

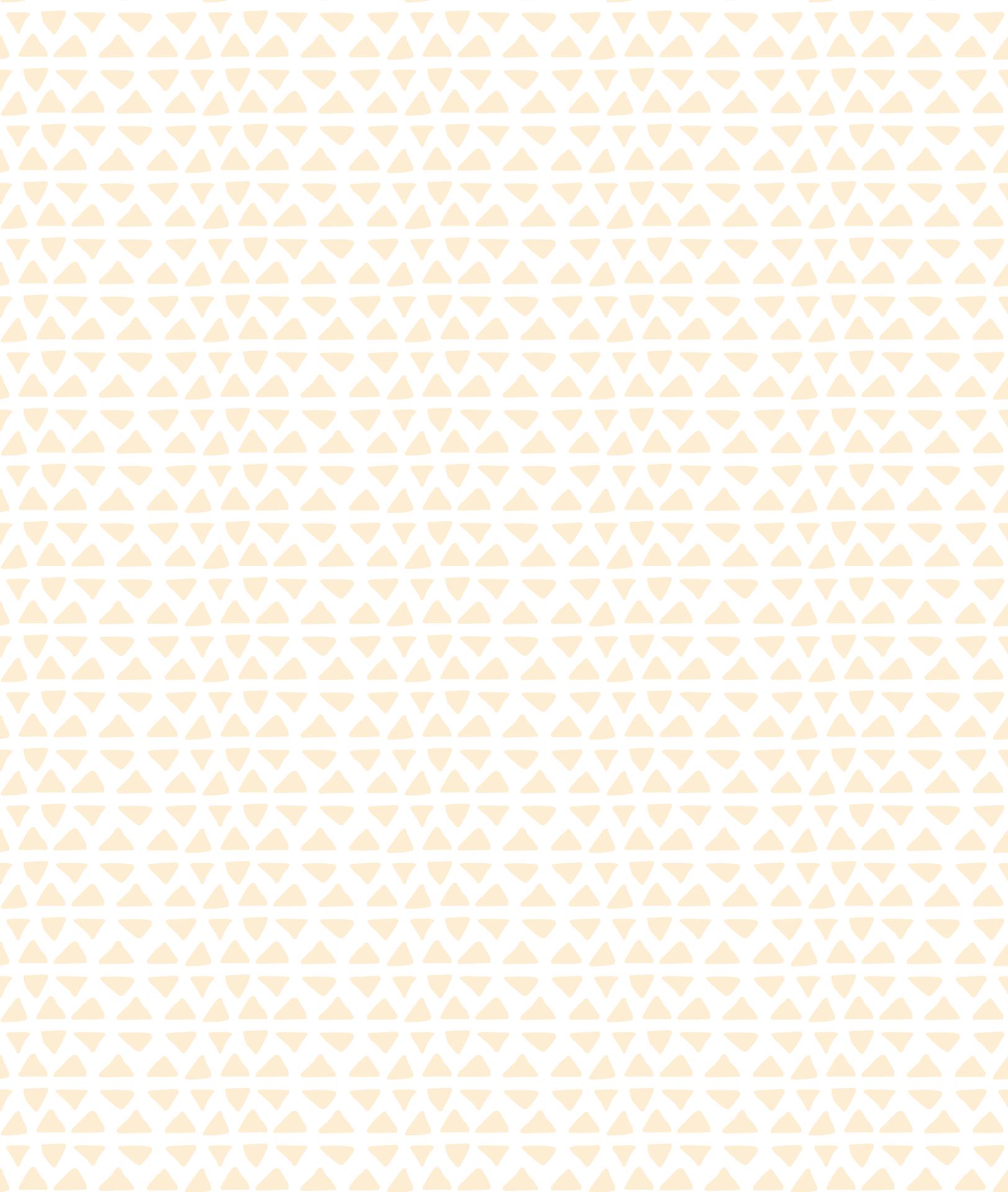
**A GUIDE FOR**

# NGOs and Women's Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW

**2019<sup>©</sup>**



**NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN/NEW YORK**



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# FOREWORD

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This NGO guide will help build the capacity of NGOs and women’s human rights activists to advocate for the rights and empowerment of women and girls. The UN Commission on the Status of Women, the main UN body responsible for gender equality and women’s empowerment, is the main case study. This guide is a component of a project called “Training for Advocacy and Capacity Building” carried out by NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York in collaboration with the Global Coordinating Committee.

This project took advantage of the regional UN preparatory events for the 20-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action and the High Level Political Forum.

The establishment of four NGO CSW Committees (committees of the Conference of NGOs or CoNGO) in Asia and Pacific, Africa, the Arab States and Latin America and Caribbean offers an important resource for a global, collaborative effort across regions — unified, yet responsive to regional diversity.

The NGO CSW Committees hope that advocacy training will help build the capacity and influence of the international women’s movement for successful outcomes at future UN meetings, particularly at the CSW.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NGO CSW/NY thanks the governments of Switzerland and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (giz/BMZ) for providing financial support for this project in the spirit of true partnership. The project on the ground is being implemented by the Global Coordinating Committee, which includes outstanding women leaders from all regions, notably Mabel Bianco, Samira Bikarden, Kafui Kuwanu, Lana Finikin, Lina Abou Habib, Memory Kachambwa, Bandana Rana, and Carole Shaw. Nurgul Djanaeva and Eleanor Blomstrom, supported by regional trainers and the NGO CSW team, developed the training material.

