



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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The Role of Parliaments in Advancing SDGs

Investing in robust public health and care systems: addressing gender inequalities

12 February 2025

10:00–11:30 CET (Geneva time) /16:00–17:30 ICT (Bangkok time)

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

According to United Nations (UN) data, the world continues to lag in its pursuit of gender equality by 2030. If we look more closely at some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be under review during this year's High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – namely SDGs 3, 5 and 8, we observe that gender inequalities pervade in the health and care sector where a global average of 67% of the workforce is represented by women. In spite of that, 75% of leadership roles in the said sector are held by men. Women working in this sector suffer from lack of access to decent work and poor working conditions, and face gender wage gaps, as well as workplace gender biases, discrimination and systemic inequities. They also perform 76% of unpaid care activities.

There is an urgent need to address this structural issue as health and care work play a fundamental role in promoting human well-being, economic prosperity, social cohesion and stability. To unlock their full potential, the health and care sector requires increased investment and more robust policies and legislation to close pay gaps, secure employment and decent working conditions for the workers involved. This will not only help strengthen the health and care workforce, but also promote gender equality. Also, it will yield a health dividend – a stronger health system as the foundation of universal health coverage.

Gender equality is the IPU's priority theme in 2025, a year that also marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Also, this webinar is inspired by UN resolution 77/159 "Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals" where Member States, including their parliaments, are encouraged "to place gender equality and the empowerment of women at the centre of their efforts to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals".

The webinar will focus on the importance of investing in robust public health and care systems to address structural and interlinked challenges such as gender inequalities in the labour market and universal health coverage. Such investment can help close the gender wage gap, reduce unpaid care work, support the work of health and care providers, increase women's participation in the workforce as well as stimulate

economic growth. Acknowledging the interlinkages and interconnected nature of the SDGs is crucial to creating synergies that promote inclusive growth and to laying the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Jointly organized by the IPU, ESCAP and ECE, the webinar serves as a pre-event to the ESCAP and ECE 2025 regional forums on sustainable development which are intergovernmental meetings organized to review progress on the SDGs at the regional level. The 2025 [Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) will be held from 25 to 28 February 2025, and the ECE [Regional Forum on Sustainable Development](#) will be held on 2 and 3 April 2025.

Objectives

1. To advance gender-responsive socioeconomic policies and legislation: increase understanding about the benefits of closing the gender wage gap and improve working conditions in the health and care sector to promote gender equality, and have more robust public health and care systems.
 2. To promote evidence-based decision-making: provide information on tools and platforms containing accurate and reliable data per region.
 3. To foster dialogue on collaboration and information-sharing (including of good practices) among parliaments, governments, the private sector and civil society.
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Participation

The webinar is open to parliaments and governments in the ECE and ESCAP Member States: Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Canada, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

Language

The working languages will be English, French and Russian.

Webinar platform

The event will be hosted on Zoom.

Registration

All interested parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, government representatives and officials can register by 7 February 2025 at the following link: <https://forms.gle/MKVwYXD5WBBcNzjK9>.