



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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## Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

### (n) Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women

New York – 13 March 2019

1. The IPU and UN Women organized a one-day parliamentary event entitled *Investing in gender equality: Parliaments ensuring social protection, public services and infrastructure deliver for women and girls*. The meeting took place on 14 March 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York on the occasion of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
2. The event brought together 115 parliamentarians (100 women parliamentarians) from 35 countries, as well as parliamentary staff, government officials, representatives of international organizations and representatives of non-governmental organizations.
3. The meeting was opened by Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, IPU President, and Ms. Åsa Regnér, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women. It was chaired by Ms. Susan Kihika, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and Member of the Kenyan Senate. Other speakers included members of parliament, experts and representatives of international organizations.
4. The debates centred on the role of parliaments in ensuring that social protection systems, public services and infrastructure policies respond to the specific needs of *all women* according to their lifecycles, employment status and care responsibilities. Participants underlined the potential of social, economic, taxation and labour policies to redress structural gender inequalities, but also to perpetuate them.
5. Participants identified four specific ways in which parliaments can ensure that policies related to social protection, public services and infrastructure advance gender equality.
6. *First*, parliamentarians should promote the adoption of laws that give legal status to social protection and to gender responsive budgeting. Without such legal status, there is little transparency around who is benefiting from protection schemes and funds. Similarly, debates about entitlements and gender roles might occur each time that parliaments vote on budgets; and social protection schemes risk being cancelled when governments change.
7. *Second*, parliaments should exercise government oversight to ensure that social protection, public services and infrastructure are designed and implemented with women's needs and realities in mind—and that they are adequately financed. Parliamentarians can hold governments accountable in particular through (a) adequate and transparent taxation; (b) public investments in policies that lift women out of poverty and offer good-quality, affordable childcare infrastructure, and (c) gender-responsive budgeting to assess where public resources have been allocated and spent.

8. *Third*, parliamentarians can do more to consult with citizens, including young people, and build political will to achieve gender equality. This involves going to different and less connected communities to hear about the needs of women in the design of public policies. These consultations must include women of all ages, geographic locations, ethnic origins, abilities and types of employment. Likewise, parliamentarians should provide civil society with greater opportunities to provide feedback so that they can learn if state policies, services and infrastructure alleviate or exacerbate the effects of structural inequalities.

9. *Fourth*, parliaments must equip themselves to advance gender equality in their work if they are to promote laws, budgets and policies that are gender responsive. This includes (a) increasing the number of women in parliament, (b) ensuring that women parliamentarians are equitably represented in leadership positions and in all thematic areas – including budget and finance –, and (c) instituting gender mainstreaming structures within parliament.

10. The parliamentary meeting was webcast and can be viewed at: <http://webtv.un.org/search/part-1-investing-in-gender-equality-parliaments-ensuring-social-protection-public-services-and-infrastructure-deliver-for-women-and-girls-csw63-side-event/6013657091001/?term=parliamentary%20meeting&lan=english&sort=date>. It received good coverage on social media.

11. In addition to the parliamentary meeting, the IPU also organized a series of side events on the occasion of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the CSW. The side events took place on 12 and 14 March and were all very well attended. The focus of these events was on violence against women in politics; data on women's political participation; and the impact of women in political leadership. The side event on violence against women in politics, which was jointly organized with the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), was also webcast and can be viewed at: <http://webtv.un.org/search/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-parliamentarians-csw63-side-event/6013127541001/?term=parliamentary%20meeting&lan=english&sort=date>.