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Office of the  
**Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth**

## Young women's political participation and leadership

The last two decades were marked by progress in women's political participation and leadership. According to IPU data, the share of parliamentary seats held by women progressed from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2020. However, still only 6.6 per cent of Heads of State and only 6.2 per cent of Heads of Government are women and the proportion of women ministers stands at 21.3 per cent.

Twenty-five years after the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), which set the international target for reaching gender equality in political decision-making, women are still underrepresented across all levels of political leadership and gender equality in politics is still far from reach.

Young women are the least represented in leadership positions. IPU data on youth participation in parliaments shows that only 2.2 per cent of parliamentarians are under 30 and less than 1 per cent of them are young women parliamentarians.

Young women have an inalienable right to be represented when laws are adopted, budgets crafted, and governments held to account. Their lack of participation is not only a violation of this right, but also a waste of the valuable contributions they can make for the good of all people today, and for the good of future generations. Their participation in politics is all the more important as young women are strong and powerful leaders in many related fields, including in civic and democratic engagement in pro-climate, anti-racism, gender equality among others. Young women are also powerful influencers across issues for many other youth and people of other generations.

Parliaments and political parties have much to do to support young women's political participation and their access to political leadership positions. Specific and adapted measures and empowerment programmes are needed to ensure more young women can make it into political office.

The IPU and the Office of the United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY) are co-organizing an interactive online event on young women's political participation and leadership as a contribution to generation equality.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the event are to galvanize momentum for young women's political participation, recognize and understand specific challenges faced by young women in engaging in political leadership, share experiences and build capacity, identify strategic solutions to be pursued by different stakeholders and jointly develop a call to action.

This will be a joint contribution to the Generation Equality Forum, specifically the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership.

The event will promote young women's political participation by placing young women leaders at the centre stage to identify, in cooperation with other key stakeholders, concrete steps to be taken to enhance young women's engagement in political decision-making.



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The event will also:

- Mark the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 10th Anniversary of the IPU resolution *Youth participation in the democratic process*
- Highlight and share real-life experiences of young women in politics and other leadership positions
- Pay tribute and give visibility to young women's leadership
- Identify structural and institutional challenges, norms and stereotypes that prevent young women from taking part in politics in a greater proportion, with a focus on intersectional barriers
- Identify policy-orientation and strategies to enhance the representation and participation of young women in politics
- Mobilize multi-stakeholders support and rally behind a call to action to increase young women's political participation.

### **Timing**

The event is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 18 November 2020, from 08:00 to 11:00 (EST), 14:00 to 17:00 (CET).

### **Participation**

The event will bring together young women leaders from various fields and key stakeholders with a common ambition to enhance young women's participation in politics. Participants will include, but will not be limited to, men and women political leaders across generations, members of parliament, government officials, representatives of international organizations and UN agencies, representatives of youth and women's movements, academics, media and representatives of civil society organizations working on political inclusion.

### **Methodology**

This will be a virtual event. Information concerning the online platform will be provided in a separate document. The online platform will facilitate space for a high-level of interaction and accessibility to large groups from various geographical regions. Audio interpretation will be provided. The event will also make use of the online chat function and other interactive elements, such as polling options, word clouds, etc.

To ensure an open and frank dialogue with a focus on experience sharing, participation in the event will be by invitation only.

The opening session of the event will be streamed on social media to ensure a greater visibility of the agenda.

In addition to the online discussions, a number of pre-recorded video messages might be provided.

### **Suggested agenda**

This event will be divided into three one-hour thematic segments on: (1) building capacity and mobilizing support; (2) campaigning and elections; and (3) occupying office and creating change from within.

### **Session I: Building capacity and mobilizing support**

This session will focus on young women's leadership and political aspirations, as well as what it takes to make the decision to go into politics. Participants will discuss existing structural, socioeconomic, institutional and cultural barriers that prevent women from having leadership positions in society and engaging in formal politics, and in the case of young women barriers additionally reinforced by discrimination based on age.



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Participants will also share their insights on civic education and engagement, empowerment strategies and programmes, among others, to identify solutions.

This being the first session of the event, it will feature a high-level introduction to give a framework to the ensuing debate. It will introduce the event objectives and link the themes to the Beijing Declaration and the relevant IPU resolution.

### **Session II: Campaigning and elections**

The session will focus on the process of running for elected office. Campaigners and candidates will explore the ways in which gender and age bias is manifested in an election race, from the local to national level. The session will critically examine sexist double standards, gendered questioning and harassment faced by young women candidates, as well as challenges ingrained in financial requirements, party structures and the broad media landscape. Participants will share personal anecdotes and strategies employed to overcome these barriers.

### **Session III: Occupying office and creating change from within**

The session will be dedicated to the role of young women in politics. Participants will discuss policy making and tried and tested strategies that give answers to the questions: What still needs to be done, and how can elected officials work together to overcome the barriers that hinder young women participating in formal politics?

Elected women leaders will tell their personal stories as a first-hand testimony of the progress made in the past. Together with their younger peers, they will discuss existing gendered challenges in the formal political sphere. Participants will share their insights on gender electoral quotas, youth quotas and other non-discriminatory measures with a view to identifying the means to support young women's political participation going forward.

### **Keeping the momentum alive**

Based on the outcomes of these three sessions, a call to action will be developed and disseminated by the IPU and OSGEY and promoted throughout the IPU membership, including at future IPU global events such as: the IPU Assemblies, Forum of Women Parliamentarians, Forum of Young Parliamentarians, and Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians.

The call to action and a summary of the event's main findings and recommendations will be made available online for public use.