



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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139th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 14-18.10.2018

Panel discussion

Where do parliaments stand in the fight against sexism and harassment?



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Launch of the IPU-PACE regional study titled *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*

Tuesday 16 October 2018, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Room 2, Level 0, Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG)

Concept note

The launch event will be presided by Ms. Gabriela Cuevas, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Ms. Liliane Maury Pasquier, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It will be followed by an interactive discussion.

The collective movement triggered by the #MeToo social media campaign has brought to the fore the global magnitude of acts of sexual harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) against women in society. It has revealed that there is a whole system in place that perpetuates such violence by protecting abusers and preventing victims from speaking.

This systemic problem permeates all sectors of the world of work, and the political world is not spared. The IPU study on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians (2016), the #MeToo movement and subsequent discussions held in parliaments have shown that parliaments are among the workplaces where hostile behaviour to women is prevalent. Such hostile behaviour so often viewed as "politics as usual", is a human rights violation and endangers women's political participation and their contribution to political processes. Sexism, harassment and violence against women in politics need to be addressed at a systemic level.

Not enough has been done to prevent such acts in politics in particular and in all sectors of society in general. Weak laws fail to protect women. Accountable alternatives are needed to replace secret settlements that silence women about abuses that they endure. Administrative regulations and codes of conduct, as well as effective mechanisms to investigate, prosecute and apply appropriate legal or disciplinary sanctions are urgently awaited. Training is required on raising awareness and clarifying misconceptions about what constitutes sexist behaviour, sexual harassment and GBV.

Are parliaments—as legislative institutions and places of work—making real progress in eliminating sexual harassment and gender-based violence? What other cultural, legal and institutional changes have to be made to respond to gender-based violence and to ensure that there is no turning back?

#IPU139

The results of a new regional study of the IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments will serve as a basis for discussions. From January to June 2018, confidential interviews were held with 123 women parliamentarians and female parliamentary staff in Europe. On the occasion of the launch of the study, women and men parliamentarians (12 in total) will read testimonies gathered during the inquiry. Through a theatrical performance, they will speak their colleagues' voices in respect of anonymity. These voices are the human experiences behind the new figures on sexism, harassment and violence against both female MPs and female parliamentary staff in Europe as highlighted in the study. It also reveals the evidence on risk factors in the parliamentary environment that have an impact on the prevalence of abuses and women's ability to seek remedy.

The theatre performance will be followed by an interactive discussion under the auspices of the IPU and PACE Presidents. The discussion will be an opportunity to link the results of the study with innovative approaches taking place currently at the international and national levels to address both the issue of violence against women in politics and the issue of harassment and gender-based violence at work. It will highlight the legislative and regulatory advances made by countries on these issues as well as lessons learned from their implementation. It will also draw attention to new parliamentary initiatives and solutions to promote a respectful, safe and secure institutional culture and working environment for both women and men.

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Programme

Theatrical performance (participants: 12 women and men MPs, members of the IPU and PACE)

Opening statements and launch of IPU-PACE study:

Ms. Gabriela Cuevas, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Ms. Liliane Maury Pasquier, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Results of the IPU-PACE regional study titled *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*, presented by Ms. Kareen Jabre, Director, IPU Division of Programmes

Interactive discussion with panellists and participants:

- Ms. Manuela Tomei, Director, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, ILO
- Mr. Lorenzo Córdova, President of the Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE)
- Ms. Michelle Rempel, Member of Parliament (Canada)