



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA  
Parliament

# 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

Virtual meeting, 17-18 August 2020  
In-person conference, 2021 in Vienna

4 June 2020

## PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Monday, 17 August 2020

2–3 p.m.

### Opening session

CEST

- **Opening remarks**  
*Parliament of Austria*  
*Inter-Parliamentary Union*
- **Group photo**
- **Keynote address**

3–4 p.m.

### Online discussion: Women's parliamentary leadership in a time of COVID-19 and recovery

CEST

#### Part 1: Taking the management of emergencies to the next level

Women constitute a key section of the population that is more exposed to climate change impact. The impact is furthermore multiplied in view of women's often vulnerable situation in society: poverty, discrimination, economic dependence and a lack of voice in decision-making.

After the Ebola (2013–2016) and Zika (2015–2016) outbreaks, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed again that in times of health crisis and pandemic, women and men are affected differently. Failing to take on board gendered dimensions of the emergency response exacerbates existing and persisting inequalities and creates new ones. Ultimately, gender-blind responses can amplify the crisis and increase both its impact and its costs for women and for society as a whole.

And yet, women are central and strategic players in any response to prevent and mitigate climate and health crises. Recent studies have shed light on the link between women in political leadership and climate action, demonstrating their positive influence for the good of our planet, its people and our common future. During the COVID-19 outbreak, many media articles highlighted the positive effect of women's political leadership on the management of and the response to the pandemic.

Beyond the effective role that women are playing, the efforts should be broadly shared, as climate- and health-related strategies and policies must be inclusive in their design and implementation, and create conducive environments for gender-responsive investment in mitigation and adaptation.

***How to build on women's leadership to reinforce and expand strong and effective climate action? How to ensure women's leadership in the management of health crises?***

***How to build synergies between women political leaders and young women advocates against climate change? How to establish connections with women scientists and support their leadership in times of pandemic?***

***What should parliaments do to ensure that climate-related policies and health emergency measures are gender-responsive?***

4–5 p.m.  
CEST

## **Part 2: Stepping up women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion**

Gender equality can significantly contribute to advancing social and economic sustainable development as well as resilience to crises and emergency situations and, in this endeavour, women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion are key.

Discriminations against women in law and in practice enhance inequalities and poverty. They confine women to unskilled, underpaid or unpaid work and prevent them from attaining equal pay for work of equal value, opening or running a business, owning and managing property, or accessing financial services. Discriminations against women make women and girls even more vulnerable in situations of emergency and crisis.

Eliminating such discriminations in the law paves the way for women's economic empowerment, financial inclusion and resilience. It can then challenge poverty and economic inequalities. Parliaments have a paramount role to play in identifying and addressing obstacles to women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion, eliminating discrimination against women and girls in the law and ensuring that social and economic policies are gender-responsive at all times, including in situations of emergency and crisis and recovery, and able to challenge extreme economic inequalities and poverty.

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***How can parliaments step up women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion?***

***What steps have been taken to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the law to contribute to women's empowerment? What laws or areas of legislation still need to be tackled?***

***How to better engage men in promoting women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion?***

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**Tuesday, 18 August 2020**

2–3 p.m.  
CEST

## **Part 3: Putting an end to sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and in all walks of life**

Threats, coercion, deprivation of liberty, harassment, and psychological, sexual or physical abuses affect women and girls across the world in both the public and private spheres. No country is free from violence against women and girls (VAWG), which exists across generations, ethnicity, disability and other backgrounds. One out of every three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.

VAWG occurs in the broader context of gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations between men and women. It violates the rights of women and girls, deprives them of their dignity and integrity and prevents them from realizing their full potential for themselves and for society.

Situations of armed conflict, violent extremism, insecurity, population displacements but also the recently experienced confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic place women and girls at greater risk of gender-based violence and abuse. Effective change requires both a strong institutional framework and national bodies with the capacity, resources and legitimacy to take action.

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***How can parliaments and their members enhance their oversight power to ensure that laws and policies to eliminate VAWG are effectively implemented?***

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No workplace or environment is immune from sexual violence and harassment against women, and parliaments are no exception. Two IPU studies, published in 2016 and 2018, provided evidence that sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments are extremely widespread, existing to different degrees in every region of the world.

Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments are major obstacles to the full contribution of women to political processes and a threat to democratic institutions and to democracy itself. As a workplace, parliament has a duty to unveil and duly address a phenomenon that often remains hidden, but can have dreadful consequences for individuals and the institution. To support a strong and efficient parliamentary response to this scourge, the IPU has produced *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament*.

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***How can parliaments become free from sexism, harassment and violence against women?***

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3–4 p.m.

**Online round table on preparing future Summits of Women Speakers**

CEST

The online round table aims to offer a platform for women Speakers to discuss preparations for the Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament to take place in 2021 and to set up a preparatory mechanism to this effect.

4–5 p.m.

**Closing session**

CEST

***Closing remarks***

*Parliament of Austria*

*Inter-Parliamentary Union*