area and build momentum for using the law to translate CEDAW-related commitments into reality.

The panel will start with presentations on CEDAW and its state of implementation as well as on means to accelerate progress in its implementation, such as the initiative [Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030: A Multistakeholder Strategy for Accelerated Action](#) launched by UN Women in partnership with the IPU and other stakeholders. Specific areas of concern and examples of parliamentary action taken to accelerate progress will also be presented, followed by a discussion among participants.

Participants will be invited to highlight one particular area in which they will strive to make a difference through their lawmaking power in the coming months in order to advance CEDAW implementation.

As an individual parliamentarian, participants may commit, inter alia, to:

- Putting a question to government calling for the review or repeal of specific legislation that restricts women's rights
- Requesting a parliamentary debate or hearing on discriminatory legislation, based on past CEDAW recommendations<sup>1</sup>
- Instigating a new bill to improve the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination
- Calling on government to engage parliament in the CEDAW reporting process, in line with the CEDAW Committee's recommendations<sup>2</sup>
- Engaging with constituents or the media on laws that discriminate against women and the need to eliminate them.

Following the panel discussion, the IPU will compile the commitments and contributions made and invite participants to report back on the efforts they have undertaken between the 141<sup>st</sup> and 142<sup>nd</sup> IPU Assemblies.

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<sup>1</sup> CEDAW Concluding Observations adopted following the review of country reports can be consulted at: [internet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx](http://internet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> CEDAW, *Statement on the relationship of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with parliamentarians*, available at: [ohchr.org/documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Statements/Parliamentarians.pdf](http://ohchr.org/documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Statements/Parliamentarians.pdf)