Soon-Young Yoon, Immediate Past Chair ex-officio of the NGO CSW/NY, and Susan O’Malley, Chair of the NGO CSW/NY, are co-chairs of this project and they serve as members of the Global Coordinating Committee. Azadhi Khalili and Saphira Rameshfar represent the NGO CSW/NY Executive Committee for the project and interns contributed their expertise and support.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Nearly 4,000 NGO representatives participate in the UN Commission on the Status of Women each year. It is the largest annual gathering of the international women's movement at the UN—a time for renewal of collective purpose and action. The CSW provides a unique opportunity for leaders in gender equality and women's empowerment to influence the UN agenda and to make sure the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is integrated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY) is responsible for convening NGOs during the UN Commission meetings and at other UN gatherings. The NGO CSW/NY is an advocate for the human rights of women and girls and supports the UN consensus documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and other UN agreements such as the Declaration on Population and Development and the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights.

The NGO CSW/NY is a volunteer-based, non-profit NGO funded largely by individual contributions and is one of the women's committees of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO). Under CoNGO's umbrella, the NGO CSW Committees helped plan the NGO Forums at the UN World Conferences on women in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing.

## 2 THE CSW AND THE UNITED NATIONS

To fully understand how the CSW functions, it is useful to understand the United Nations structure.

51 countries created the United Nations (UN) just after World War II in 1945. The purpose of the United Nations is:

- To maintain peace throughout the world
- To develop friendly relations to help nations work together to improve poverty, to end hunger, disease and illiteracy, and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms

Today, 193 countries are Member States. The Holy See and the State of Palestine are Non-Member Observer States, and several Organizations are recognized as Permanent Observers.

More information on the United Nations: [www.un.org/en/aboutun](http://www.un.org/en/aboutun)

UN website on Membership: [www.un.org/en/members](http://www.un.org/en/members)

### 2.1 The General Assembly

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The General Assembly is the main deliberative decision-making organ in the UN and is composed of all Member States.

More information and news on the General Assembly: [www.un.org/en/ga](http://www.un.org/en/ga)

More information on the Regional Groups of the General Assembly:  
[www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups](http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups)

## 2.2 Social, Humanitarian & Cultural - Third Committee

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The General Assembly allocates agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world to the Third Committee.

The Committee also discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.

## 2.3 The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

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The UN Charter established the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to coordinate the economic and social work of the United Nations. ECOSOC also coordinates UN agencies, funds and programs that work on these topics, including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development.

More information and news on the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):

[www.un.org/en/ecosoc](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc)

## 2.4 The Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations

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The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental

body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

See more at: [www.unwomen.org/en/csw](http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw)

## 2.5 UN Women and the CSW

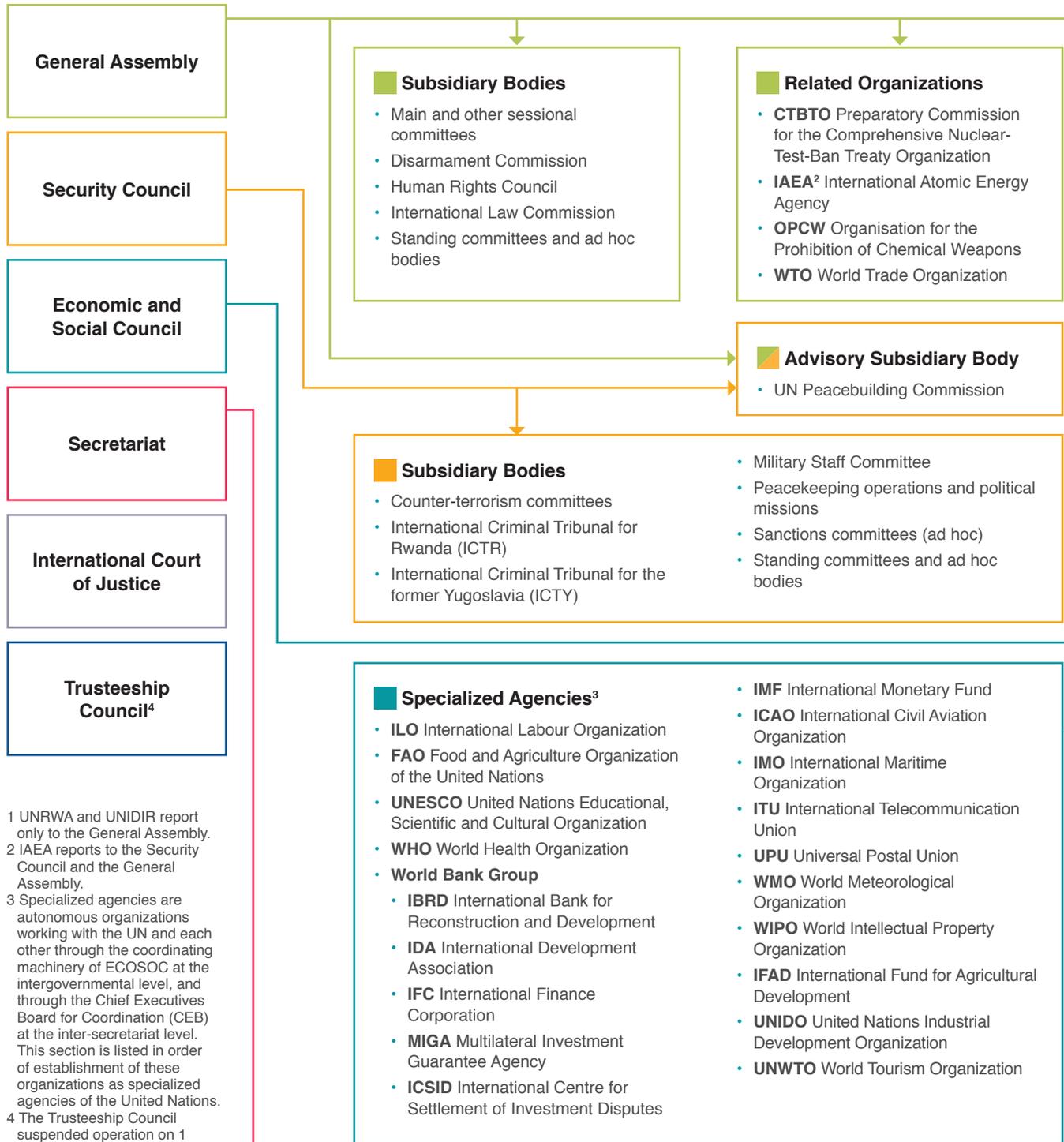
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UN Women was formed in 2010 by the merger of four women's entities at the UN. Its main roles are to support the inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms. It also helps Member States to implement these standards and hold the UN system accountable for commitments on gender equality. During the CSW, the agency organizes special preparatory events and briefing sessions for Member States and is responsible for organizing substantive papers, such as the Report of the Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action, based on government reports.

