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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women

## Parliaments and Beijing +30: Resisting the backlash and shifting paradigms towards gender equality

A parliamentary event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN-Women  
at the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

11 March 2025, UN Headquarters, Trusteeship Council Room, New York

### CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

Thirty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and a decade into the United Nations sustainable development agenda, despite notable progress achieved towards gender equality in certain areas, significant gaps exist, and serious challenges persist.

Gaps and challenges worsen amidst a backdrop of overlapping global crises, attempts of rollback in gender equality, and women's and girls' rights and freedoms, and serious backlash on women's empowerment, their protection from gender-based violence and harassment, including online, and on sexual and reproductive health and rights across the globe.

The effects of unrest, conflict and war are strongly felt by women. They suffer various harms, including sexual and gender-based violence, loss of spouses, families, livelihoods and of personal autonomy. Even during transitional and peacebuilding periods, women often remain marginalized.

The rollback on reproductive health, rights and justice is intensifying with bans or limitations on abortion and reduced punishment for marital rape. In several countries there have been attempts to reinstate banned, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or early marriages. Proposals have been put forward to weaken laws that protect women and girls from gender-based violence, including undermining protection for survivors of gender-based violence. The growing challenges to protect women's reproductive rights are adding to the overall backlash against women's rights, destabilizing the lives of women, girls and societies at large. The backlash and the continued systemic gaps hinder women's full participation in economic, social and political life, limiting their opportunities for empowerment and autonomy.

The year 2024, a "so-called" super election year, brought more setbacks than achievements for women in decision-making. Women's representation in parliaments stagnated at 27% globally with a decrease rather than an increase in the number of women MPs among the newly elected parliaments. Only five women were elected as Heads of State out of 31 direct presidential elections held worldwide. Forming gender parity cabinets continued to be the exception rather than the norm. Additionally, women politicians globally continue to experience gender-based violence, including in parliament, highlighting the persistent barriers to their safety and participation.

Beyond parliament, violence against women remains alarmingly prevalent, affecting one in three women globally, underscoring the persistent threat to women's safety and well-being. Discriminatory laws continue to undermine the rights of women and girls, particularly in critical areas such as sexual and reproductive health



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rights (SRHR). Every two minutes, a woman dies from childbirth-related causes – a statistic that has stagnated – while an estimated 270 million women lack access to modern family planning methods.<sup>1</sup>

The digital sphere and developments in artificial intelligence (AI) present new challenges, as gender biases are being embedded into their development and operations, perpetuating and amplifying existing inequalities. Intentions and commitments announced by social media networks to reduce moderation on their platforms are flagrant setbacks after many years of calls made by women, women's rights movements and human rights defenders to put in place frameworks to address online gender-based violence, harassment, deepfakes and misinformation against women.

However, a transformative force is resisting backlash, striving for societies that are just, inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable for all. Feminism has never been more mainstream, nor mobilized as many young people as it does today.<sup>2</sup> This force comprises millions of women and girls worldwide, supported by their movements and allies, including men and boys. 2024 marked landmark victories: in the Gambia, plans to repeal the ban on FGM, mobilized local, national, regional and global pushback against the pushback, culminating in the Parliament's decision to uphold the ban; in France, the Parliament voted overwhelmingly to enshrine abortion rights in the constitution, being the first country in the world to do so. In 2024, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) launched its landmark General Recommendation 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, offering authoritative guidance for a paradigm shift towards parity in decision making.

Parliaments are central institutions in resisting rollback on women's rights, shifting paradigms and ensuring the effective implementation of the international normative framework, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

With this in mind, the IPU and UN-Women are organizing their annual Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) on the theme: *Parliaments and Beijing +30: Resisting the backlash and shifting paradigms towards gender equality*.

## Objective

The Parliamentary Meeting will provide a platform to examine the role of parliaments in advancing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the occasion of the latter's 30th anniversary. The meeting will offer an opportunity for members of parliament from around the world to mobilize against the backlash and revive their commitment to the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies and action plans to achieve gender equality and fulfill women's and girls' rights and empowerment. Particular focus will be placed on shifting the paradigm towards parity in decision-making.

