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Forum of Women Parliamentarians
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6 February 2023

Panel discussion

Parliamentary leadership in addressing insecurity and crises: Putting gender equality at the centre of water security, climate resilience and peace sustainability

35th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians

Saturday, 11 March 2023, 14:30 – 16:30
Grand Hall 3, EWB

Background

Since 2020, participants in many of the deliberations held at the IPU's key international parliamentary events¹ have clearly pointed out that crises are never gender-neutral, and that confronting crises and building resilience requires the advancement of gender equality. Through these debates, the parliamentary community has underlined that any crisis solution, adaptation or mitigation measure must take into consideration that crises have differing impacts on specific groups, in particular women and girls. Deploring the underrepresentation of women in responses to crises and in resilience-building, they have called for increased women's and girls' participation and leadership in decision-making processes in order to achieve more durable results that are more likely to leave no one behind. Most recently, IPU Members reaffirmed, in the Kigali Declaration adopted at the 145th IPU Assembly, that gender equality and women's and girls' participation and leadership were key in confronting pandemics, conflicts, economic recessions and climate change, and in building resilience and sustainability.

Fresh water makes up less than 3% of the world's water resources. Water stress is being exacerbated by years of misuse, poor management, overextraction of groundwater and contamination of fresh water supplies.² The UN 2023 Water Conference, to be held in March in New York, aims to strengthen action for water supply, sanitation and hygiene, to promote integrated water resources management, and to build comprehensive and preventive approaches to address water challenges.³

Water insecurity is exacerbated by climate change and global warming. Climate shocks such as droughts, and changes in rainfall or temperatures, destroy water supplies, subsistence agriculture, crops and livelihoods, and undermine people's ability to feed themselves. While conflict is still the biggest driver of hunger in the world,⁴ these climate shocks are among the leading causes of the steep rise in global hunger. Currently, in the Horn of Africa, 22 million people are acutely food-insecure because of a historic drought that began in late 2020 and is expected to last for the next few months. Already, more than 1.7 million people have left their homes in search of food and water.⁵ In 2018, 28 million people were newly internally displaced because of conflict or disaster, including 16.1 million people displaced on account of storms, food shortages, droughts, wildfires, landslides and extreme temperatures.⁶

¹ In particular, the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (2021), the 13th and 14th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (2021 and 2022 respectively), the Parliamentary Event at the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (2022), and the General Debate at the 145th IPU Assembly in Kigali (2022).

² <https://www.wilpf.org/feminism-gender-environment/>

³ <https://www.unwater.org/news/un-2023-water-conference>

⁴ <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>

⁵ <https://www.wfp.org/publications/regional-drought-response-plan-horn-africa-2023>

⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019* (Geneva, 2019).

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Women and girls play a key role in searching for food, and in finding and bringing clean water to their families to fill the gaps in water supply services. It is estimated that, around the world, women and girls spend about 200 million hours each day collecting water – a colossal amount of valuable effort and time, for which they are unpaid. They are disproportionately impacted not only by water scarcity but also by climate-related disasters in general, especially when these threaten national and regional peace and security, causing forced migration, displacement and increased poverty. They become more vulnerable to gender-based violence and to other violations of women's human rights, often with no access to support systems.

Despite all of this, policies and national adaptation plans to curb climate change, to build or sustain peace, or to address water challenges, too often do not include a strong gender perspective, a clear budget line for it, and mechanisms to ensure women's and girls' participation and leadership in water governance, climate action and peace processes.

With this in mind, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians invites the participants in the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, gathered at the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, to take part in a panel discussion to explore the centrality of gender equality in addressing water insecurity and climate change, in preventing conflict, and in sustaining peace.

The panel discussion will take place on Saturday, 11 March 2023, during the 35th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and will focus on the role of parliaments and their men and women members in water resource management, climate protection and peacebuilding that:

- Meet the rights, needs and interests of women and girls
- Take into consideration their experiences
- Ensure their participation and leadership

Objectives

Participants are invited to share good practices and solutions advanced through legislation and policymaking in their respective countries to mainstream gender equality and to take into account the needs and interests of women and girls in water security, climate action, and peace and security, such as:

- Engaging with diverse groups of women and girls to assess the gendered impact of water insecurity, climate change and conflict, and ensuring they can contribute to legislation and policymaking in these fields
- Ensuring that measures to prevent, mitigate and address the effects of water insecurity, climate change and conflict are all gender-responsive and promote the rights of women and girls and their empowerment, including the rights of displaced women and girls, women's right to land, their right to justice and to a life without gender-based violence, and their economic empowerment
- Using IPU resolutions, declarations and other policy guidance to promote women's leadership in addressing crises and gender-responsiveness in building resilience and sustainability

Panellists

- Ms. Nahla Haidar, member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)
- Ms. Gillian Triggs, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection
- Ms. Jemma Nunu Kumba, Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly of South Sudan
- Mr. Putu Supadma Rudana, member of the House of Representatives of Indonesia
- Ms. Margareta Kiener Nellen, former member of the National Council of Switzerland, and member of the International Board of PeaceWomen Across the Globe