As the Secretariat for the CSW, UN Women also manages the written and oral statement applications by NGOs. UN rules stipulate that only NGOs with official relations with the UN through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have full privileges, such as speaking at official inter-governmental meetings. It should be noted that some NGOs are accredited to the UN through the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) or through UN conferences; these NGOs cannot submit written or oral statements to UN Women for the CSW.

## 2.6 The United Nations System

### UN PRINCIPAL ORGANS



1 UNRWA and UNIDIR report only to the General Assembly.

2 IAEA reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

3 Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level. This section is listed in order of establishment of these organizations as specialized agencies of the United Nations.

4 The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994 with the independence of Palau, the last remaining United Nations Trust Territory, on 1 October 1994.

## Programmes and Funds

- **UNCTAD** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
  - **ITC** International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO)
- **UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
  - **UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
  - **UNV** United Nations Volunteers
- **UNEP** United Nations Environment Programme
- **UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund
- **UN-HABITAT** United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- **UNHCR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- **UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- **UNODC** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- **UNRWA**<sup>1</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
- **UN-Women** United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- **WFP** World Food Programme

## Research and Training Institutes

- **UNICRI** United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
- **UNIDIR**<sup>1</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

- **UNITAR** United Nations Institute for Training and Research
- **UNRISD** United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
- **UNSSC** United Nations System Staff College
- **UNU** United Nations University

## Other Entities

- **UNAIDS** Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- **UNISDR** United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
- **UNOPS** United Nations Office for Project Services

## Functional Commissions

- Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Narcotic Drugs
- Population and Development
- Science and Technology for Development
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Status of Women
- United Nations Forum on Forests

## Regional Commissions

- **ECA** Economic Commission for Africa
- **ECE** Economic Commission for Europe
- **ECLAC** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- **ESCAP** Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- **ESCWA** Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

## Other Bodies

- Committee for Development Policy
- Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
- Other sessional and standing committees and expert, ad hoc and related bodies

## Departments and Offices

- **EOSG** Executive Office of the Secretary-General
- **DESA** Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- **DFS** Department of Field Support
- **DGACM** Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
- **DM** Department of Management
- **DPA** Department of Political Affairs
- **DPI** Department of Public Information

- **DPKO** Department of Peacekeeping Operations
- **DSS** Department of Safety and Security
- **OCHA** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- **OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **OIOS** Office of Internal Oversight Services
- **OLA** Office of Legal Affairs
- **OSAA** Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

- **SRS/CAAC** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
- **UNODA** Office for Disarmament Affairs
- **UNOG** United Nations Office at Geneva
- **UN-OHRLS** Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- **UNON** United Nations Office at Nairobi
- **UNOV** United Nations Office at Vienna

# 3 INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND THE UN WOMEN'S CONFERENCES

## International Policies and UN Women's World Conferences

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### THE UNITED NATIONS' FIRST WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, MEXICO CITY, 1975

The conference defined a [World Plan of Action](#) for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985.

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### UN DECADE FOR WOMEN (1975-1985)

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### THE UNITED NATIONS' SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, COPENHAGEN, 1980

A [Programme of Action](#) called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in protecting women's rights to inheritance, child custody and nationality.

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### THE UNITED NATIONS' THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, NAIROBI, 1985

Governments adopted the [Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women](#), which outlined measures for achieving gender equality at the national level and for promoting women's participation in peace and development efforts.

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### THE UNITED NATIONS' FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, BEIJING, 1995

The [Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action](#), adopted unanimously by 189 countries, is an agenda for women's empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality.