## Date and time

The Parliamentary Meeting will be held in person on United Nations Headquarters' premises, in the Trusteeship Council Room on Tuesday, 11 March 2025.

## Languages

Interpretation will be provided in English, French, Arabic and Spanish.

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<sup>1</sup> See in: [www.who.int/news/item/23-02-2023-a-woman-dies-every-two-minutes-due-to-pregnancy-or-childbirth--un-agencies](http://www.who.int/news/item/23-02-2023-a-woman-dies-every-two-minutes-due-to-pregnancy-or-childbirth--un-agencies).

<sup>2</sup> [EGM/B30/2024/REPORT](#), pg. 15.



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## Programme

*Chair: Ms. Cynthia López Castro (Mexico), Senator and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians*

*Moderator: Ms. Kristin Haffert, CEO, Mine The Gap*

**09:45–10:00**

**Arrival of delegates**

**10:00–10:15**

**Opening remarks**

- Ms. Cynthia López Castro (Mexico), Senator and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians
- Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President
- Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results, UN Women

**10:15–12:00**

**Session 1: Women's political participation: Progress, setbacks and lessons learned for a way forward to achieving parity.**

Participants will review the latest data and resources on women in politics. These include the IPU's report *Women in Parliament 1995-2025* and the IPU-UN Women 2025 Map Women in Politics. The session will provide space to take stock of the global state of women's representation in political decision-making over the past 30 years, highlighting progress and persistent challenges, and identifying lessons learned. It will also provide an opportunity to take a look at the elections held in 2024 and their outcomes in terms of women's political representation.

The session will focus on the following questions:

- *What progress has been made in advancing women's representation in parliament and political leadership globally over the past 30 years?*
- *What are the main observations drawn from the 2024 election results regarding women's participation in decision-making?*
- *What are the barriers blocking greater progress and how can they be addressed?*
- *What lessons can be drawn from countries that have demonstrated significant progress towards gender parity in politics, and how can these successes inform global efforts?*
- *How can we inspire and support the next generation of women leaders to take on political roles?*

### **Panellists**

- Ms. Cynthia López Castro (Mexico), Senator and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians
- Ms. Lashell Adderley (The Bahamas), President of the Senate
- Ms. Nafeesa Shah (Pakistan), Chairperson of National Assembly of Pakistan Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming
- Ms. Kafilat Ogbara (Nigeria), Member of Parliament, Chairperson of the House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development



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**12:00–12:45**

**Special segment: Panel discussion on shifting the paradigm towards parity: Presentation of the UN CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems followed by a Q and A with participants**

**Panellists**

- Ms. Nahla Haidar, CEDAW Committee Chairperson
- Ms. Nicole Ameline, former CEDAW Committee member and former Chair of the GR40 drafting group

**12:45–15:00**

**Lunch break**

**15:00–17:00**

**Session 2: Pushing back against the pushback**

This session will focus on setbacks and the impact of the pushback on gender equality and women’s rights, with a focus on parliamentary action in addressing such challenges. The participants will discuss the drivers of pushbacks, their supporting forces, and their impact. The session will also explore actions to reverse backlash and sustain momentum towards achieving gender equality and the implementation of the BPfA and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agendas, including through global partnerships.

The session will focus on the following questions:

- *In which areas are pushbacks most pervasive and what harm are they creating?*
- *What innovative actions can parliaments take to safeguard advancements in gender equality?*
- *How can parliaments promote gender-sensitivity amid global pushback on gender equality?*
- *What partnerships are needed to address rollback on women’s rights?*

**Panellists:**

- Ms. Julia Braunmiller, Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, Women, Business and the Law project, World Bank
- Ms. Antonia Kirkland, Global Lead, Legal Equality and Access to Justice, Equality Now
- Mr. Seedy S.K. Njie (The Gambia), Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly
- Ms. Petra Bayr (Austria), Member of Parliament
- Mr. Mohamed Farid (Egypt), Senator (video message)
- Mr. Gary Barker, President and CEO, Equimundo

**17:00–17:30**

**Wrap up and concluding remarks**