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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

Pursuing gender parity on panels

Guidance Note by the IPU Secretary
General

Geneva, 18 December 2017

The IPU Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, as adopted by the Governing Council in October 2013, calls for institutionalizing gender equality at the IPU, promoting gender equality in representation and participation, building the capacity of members and staff on gender equality, gender-sensitive parliaments and gender mainstreaming, and developing mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.

In November 2015, the IPU Secretary General joined the International Gender Champions network. By becoming a Gender Champion and signing the Panel Parity Pledge, the Secretary General committed to:

- 1) Not sit on a single-sex panel;
- 2) Strive for gender balance on all panels that he takes part in, or that the IPU organizes.

This note is aimed at providing guidance to IPU staff organizing panels or liaising with the organizers of panels that the Secretary General is invited to join.

While the ultimate objective is to ensure gender parity – or 50/50 representation of women and men – on all panels, the immediate objective of this note is to help attain as close to gender parity as possible (a 40/60 gender ratio being understood as one that provides such balance).

IPU-organized panels

Gender equality is a strategic objective and a core value of the IPU. As such, the IPU must ensure that women and men have a say on all issues of concern to the IPU and to the parliamentary community, thus providing a gender perspective in all debates.

IPU staff members should ensure that all panels that the IPU organizes, on its own or with partner organizations, include men and women panellists. This requirement cannot be satisfied by having one keynote speaker or one moderator of a different sex.

It is important to note that in some areas it may be difficult to find a large pool of women experts, or a large pool of male experts. Pursuing the gender parity principle will therefore require an extra effort. In addition, since women still bear most of family responsibilities, securing their participation will require planning ahead.

Means of implementation

- Affirm the gender parity principle from the outset when co-organizing a panel with a partner organization or national parliament;
- Affirm the gender parity principle when asking a partner organization or a national parliament to nominate specifically a man or a woman to sit on a panel organized by the IPU;
- When selecting invitees to panels, aim for a 50/50 ratio of men and women panellists;
- Extend invitations early, so as to have a wider range of potential panellists of both sexes, and ask around;
- Invite panellists who are subject experts in the topic, regardless of their position – there is a higher chance to find a woman panellist with expertise in the issue at stake if you do not only target heads of organizations or ambassadors.

Additional means of implementation can be found in [Annex I](#) enclosed.

Scope: This requirement applies to all panels organized or co-organized by the IPU during Assemblies, at global events, or at specialized meetings at the national, regional and international levels.

Panels that the IPU Secretary General sits on

As a matter of principle, the Secretary General will not sit on single-sex panels.

Means of implementation

- Affirm this principle from the outset when liaising with the organizer of any panel that the Secretary General is invited to;
- Before confirming the Secretary General's availability, ask for the names of other invited panellists and inform the Secretary General accordingly;
- Request an update from the organizers on the final list of panellists closer to the event;
- Offer support to the organizers in looking for alternate or additional panellists so as to redress any existing gender imbalances and thus avoid having the Secretary General sit on a single-sex panel.

If, despite all these efforts, the panel remains single-sex, the IPU Secretary General may consider refusing to sit on the panel or request that a senior IPU staff member from another sex speaks at the event to represent the IPU.

Additional means of implementation can be found in [Annex II](#) enclosed.

Reporting

As a Gender Champion, the IPU Secretary General has committed to reporting annually to the International Gender Champions network on the composition of:

- 1) Panels that the IPU organizes
- 2) Panels that the IPU Secretary General sits on

IPU staff members will report on the gender composition of each panel they organize through a reporting mechanism to be coordinated by the Gender Partnership Programme.

Colleagues are also requested to inform the Executive Office and the Gender Partnership Programme on whether an intervention by the Secretary General was required so as to ensure gender balance on any of the panels he has been invited to, or whether the Secretary General has refused to take part in any panels due to a lack of representation of both sexes.

Annex I – Checklist for the organization of gender-sensitive panels and meetings

Annex II – Suggested language for panels where the IPU Secretary General is invited to speak



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Checklist for the organization of gender-sensitive panels and meetings

IPU Secretary General Guidance Note on
pursuing gender Parity on panels
Annex I

18 December 2017

- ✓ Include a gender perspective in the concept/outline of all meetings and panels.
- ✓ Include a clause in invitations to *all* IPU events encouraging participating delegations to ensure gender balance among their representatives so as to have a considerable pool of potential panellists from both sexes.
- ✓ Set specific targets for the participation of women and men on panels (always aim for 50 per cent; where not possible, aim for a ratio of 40/60).
- ✓ Ask around; seek advice from previous women speakers on other women who could be invited to speak on a given topic.
- ✓ Expand and adapt invitation criteria to make them inclusive; in particular, avoid inviting heads of organizations of ambassadors only, as these tend to be male.
- ✓ Bear in mind the fact that women experts are a minority in some areas, and so are men in others. Book speakers early and be sensitive to the practical obstacles that may limit women's participation, such as being asked too often for the same type of event, as well as family responsibilities, concern for personal safety and security, cultural and religious customs discouraging women's participation in public affairs or women travelling alone.

COMMUNICATION

- ✓ Communicate widely on IPU strategies to ensure gender equality in the organization and proceedings of IPU events, as well as the rationale behind them and the results achieved, thus promoting good practice and raising awareness among other organizations, partners and Member Parliaments.