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In the 1980s, the UN embarked on a series of world conferences that ushered in a new era of UN-NGO relations, extending beyond the larger NGOs and providing a major catalyst for mobilization in the women's movement. These conferences included the four major conferences on women, as well as conferences that addressed the environment, human rights, population, and social development.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the major UN processes in 2019-2020 related to women's rights and gender equality outcomes in which the women's movement continues to be active are highlighted below, including several sustainable development processes:

- Commission on the Status of Women, (11-22 March 2019)
- High Level Political Forum (July 2019)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2019-2020)
- Commission on Population and Development (2019)
- Human Rights Council (2019)
- CEDAW Committee meetings (2019-2020)

## 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Women and the environment
- Women in power and decision-making
- The girl child
- Women and the economy
- Women and poverty
- Violence against women
- Human rights of women
- Education and training of women
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- Women and health
- Women and the media
- Women and armed conflict

[beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about](http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about)

<sup>1</sup> 1992-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio (UNCED); 1993- World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (Vienna Declaration on Human Rights 'women's rights are human rights'); 1994- International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo (ICPD); 1995- World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen

# 4 THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY

At a UN summit on 25 September 2015, 193 Members States of the UN unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes an ambitious set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>1</sup> The framework brings together the three dimensions of sustainable development— economic, social and environmental—with 17 goals and 169 targets to be met by all countries before 2030.<sup>2</sup>

The 2030 Agenda is a comprehensive agenda that reaffirms previous agreements, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, as well as Agenda 21 and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The Agenda is universal and based on the principles of human rights. Goal 5 to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” is recognized as critical to the successful implementation of all goals.

## 4.1 Goal 5 as a cross-cutting issue and stand alone goal

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Women’s agency—the ability to freely make decisions about one’s own life and bodily autonomy—is a basic human right and ethical imperative. Likewise, freedom from violence and equal access to resources and power are human rights and markers of gender equality. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring human rights and equality for all. In addition, women’s empowerment and gender equality have a catalytic effect on improving human development, good governance, sustained peace and balance between the environment and human settlements.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that a two-pronged approach is needed. Gender equality should be a stand alone goal while transversing all other SDG’s.

Gender equality cuts across all other SDGs and contributes significantly to them all. For example, closing the gender gap in earnings, bargaining power, or access to land is essential to achieving food security.<sup>4</sup> The private sector increasingly recognizes that women’s empowerment and leadership means better talent, more productivity and more diverse leadership, and contributes to the national GNP. Indeed, gender equality is a “key pathway” to ensuring lasting poverty reduction and shared prosperity.

However, the obstacles to realizing the full potential of girls and women of all ages, including older women, indigenous women and women with disabilities, are many. Gaps in access to resources, such as male-dominated land tenure structures throughout much of the world, hinder women’s ability to respond to climate change impacts. As of 2010, only 15 percent of land in sub-Saharan Africa is managed by women<sup>5</sup> and in Burkina Faso, more than twice as many men as women report owning a house.

What’s more, gender-based violence, which is a constraint on women’s agency, is a global epidemic, ranging from 21 percent in North America to 43 percent in south Asia. Somali women refugees in East Africa face multiple exclusions due to their ethnicity, religion and refugee status.

Women’s underrepresentation is another challenge to full participation in decision-making. Worldwide, women account for fewer than 22 percent of parliamentarians and fewer than 5 percent of mayors.<sup>6</sup> Nine targets for Goal 5 will help to measure progress in remedying these violations to women’s human rights.

## Nine Targets for Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Laws and policies need to be urgently reviewed, amended or abolished as a first step towards achieving substantive gender equality, complemented by measures to change discriminatory social norms and practices.
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation.
- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conference.
- Undertake reforms to give women equal right to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

## 4.2 A Transformative Agenda

Policies must address structural causes of gender-based discrimination and inequality across three dimensions of sustainable development: social, environmental and ecological.

This includes:

- Ensuring freedom from violence;
- Gender equality to distribute capabilities through knowledge, good health, sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- Access to resources including land, infrastructure, decent work and social security, and
- Equal decision-making in all spheres of private as well as public sectors.<sup>7</sup>

In the universal 2030 Agenda, all countries must take on responsibility to meet Goal 5. Women's movements can play an important role to ensure that political and financial mechanisms are in

place to achieve the SDGs from a gendered perspective.

## 4.3 The Nexus approach—looking for interlinkages

At the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, Member States will review clusters of goals. However, a “nexus” approach that focuses on the connections between several sets of issues is the lens through which we should view the SDGs.<sup>8</sup> This kind of analysis looks at interlinkages between the SDGs and how a change in one affects and is affected by others. The results can often be very illuminating, revealing cascading or multiplier effects.

For example, sustainable, low-carbon transportation systems that are safe for women and girls can help reduce poverty by providing better

## HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) 2019

The theme of the HLPF in 2019 will be *“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.”*

Each year, a cluster of goals is under review.

The set of goals to be reviewed in 2019 are:

- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Follow-up and review processes at all levels will be guided by the nine principles formulated in United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 (article 74).

access to social and health services. They can also improve women’s mobility to get water and food, and provide infrastructure for women’s businesses to grow, all while combatting climate change. Ensuring clean cooking stoves for rural women saves money, releases girls’ time to attend school, reduces health problems caused by air pollution, prevents deforestation and also reduces black carbon emissions.<sup>9</sup> Investments in such projects that have benefits across a wide range of SDGs will mean speedier, more cost-effective and long-lasting results.

