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Canada



The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the International Gender Champions – Geneva, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women and the Permanent Missions of Canada, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ireland, Maldives, Mexico, Rwanda and Sweden to the United Nations, are pleased to invite you to a side event on:

Legislating for gender equality:

Eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence by 2030

**Wednesday, 26 June 2019, 1.30 – 3 p.m.
Room IX, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

The year 2019 marks the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 25th anniversary of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. It is also time to take stock of national-level implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in view of the 25-year review in 2020. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides much-needed impetus to translate the CEDAW Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action into reality for women and girls and for the good of all.

The recently launched [2019 SDG Gender Index](#) indicates that no country has achieved gender equality across the board. Over 2.5 billion women and girls around the world are still affected by discriminatory laws.¹ Discrimination in the law spans a wide range of domains such as women's ability to travel, seek employment, access courts, receive inheritance or decide when and whom to marry on an equal footing with men. For instance, according to the World Bank, 104 countries still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, and in 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working.² Gender-based violence against women is widespread both in the private and the public spheres. Yet, 45 countries do not have laws on domestic violence³ and in 59 there are no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace.⁴

Parliaments are a key part of the solution, as representatives of all the people. Parliamentarians can amend laws and sometimes draft new bills. They can also reach out to constituents to garner their support to legal reforms and hold government to account. Yet, law-making processes have historically excluded women and girls and still do for the most part. At 1 January 2019, only one in five ministers and less than one in four members of parliament were women.⁵ As a result, women's voices and perspectives continue to be largely absent from legal frameworks and legal practices. Also, parliaments are often not equipped to integrate a gender perspective into their work.

It is now time to step up efforts to enhance women's participation in political decision-making while also building synergies across sectors, including parliaments, and in advancing gender equality in the law. In March 2019, an ambitious [multi-stakeholder initiative to remove all forms of gender discrimination in laws by 2030](#) was launched by UN Women along with the IPU and a wide range of other partners. The strategy aims to fast track the repeal of

¹ McKinsey Global Institute. 2015. [The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add \\$12 Trillion to Global Growth](#). McKinsey & Company, p. 74.

² World Bank. 2018. [Women, Business and the Law 2018](#), p. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

⁵ See IPU-UN Women. 2019. [Women in Politics: 2019](#).

discriminatory laws in six thematic areas: comprehensive reforms, women's economic empowerment, minimum age of marriage provisions, nationality rights, discriminatory rape laws, and family and personal status laws.

There is also growing acknowledgement that legislating to protect women from violence and harassment at work is essential to ensuring women's human rights and economic empowerment. Importantly, as the ILO celebrates its 100th anniversary, it is in the process of developing a new instrument on violence and harassment in the world of work, which is also the theme of the 2019 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence against Women.

The global organization of parliaments — the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) — has been supporting parliaments in advancing gender equality. As the IPU celebrates its 130th anniversary in 2019 and as several other milestones are being celebrated internationally, there is a key opportunity to further mobilize national parliaments towards achieving gender equality in the law.

The event will bring together members of parliament from across the globe, as well as representatives from governments, international organizations and civil society, and take stock of progress made and what remains to be done towards legislating for gender equality.

Following a moderated discussion with the panel, the floor will be open for debate.

Chair/Moderator: H.E. Ambassador Rosemary McCarney, Permanent Representative of Canada

Panellists: Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General, IPU
Ms. Nahla Haidar, Member, CEDAW Committee
Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women
Ms. Christine Löw, Director, UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva
Mr. Maxime Koné, MP, Burkina Faso

Responders: H.E. Ambassador Veronika Bard, Permanent Representative of Sweden
H.E. Ambassador François Ngarambé, Permanent Representative of Rwanda
Mr. Yibza Tesfaye, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Ethiopia
Ms. Janepher N. Egunyū, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Uganda
Ms. Valentina Beghini, Senior Technical Officer on Gender Equality, ILO

Refreshments will be provided outside room IX from 1.10 p.m.
Simultaneous interpretation in French and English will be available during the event.