# 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

United Nations Office, Vienna (Austria), 17 and 18 August 2020

22 April 2020

## PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.00–9.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30–10.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Opening session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament of Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15–10.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Keynote address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30–10.45 a.m.</td>
<td>Group photo for Women Speakers of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.45–11.00 a.m.</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00 a.m.–1.00 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>Session 1: Taking climate action and the management of emergencies to the next level</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As highlighted by the UNFCCC, “climate change has a greater impact on those sections of the population, in all countries, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes”. In this context, women constitute a key section of the population that is more exposed to climate change impact. The impact is furthermore multiplied in view of women’s often vulnerable situation in society: poverty, discrimination, economic dependence and a lack of voice in decision-making.

After the Ebola (2013–2016) and Zika (2015–2016) outbreaks, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed again that in times of health crisis and pandemic, women and men are affected differently. Failing to take on board gendered dimensions of the emergency response exacerbates existing and persisting inequalities and creates new ones. Ultimately, gender-blind responses can amplify the crisis and increase both its impact and its costs for women and for society as a whole.

And yet, women are central and strategic players in any response to prevent and mitigate climate and health crises. Any policy or initiative will have to take into account women’s role at local and grassroots levels; any policy or initiative will have to build on the potential that women can yield, taking their specific needs into account and making good use of their knowledge, experience and engagement. Participation of women at all levels is therefore essential. Exclusion would result in inefficiency and increased vulnerability.

Recent studies have furthermore shed light on the link between women in political leadership and climate action, demonstrating their positive influence for the good of our planet, its people and our common future. For example, a study on Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make difference? demonstrated that female representation leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies, resulting in lower carbon dioxide emissions. Alongside women in political power, young women activists are playing their part, becoming leaders of their generation and mobilizing the world around stringent climate action. During the COVID-19 outbreak, many media articles highlighted the positive effect of women’s political leadership on the management of and the response to the pandemic.
Beyond the effective role that women are playing, the efforts should be broadly shared, as climate- and health-related strategies and policies must be inclusive in their design and implementation, and create conducive environments for gender-responsive investment in mitigation and adaptation.

Many efforts and initiatives driven by local communities, the business and financial sectors, academic and research institutions, children and youth, media, governments and parliaments are promoting an innovative mix of traditional and modern sustainable lifestyles at the individual and collective levels. This movement provides opportunities to involve and empower all sectors of society, including women and girls.

| How to build on women’s leadership to reinforce and expand strong and effective climate action? | How to ensure women’s leadership in the management of health crisis? |
| How to build synergies between women political leaders and young women advocates against climate change? | How to establish connections with women scientists and support their leadership in times of pandemic? |
| What should parliaments do to ensure that climate-related policies and health emergency measures are gender-responsive? | What can women speakers pledge to do in reinforcing climate action and making it gender-responsive? |
| What can women Speakers pledge to do to promote gender-sensitive management of health crises? |

Key reference documents on climate change:
The Paris Agreement, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, the Cancun Agreements, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Warsaw Outcomes, the SAMOA Pathway, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, IPU Parliamentary action plan on climate change, IPU resolutions on climate change, on access to health as a basic right and on universal health coverage, IPU Guidance Note for parliaments on Gender and COVID-19.

1.00–2.00 p.m. Lunch
2.00–4.00 p.m. Session 2: Stepping up women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion

Gender equality can significantly contribute to advancing social and economic sustainable development as well as resilience to crises and emergency situations and, in this endeavour, women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion are key.

In a world of extreme inequalities, where the richest 1 per cent have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people, where nearly half of the world’s population (3.4 billion people) is living on less than 5.50 US dollars a day, where women and girls are putting in 12.5 billion hours every day of care work for free, where women earn 24 per cent less than men and own 50 per cent less wealth1 and where gender gaps cost the economy some 15 per cent of GDP,2 too many obstacles still prevent the economy from working for women.

Discriminations against women in law and in practice enhance inequalities and poverty. They confine women to unskilled, underpaid or unpaid work and prevent them from attaining equal pay for work of equal value, opening or running a business, owning and managing property, or accessing financial services. Discriminations against women make women and girls even more vulnerable in situations of emergency and crisis. Eliminating existing discriminations in the law paves the way for women’s economic empowerment, financial inclusion and resilience. It can then challenge poverty and economic inequalities.

Parliaments have a paramount role to play in identifying and addressing obstacles to women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion, eliminating discrimination against women and girls in the law and ensuring that social and economic policies are gender-responsive at all times and able to challenge extreme economic inequalities and poverty.

---

1. Oxfam (2020), Time to Care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis
How can parliaments step up women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion?

What steps have been taken to eliminate gender-based discrimination in the law to contribute to women’s empowerment? What laws or areas of legislation still need to be tackled?

How to better engage men in promoting women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion?

What can women Speakers pledge to do for women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion?

Key reference documents

The Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality, the IPU resolution on promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development.

4.00–4.15 p.m. Coffee break

4.00–6.00 p.m. Session 3: Putting an end to sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and in all walks of life

Threats, coercion, deprivation of liberty, harassment, and psychological, sexual or physical abuses affect women and girls across the world in both the public and private spheres. No country is free from violence against women and girls (VAWG), which exists across generations, ethnicity, disability and other backgrounds. One out of every three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.

VAWG occurs in the broader context of gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations between men and women. It violates the rights of women and girls, deprives them of their dignity and integrity and prevents them from realizing their full potential for themselves and for society. Situations of armed conflict, violent extremism, insecurity, population displacements but also the recently experienced confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic place women and girls at greater risk of gender-based violence and abuse.

The right of women to be free from violence has been recognized in international and regional human rights instruments, and important achievements have been made to bring national legislation in line with the norms established by these instruments. In particular, national laws and policies have been adopted. However, their implementation remains the key challenge. Without it, these laws and policies will not fulfill their intended objective of preventing violence, protecting and supporting victims, and ensuring that they have access to justice and reparation and that the perpetrators are prosecuted.

Effective change requires both a strong institutional framework and national bodies with the capacity, resources and legitimacy to take action.

How can parliaments and their members enhance their oversight power to ensure that laws and policies to eliminate VAWG are effectively implemented?

No workplace or environment is immune from sexual violence and harassment against women, and parliaments are no exception. Two IPU studies, published in 2016 and 2018, provided evidence that sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments are extremely widespread, existing to different degrees in every region of the world.

Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments are major obstacles to the full contribution of women to political processes and a threat to democratic institutions and to democracy itself.

To support a strong and efficient parliamentary response to this scourge, the IPU has produced Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament. Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was adopted in 2019 and recognizes the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. As a workplace, parliament has a duty to unveil and duly address a phenomenon that often remains hidden, but can have dreadful consequences for individuals and the institution.
What can women Speakers pledge to do to free parliaments from sexism, harassment and violence against women?

Key reference documents

6.30–9.30 p.m.  
Reception offered by the Austrian Parliament in honour of women Speakers

Tuesday, 18 August 2020

09.30–11.30 a.m.  
Closed session for Women Speakers
The closed session aims to offer a platform for women Speakers to agree on the Summit’s conclusions and main recommendations.
It will also provide the opportunity to the women Speakers to review from a gender perspective the draft outcome document of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and provide input aimed at mainstreaming gender equality throughout the document.
This session will also prepare the next Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament to take place in 2022.

11.30–11.45 a.m.  
Coffee break

11.45–12.30 p.m.  
Closing session
The Summit will close with key conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Presentation of the outcome document of the Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament
Parliament of Austria

Closing speech
Inter-Parliamentary Union