### 4.4 Accountability

The High Level Political Forum is the principle mechanism to review progress and hold governments accountable to their commitments. It is important to note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is not a legally binding document, but has the stature of a high-level, ministerial review. Governments will provide Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) according to their own schedules and are encouraged to engage stakeholders in their preparation.

During the HLPF and other SDG processes, civil society is organized around nine major groups and “other stakeholders” (MGoS) who can submit statements and reports to the UN process, including official papers from the recognized MGoS. Many in civil society will also prepare shadow and alternative reports, or thematic reports (although shadow reports are not currently officially recognized). Additionally, MGoS are requested in the Agenda to report progress on their own contributions to implementing the SDGs. The different reports may include verification or critique of government reports.

Both Member States and the MGoS have guidelines to support their reporting. For example, reporting can include information on how major groups and other stakeholders have contributed to the SDGs, what challenges they face, and recommendations for future action. Reporting may also include information on special groups and issues that may often be overlooked, such as violations of migrant and refugee rights. More attention is needed to national and regional action plans to ensure full and integrated implementation.

## 4.5 Implementation

The novel provisions on the “means of implementation” targets under Goal 17 and under each Sustainable Development Goal are key to realizing the SDGs as a transformative agenda.<sup>10</sup> These cover issues such as financing, technology, capacity building, trade, monitoring and evaluation and partnerships.<sup>11</sup> The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) contains many targets that provide transformative financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment. These include tax incentives to support ownership of assets/property by women, costed and adequately resourced national policies, strategies and plans on gender equality, tracking and prioritized allocation of ODA for gender equality, and legislative reforms implemented to ensure women’s equal rights to economic and productive resources”.<sup>12</sup> Although there is some discussion concerning how to improve these, they are significant starting points.

### Nine Major Groups and other stakeholders

- Women
- Children and youth
- Indigenous peoples
- NGOs
- Workers and trade unions
- Local authorities
- Business and industry
- The scientific and technical community
- Farmers

Others stakeholders may refer to any other groups that may not be involved with the MGs, but who are important to the implementation of the SDGs such as local communities, volunteer groups, foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup>. The SDGs are introduced in paragraph 54 – 59 of United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015.

<sup>2</sup>. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

<sup>3</sup>. *A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment: Imperatives and key components*, UN Women (2013): <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/7/post-2015-long-paper>

<sup>4</sup>. Mans Nilsson, *Understanding and mapping important interactions among SDGs*, a background paper for UNIDO Expert meeting in preparation for HLPF 2017, Vienna, 14 to 16 December 2016: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12067Understanding%20and%20mapping%20important%20interactions%20among%20SDGs.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>. *The state of food and agriculture: Women in agriculture closing the gender gap for development*, Food and Agriculture Organization (2010-2011): <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>. *Voice and Agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity*, World Bank Group (2014): <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/voice-and-agency-empowering-women-and-girls-for-shared-prosperity>

<sup>7</sup>. *A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment: Imperatives and key components*, UN Women (2013): <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/7/post-2015-long-paper>

<sup>8</sup>. Mans Nilsson, *Understanding and mapping important interactions among SDGs*, a background paper for UNIDO Expert meeting in preparation for HLPF 2017, Vienna, 14 to 16 December 2016: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12067Understanding%20and%20mapping%20important%20interactions%20among%20SDGs.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>. *2016 Progress Report on Clean Cooking*, Global Alliance for Clean Cook Stoves (2016): <http://cleancookstoves.org/resources/reports/2016progress.html>

<sup>10</sup>. Article 40, A/RES/70/1

<sup>11</sup>. Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1

<sup>12</sup>. Source: Addis Ababa Action Plan: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/commitments/commitment/addis-ababa-action-plan-on-transformative-financing-for-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment.html>

# 5 WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE UN

## 5.1 Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights

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Gender equality has been recognized as intrinsic to peace and justice since the founding of the United Nations (UN), but challenges to achieve the same have remained strong within UN negotiations.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is an historic policy document and to date remains the strongest document in the UN on gender equality and women's human rights. However, like Declarations, Agreed Conclusions and resolutions, the BPfA is "soft law" and not legally binding. This means it implies a moral obligation for Member States to comply with, but governments are free to consider their way of implementing the content of these texts. In contrast, treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are legally binding.

## 5.2 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

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Gender equality and women's human rights are an intrinsic part of comprehensive human rights. This is most clearly affirmed in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), along with its 1967 Declaration and 1999 Optional Protocol. CEDAW develops and clarifies the principle of gender equality and nondiscrimination. Unlike the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW is a treaty and is legally binding for those countries that have ratified it. To date, CEDAW is nearly universally signed, with 188 signatories and 99 ratifications.

## 5.3 Key Treaties

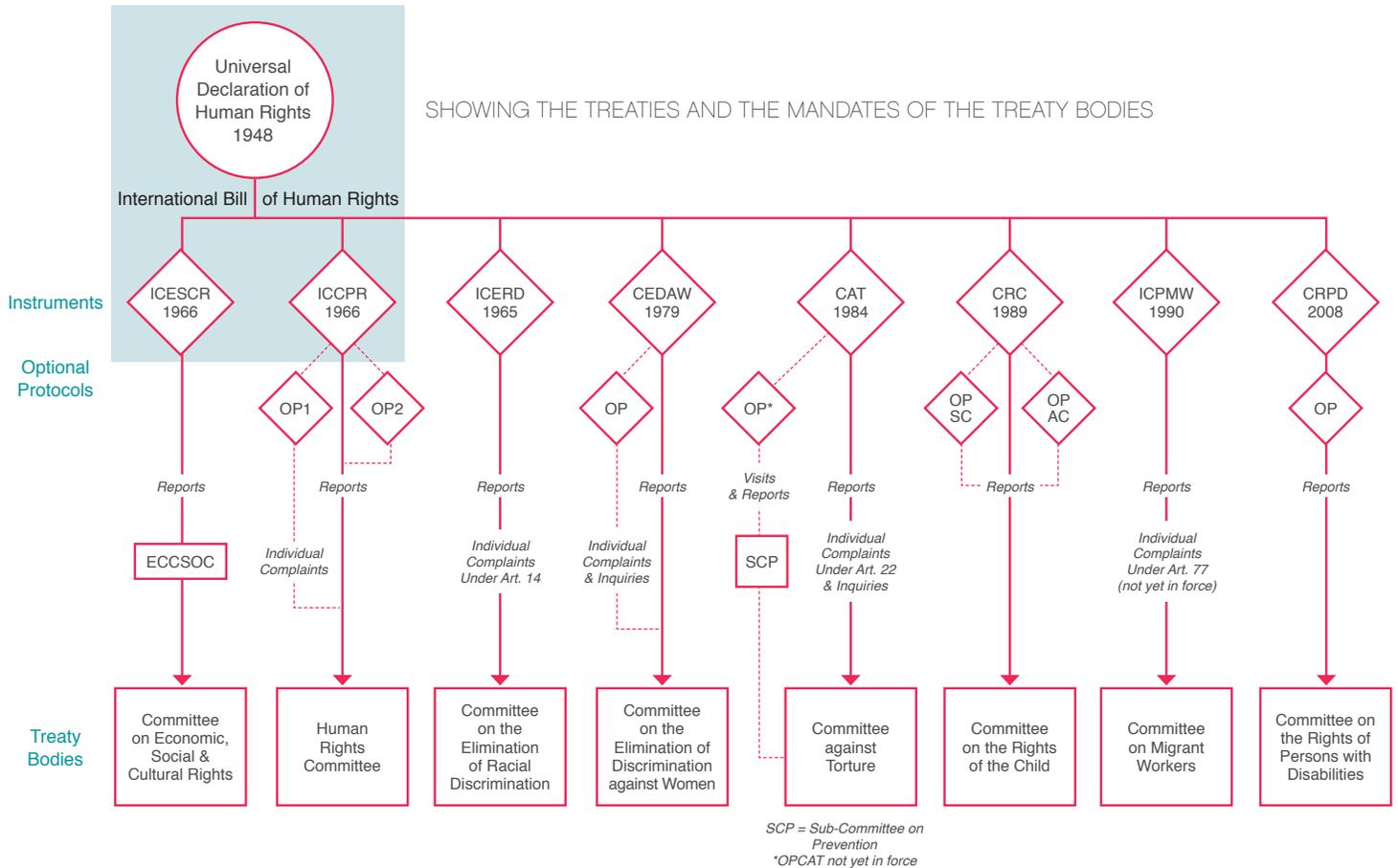
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The human rights treaty system involves nine major treaties:

- International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (in force 4 January 1969)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) (in force 23 March 1976)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (in force 23 March 1976)
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (in force 3 September 1981)
- Convention Against Torture, and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (in force 26 June 1987)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (in force 2 September 1990)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) (in force 1 July 2003)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (in force 3 May 2008)
- International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) (in force 23 December 2010)

## 5.4 Mapping the United Nations Human Rights Treaty System

SHOWING THE TREATIES AND THE MANDATES OF THE TREATY BODIES



## 5.5 The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Security Council

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) spearheads the United Nations' human rights efforts. There are also a number of special rapporteurs such as those on violence against women, health, cultural rights, disability, situation of human rights defenders and migrants who also include provide information on women's human rights. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

In addition, numerous resolutions such as SC 1325 passed by the Security Council reaffirm the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. They call for an end to impunity for incidents of sexual violence in conflict and establish a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

# 6 A QUIZ ON WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

True or False: Shifting as little as 9.5% of global military spending to agriculture and infrastructure in poor communities could eliminate extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.

- A. True
- B. False

Source: UN Women Peace & Security - Facts & Figures (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>).

## Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

True or False: In Malawi, female-headed households are more than twice as likely as male-headed households to report reducing the number of meals they eat when experiencing climate shocks.

- A. True
- B. False

Source: GGCA Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence, 2016. (<http://gender-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GGCA-RP-110616.pdf>)

## Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

True or False: Breast cancer is the largest killer of women worldwide causing 9.1 million deaths each year.

- A. True
- B. False (cardiovascular diseases kill more women than cancers)**

Source: The NCD Alliance, Non-communicable diseases: a priority for women's health and development, 2010. ([http://www.who.int/pmnch/topics/maternal/2011\\_women\\_ncd\\_report.pdf.pdf](http://www.who.int/pmnch/topics/maternal/2011_women_ncd_report.pdf.pdf))

## Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

True or False: Investing in education programmes for girls can return \$5 for every dollar spent.

- A. True
- B. False

Source: UN Sustainable Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>).

### Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

True or False: Disasters such as droughts, floods and storms kill more men than women due to gender differences.