FOLLOW-UP

- ✓ Keep track of lessons learned from successes and failures in reaching parity in panels and events.
- ✓ Keep the names and contacts of invited women panellists who could not accept the invitation and reach out to them for future events.
- ✓ Develop a roster of women experts on all relevant topics, as well as male experts on gender equality, within the Secretariat.

Additional resources

Chief Executive Women, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and Male Champions of Change, *Gender Balance at Every Forum: The Panel Pledge* (see checklist on page 4) - <http://www.wlia.org.au/publications/panel-pledge-toolkit/>

Jacqueline O'Neill, "7 Rules for Avoiding All-Male Panels", *Foreign Policy*, 8 March 2016 - <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/08/7-rules-for-avoiding-all-male-panels/>

Malaka Gahrib, *Dude, Where Are The Women? #AllMalePanels In Global Development*, NPR, 9 May 2016 - <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/05/09/476881541/dude-where-are-the-women-allmalepanels-in-global-development>



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Suggested language for panels where the IPU Secretary General is invited to speak

IPU Secretary General Guidance Note on
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Annex II

18 December 2017

This draft guidance document has been developed under the International Gender Champions initiative to support the Secretary General and IPU staff in meeting the Gender Parity Pledge.

Staff liaising with partner organizations should draw from this guidance document so as to ensure the Secretary General does not sit on a single-sex panel.

IGC Panel Parity Pledge

Quick Guide / Proposed Language

This draft document is based on the work of the IGC brown bag meeting held on 16 May 2017. It is being circulated for further comment and suggestions prior to publishing as an official IGC guidance document.

Definitions

International Gender Champions: The International Gender Champions (IGC) is a network of female and male leaders who have committed to breaking down gender barriers to make systems change (www.genderchampions.com).

Panel Parity Pledge: The baseline commitment of the IGC is the Panel Parity Pledge which calls on the individual **Gender Champion** to challenge the absence of female speakers, (or male speakers on topics addressing gender equality) by discussing panel composition with event organisers, recommending female (or when appropriate, male) speakers on the topic, and creating a positive mindset for the inclusion of women in all discussions effecting our society.

Panel: Champions are often invited to speak at events, round-table discussions, public conferences or other forums. This may be in the capacity of a keynote speaker, a panelist or as a moderator. In all cases, for the purposes of the Panel Parity Pledge, a “panel” is defined broadly as:

“any speaking engagement where the Champion is invited as representative of their organisation, as a subject matter expert, or in their personal capacity, whether to deliver Welcome remarks; be the keynote speaker; share experiences, practices or knowledge as a panelist; or to facilitate a discussion as the chairperson or moderator.”

When Champions are invited to speak:

1. **Include standard language in correspondence replying to all speaking engagements. Potential text:**

[Champion X] is a member of the International Gender Champions (IGC), and has taken the IGC Panel Parity Pledge. By taking the pledge, [he/she] has committed to striving towards gender-balance at every event to which he/she is invited to speak. We are also recording statistics for each event that [name of Champion] participates in, to be published in the annual IGC report.

AND

2. **Request:**
 - the organisers to confirm who the other panelists/ speakers/ participants are (if not obvious from the invite), and inquire how gender-balance will be achieved.
 - Explain that as a condition of acceptance, the expectation is that there will be both men and women speakers to ensure inclusive perspectives and insights.
 - Offer suggestions for interesting speakers that might round out the panel

When Champions receive an invitation with a speaker list that is single-sex:

Some proposed text to adapt in correspondence with the organisers:

We have noticed that the composition of speakers at [name the event or panel] is all male/ all female. [Name of Champion] is a member of the International Gender Champions (IGC), and has taken the IGC Panel Parity Pledge.

By taking the pledge, [he/she] has committed to striving towards gender-balance at every event on which [he/she] is invited to speak. We are also recording statistics for each panel that [Name of Champion] participates in to be published in the annual IGC report.

[If your Champion and Focal Point have ideas of women/men to speak:

We are mindful that it can be a challenge to ensure a gender-balanced panel, and to this end [Name of Champion] would be pleased to propose, [Name and affiliation of proposed candidate] [to take his/her place] [be invited to speak]. This would be a great opportunity for [Name proposed candidate] and would ensure inclusive perspectives and insights on the topic. We can put you in touch with [Name] if you do not have another [female/male] panelist in mind.]

Only in this way, working together, will we be able to increase the participation and influence of women in order to ensure inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation, and ultimately women's empowerment and the effective implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality.

When Champions *unexpectedly* find themselves about to participate on a single-sex panel:

Potential language:

- *As a Gender Champion, I have signed the Panel Parity Pledge that challenges all of us to take a stand against all male/ all female panels. The International Gender Champions (IGC) is a network of female and male leaders who have committed to breaking down gender barriers to make systems change.*
- *We need to increase the participation and influence of women (or men on women's issues) to achieve inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation.*
- *There are many brilliant women, I find it hard to believe that one could not be found to join us on this panel.*
- *It will take all of us working together, women and men, to bring the inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation that we and the world so badly need.*

Additional Strategies:

1. Only take questions from women in the audience as only men have had a chance to speak on the panel
2. Recruit an expert you know from the audience.
3. Add an empty chair.
4. Leave.