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## The role of women's leadership and gender-responsive parliaments in climate action

A parliamentary event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women at the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in line with the priority theme: *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes*

14 March 2022, virtual event

### CONCEPT NOTE AND PROVISIONAL AGENDA

#### Background

Parliaments can play a key role in climate change response. In order to be enforceable, international agreements on climate change must be transposed into national legislation, while also supported by adequate budgets and robust oversight. These functions are central to the role of parliaments. Parliamentarians also bridge the gap between constituents, governments and the international community: a necessary step for sustainable and effective climate action.

The question of who occupies parliamentary seats also matters. A study looking at 91 countries found that there is a strong positive correlation between the percentage of seats occupied by women in national parliaments and the prioritization of climate change policy associated with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>1</sup> Available research indicates that greater representation of women in national parliaments leads countries to adopt more “stringent climate change policies” that go on to succeed more in places where there are more women in decision-making, in combination with other factors, such as the country's GDP per capita, education levels, and overall political orientation.<sup>2</sup> Similar trends are also seen in environmental and disaster risk reduction policy areas. Women are at the forefront of social movements demanding equal rights and more ambitious climate action. Research shows that the participation of women in social movements is highly correlated with the chance that they will use non-violent methods and succeed.<sup>3</sup>

However, there is a disproportionate lack of representation of women in national and global policy spaces. As of November 2021, only 25.9% of all members of parliament around the world are women. While this percentage is a historic high, it is still far from gender parity. Given the low representation of women in decision-making, it is not surprising that women are being outvoted on climate action, environmental protection and disaster risk reduction initiatives.

#### Women's leadership and gender-responsive parliaments as necessities for climate action

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action clearly defined the link between gender, the environment and sustainable development, and established that women have a strategic role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns, including the need for women to participate on an equal basis in making decisions about the environment at all levels.<sup>4</sup> The fourth action area of the IPU's Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change<sup>5</sup> states the need to improve consistency and complementarity between national climate legislation and other societal goals, including gender equality.



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Indeed, parliaments need to keep in mind that climate change legislation also mutually reinforces policies that advance other goals aimed at sustainable development. The achievement of gender equality should be seen as essential to achieving climate action goals, and vice versa.

Women's participation in leadership should be seen as a crucial step towards achieving environmental goals globally and nationally. As the heart of the climate response, parliaments must lead on this change. Without proactive measures to simultaneously ensure gender equality, including gender parity in political participation and the socio-economic empowerment of women, women's rights will be further compromised and societies globally will be tackling the climate crisis with one hand tied behind their backs.

Climate change is also likely to reinforce harmful gender social norms and power dynamics that adversely impact the role of women and girls in their everyday lives. Thus, national policies in relation to climate change must acknowledge how the eradication of barriers to gender equality also allows prioritization and investment that enables women and girls to enact change and reinforce climate action strategies. Ultimately, the legal framework on climate action must be approached through a gender-responsive lens for it to be effective and sustainable.

## Objective

Recognizing the urgency for concrete and bold legislative actions towards women's political participation and legal and policy initiatives for gender-responsive climate action, in partnership with UN Women, the IPU is organizing the annual Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 66). The Meeting will take place on 14 March 2022 on the theme **The role of women's leadership and gender-responsive parliaments in climate action**.

During the meeting, Members of Parliament from around the world will share good parliamentary practices on responding to climate change. The event aims to stimulate dialogue that can help scale up political will and transformative actions towards advancing women's participation and gender-responsive parliamentary climate and environmental action through legislation and policies. Participants will discuss how parliaments can move towards an inclusive green economy<sup>6</sup> as well as integrated green approaches to COVID-19 recovery efforts that take into account gender and other socially-differentiated needs.<sup>7</sup> These actions must start from within parliaments, through shifting to greener, more environmentally-friendly processes and functions as a means of leading by example, which will be discussed during the session on the internal practices of green parliaments.

The Meeting will underline the need for stronger parliamentary engagement to ensure the complementary and reinforcing relationship between climate action and gender equality is recognized and concrete action towards gender-responsive climate legislation and policies is taken. Finally, the event will provide an opportunity to contribute to the CSW's debates from a parliamentary perspective.

## Date and time

The parliamentary meeting will take place on 14 March 2022 from 10:00 to 12:30 ET (15:00 to 17:30 CET) on the Inteprefy online platform.

Registration link available [here](#)



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## Agenda

Chair and moderator: Ms. Hala Ramzy Fayez, Member of the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain and First Vice-President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

### Opening remarks:

- Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General
- Ms. Åsa Regnér, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women (video message)

### Session 1: Women's leadership and political participation in climate action

#### ***Moderated discussion (45 minutes)***

Short presentations by panelists, followed by a moderated debate among participants.

Guiding questions:

- ***How does women's political participation contribute to the achievement of climate goals?***
- ***How does women's involvement in climate action support the achievement of gender equality?***
- ***What are examples of initiatives where women MPs are taking the lead in climate action?***

### PANELISTS:

- Ms. Nicole Ameline, Vice-Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Ms. Fleur Newman, Gender Affairs Officer and Lead of the Gender and Climate Change Unit (UNFCCC);
- Ms. Meera Alsuwaidi, Member of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates and Member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians;
- Ms. Maryse Gaudreault, President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians (APF)

Presentation on Women in Parliament in 2021 by Ms. Zeina Hilal, Manager, Gender Partnership Programme and Youth Participation Programme, IPU



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## Session 2: Experience sharing on:

- Legal and policy reforms for gender-responsive climate action
- Green parliaments

### ***Moderated discussion (65 minutes)***

Short presentations by panelists followed by a moderated debate among participants.

Guiding questions:

- ***How can parliamentarians support gender-responsive climate action?***
- ***What are examples of parliamentarians contributing to putting in place gender-responsive climate-related legislation and policies?***
- ***What are examples of initiatives taken to make parliament a “green” institution?***

### **PANELISTS:**

- Ms. Nahla Haidar, Member of the of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Ms. Wilma Andrade Muñoz, MP from the National Assembly of Ecuador and Second Vice-President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians;
- Mr. Jurmi Wangchuk, MP from the Kingdom of Bhutan
- Ms. Mariana Baba Moussa Soumanou, MP from the National Assembly of Benin and Member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians;

Wrap up and the way forward

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<sup>1</sup> Richler, Jenn, 2019. Effect of female representation. *Nature Climate Change*, Volume 9, p. 801. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-019-0626-2>

<sup>2</sup> Countries with more female politicians pass more ambitious climate policies, study suggests, <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/09/countries-with-more-female-politicians-pass-more-ambitious-climate-policies-study-suggests/>

<sup>3</sup> Erica Chenoweth et al., 2019. *Women's participation and the fate of nonviolent campaigns: a report on the Women in Resistance (WiRe) data set*, paper prepared for the One Earth Future Foundation, Broomfield, Colorado

<sup>4</sup> Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> IPU, 2016. *Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change*. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/climat16-e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> IPU and UNEP, 2020. *Shades of green: an introduction to the green economy for parliamentarians*. Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2019-03/shades-green-introduction-green-economy-parliamentarians>

<sup>7</sup> IPU and UNEP, 2021. *Green approaches to COVID-19 recovery: Policy note for parliamentarians*. Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/other/2020-12/green-approaches-covid-19-recovery-policy-note-parliamentarians>