A. True

**B. False (More women than men die due to gender inequalities)**

Source: WHO Gender, Climate Change, and Health, 2011. (<http://www.who.int/globalchange/GenderClimateChangeHealthfinal.pdf>)

### Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Involving women in water projects can increase the effectiveness of such projects by how much?

A. 10-11 times

**B. 6-7 times**

C. 18-19 times

Source: Conservation International - Gender & Conservation (<http://www.conservation.org/How/Pages/gender-and-conservation.aspx>).

### Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

In Brazil, what percentage of rural women with access to electricity were more likely to complete primary education?

**A. 59%**

B. 68%

C. 71%

Source: ActionAid, Friends of the Earth & WEDO - Power for the People: Delivering on the Promise of Decentralized, Community-Controlled Renewable Energy Access, 2016. (<http://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Power-for-the-People-1.pdf>)

### Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

In one study, what percent of their time each day did women report spending in unpaid labour?

A. 25%

**B. 19%**

C. 12%

Source: UN Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2016. (<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20Report%202016.pdf>)

### Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Fill in the blank: In developing countries, \_\_\_\_\_ percent fewer women use the Internet than men.

**A. 16%**

B. 18%

C. 23%

Source: UNESCO Doubling Digital Opportunities, 2013. (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2013/9/doubling-digital-opportunities-women-and-girls-in-it>)

### Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimates that fewer than 20 percent of landholders globally are women. Closing this gender gap would reduce the number of hungry people by:

- A. 5-10%
- B. 10-15 %
- C. Over 15%**

*Source: The World Bank Group, Voice and Agency: empowering women and girls for shared prosperity, 2014. (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/voice-and-agency-empowering-women-and-girls-for-shared-prosperity>)*

### Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

In Kenya and Nicaragua, what proportion of women-headed households in cities suffers from insecure housing and poor access to clean water?

- A. 1/4
- B. 3/4
- C. 1/3**

*Source: UN Habitat – Gender (<http://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/gender/>).*

### Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

True or False: In some countries women make up 85 percent or more of the pesticide applicators on commercial farms and plantations, often working whilst pregnant or breastfeeding.

- A. True**
- B. False

*Source: WECF Women and Chemicals: The impact of hazardous chemicals on women, 2016. ([http://www.wecf.eu/download/2016/March/WomenAndChemicals\\_PublicationIWD2016.pdf](http://www.wecf.eu/download/2016/March/WomenAndChemicals_PublicationIWD2016.pdf))*

### Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

In the United States, the death rate from extreme heat is how many times greater for men than women?

- A. 2.6 times greater**
- B. 5.6 times greater
- C. 10.6 times greater

*Source: GGCA Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence, 2016. (<http://gender-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GGCA-RP-110616.pdf>)*

**Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

In Vietnam, what percentage of the aquaculture workforce are women?

- A. **80%**
- B. 60%
- C. 40%

Source: *FAO Gender & Fisheries* (<http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-fisheries/en/>).

**Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

What percent of the world's plant and animal species could go extinct if the global temperature increase exceeds 2.5 degrees centigrade?

- A. 10%
- B. **30%**
- C. 50%

Source: *UNCC Learn* (<http://www.uncclearn.org/>) & *UN Decade on Biodiversity* (<https://www.cbd.int/2011-2020/about/biodiversity>).

**Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

In 2016, which country was the most dangerous for an environmental defender?

- A. Philippines
- B. Colombia
- C. **Brazil**

Source: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/dangerous-ground/>

**Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

According to a UN expert group report on the SDGs, which of the following need stronger partnerships with governments?

- A. Mayors and local authorities
- B. Women's groups, including indigenous women
- C. Businesses and Private Sector
- D. **All of the Above**

Source: *UNIDO Background paper - Expert meeting in preparation for HLPF, Vienna, 2017.* (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12067Understanding%20and%20mapping%20important%20interactions%20among%20SDGs.pdf>)

# 7 KEY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

The follow table highlights “priorities” coming out of a selected set of Women’s and Sustainable Development Conferences in the past three-and-a-half decades. The table aims to show how priorities have progressed over time, as well as how priorities may be shared, even when from distinct women’s or sustainable development processes. The General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that marks the end of the Millennium Development Goals and sets new targets for the next 15 years in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals. The table could be expanded to include other important conventions and outcomes, for example, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on Climate Change. The following are examples of interrelationships between the BPfA, CEDAW and the SDGs and is not a complete analysis. Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls is relevant to all of the issues below.

| Beijing Platform for Action - Critical Areas of Concern | Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women, CEDAW  | The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development <sup>1</sup>  |
|---|---|---|
| A. Women and poverty                                    | <b>Article 13</b> Women have a right to family benefits, bank loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial credit.  | <b>Goal 1.</b> End poverty in all its forms everywhere.<br><br><b>Goal 10.</b> Reduce inequality within and among countries.  |
| B. Education and training of women                      | <b>Article 10</b> Women and girls should receive career and vocational guidance and have access to education opportunities on par with men or boys.   | <b>Goal 4.</b> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.<br><br><b>Goal 2.</b> End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.  |
| C. Women and health                                     | <b>Article 12</b> Women have the right to family planning services.   | <b>Goal 3.</b> Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.<br><br><b>Goal 2.</b> Achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.   |
| D. Violence against women                               | <b>Article 6</b> Governments shall take all measures to stop trafficking and exploitation of women for prostitution.  | <b>Goal 16.</b> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.  |
| E. Women and armed conflict                             |   | <b>Goal 16.</b> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.  |
| F. Women and the economy                                | <b>Article 14.</b> Governments should undertake to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas so that they may participate in and benefit from rural development.<br><br><b>Article 11.</b> Women have an equal right to work with men, which includes pay, promotions, training, health and safety. | <b>Goal 8.</b> Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth full and productive employment and decent work for all.<br><br><b>Goal 9.</b> Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.<br><br><b>Goal 10.</b> Reduce income inequality within and among countries.<br><br><b>Goal 12.</b> Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. |

<sup>1</sup> See Transforming our world the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

| Beijing Platform for Action<br>- Critical Areas of Concern        | Convention on the Elimination of all<br>Discrimination against Women, CEDAW  | The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development <sup>2</sup>   |
|---|--|--|
| G. Women in power and<br>decision-making                          | <p><b>Article 16.</b> Women have the same rights as their husbands in marriage, childcare and family life.</p> <p><b>Article 7.</b> The right of women to vote, to participate in forming and implementing government policies and to join public and political organisations.</p> <p><b>Article 9.</b> Equal rights with men to keep and change their nationality and to grant their nationality to their children.</p> | <p><b>Goal 17.</b> Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.</p>   |
| H. Institutional<br>mechanisms for the<br>advancement<br>of women | <p><b>Article 15.</b> Women are to be equal before the law.</p>  | <p><b>Goal 17.</b> Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.</p>   |
| I. Human rights of<br>women                                       | <p><b>Article 3.</b> Governments shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women can enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.</p> <p><b>Article 4.</b> Governments can adopt temporary special measures to accelerate equality for women, i.e., affirmative action.</p> <p><b>Article 2.</b> Governments shall take concrete steps to eliminate discrimination against women.</p>                     |  |
| J. Women and the media  | <p><b>Article 5.</b> Governments shall take appropriate measures to eliminate sexist stereotyping.</p>   |  |
| K. Women and the<br>environment                                   | <p><b>Article 7.</b> The right to participate in the formulation of government policy and perform all public functions.</p> <p><b>Article 8.</b> Ensure women the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and participate in the work of international organizations.</p>  | <p><b>Goal 6.</b> Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</p> <p><b>Goal 7.</b> Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.</p> <p><b>Goal 11.</b> Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.</p> <p><b>Goal 13.</b> Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.</p> <p><b>Goal 14.</b> Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.</p> <p><b>Goal 15.</b> Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.</p> |
| L. The Girl-Child   | <p><b>Article 5.</b> Modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women to eliminate prejudices and customary and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes.</p>   | <p><b>Goal 4.</b> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p> <p><b>Goal 3.</b> Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p> <p><b>Goal 6.</b> Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</p>   |

# 8

## LANGUAGE EQUALS POWER

Language is not just semantics. It has political power. And, ultimately, language agreed within the UN by governments can influence and often lead to programs and policies on the ground.

### 8.1 Similar, yet very different, terms

Language equals power and it is important to know the political meaning of terms used in negotiations. Whether or not they are agreed language—found in UN treaties or policy documents—these terms were chosen to help women’s groups understand decisions made. The language section should be used by CSW attendees to educate themselves to understand terms and/or positions that are different from their own that they will hear while at the UN, to assist in preparing valid explanations or rebuttals, when faced with terms that one disagrees with or is uncomfortable with. That is why this Guide provides a brief glossary of terms often used at the UN. These are not “positions” taken by the authors. The sources have been cited in footnotes. The following list is a selective sample of words and concepts, each including the term, the definition, and the political context.

**Food sovereignty**<sup>1</sup>: A political term springing from a movement. According to the *2007 Declaration of Nyéléni*, it is “The right of

peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. Food sovereignty means the primacy of people’s and community’s rights to food and food production, over trade concerns.”<sup>2</sup>

**Food security**<sup>3</sup>: The FAO states, “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

**Human Trafficking**: Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits

to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.<sup>4</sup>

**Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR):** It is important to advocate that any mention of SRHR, or even sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRH and RR), is done without qualifications, meaning without calling specifically for “in accordance with ICPD or Beijing.” Women’s human rights advocates prioritize advocating for the full SRHR package and over the last twenty years have fought hard for including sexual rights, which recognizes the autonomy and bodily integrity of all persons to control all aspects of one’s sexuality and unqualified mention of reproductive rights which include the right of all people to decide the number and spacing of their children and access information on sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education. Introducing qualifiers, such as those mentioned above is a tactic for some governments to oppose a broader definition of reproductive rights, which can include access to safe and legal abortion.<sup>5</sup>

**Climate Justice:** This concept is based on the view of transforming the model of development, or economics, in a way that addresses all people’s needs and experiences and that enables and brings about a redistribution of resources. This includes an assessment of – and change in – how and how much we

use, in order to reduce emissions and lessen climate impacts. Climate justice is a rights-based frame.<sup>6</sup>

**Climate action:** This refers to action based on the reality of today in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. However, it does not usually intentionally address underlying structural issues, such as inequalities, that perpetuate climate change, in order to transform them.

**Just transition:** Ensures that no one is left behind as we reduce emissions, protect the climate and advance social and economic justice. It means that those most vulnerable to change will be protected and that the process of change “will increase social justice for workers, women, the poor, and all oppressed groups.”

**Gender Equality:** Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development.

Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, their community and their society.

**Gender Equity:** Gender equity is the process of being fair to men and women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field. Equity is a means. