

# SEXISM, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

— You are invited to join this CSW63 side event, organised by the Council of Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Finland's Permanent Mission to the UN as part of the Finnish presidency of the Council of Europe, to take stock of on-going legal and policy initiatives to end violence against women in politics and to share experiences and lessons learned from their implementation. The event also aims to strengthen partnerships at global, regional and local levels, as well as to increase the impact of the work and efforts in this area in the presence of high-level panellists, some of whom will share their own experiences as women politicians.

## PANELLISTS:

- ▶ **Liliane Maury Pasquier, President**, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- ▶ **Gabriela Cuevas, President**, Inter-Parliamentary Union
- ▶ **Päivi Sillanaukee**, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Finland
- ▶ **Charles Ramsden**, Chair, Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe
- ▶ **Dubravka Šimonović**, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences
- ▶ **Purna Sen**, UN Women Spokesperson on Addressing Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination

## MODERATOR:

- ▶ **Marja Ruotanen**, Director, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**DATE AND TIME:** Tuesday 12 March 2019, from 11.30 to 12.45

**VENUE:** Conference Room 1 UN HQ, New York

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November 2018 - May 2019

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Harassment, sexism, harmful stereotypes and the intimidation of women in politics are rampant. For far too long, these human rights violations have been tolerated and normalised. They have negative consequences on achieving gender equality by causing and aggravating the under-representation of women in politics and affecting their contribution to political processes. A recent study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe reveals that over 85% of respondents have experienced psychological violence; 47% have received threats of death, rape or beatings during their parliamentary term and 68% have been subject to sexist remarks. Young women MPs and those women active in the fight against gender inequality and violence against women were often singled out for attack. A quarter of the women parliamentarians interviewed were the target of sexual harassment perpetrated by male parliamentarian colleagues, both from their own political party and from parties opposed to their own.

Moreover, the study clearly showed that not enough has been done to prevent such acts and to make political spaces safer and more inclusive for women. To fulfil the commitments of the UN 2030 Agenda and SDG5, as well as of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, to achieve women's full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making and eliminate violence against women in all spheres of life, strong laws and accountable alternatives are needed to break the silence, protect the victims of abuse and end the impunity of the perpetrators. Administrative regulations and codes of conduct, as well as effective mechanisms to investigate, prosecute and apply appropriate legal or disciplinary sanctions are urgently awaited. Training is required on raising awareness and clarifying misconceptions about what constitutes sexist behaviour, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. The Istanbul Convention on violence against women also needs to be further promoted and implemented. As a follow-up to the joint study with the IPU, the Parliamentary Assembly has launched the initiative *#NotInMyParliament*, to mobilise parliaments to take such immediate action to stamp out sexism and violence. In addition, the Council of Europe is preparing a Recommendation to prevent and combat sexism which will also address women in politics.

**#NotInMyParliament**



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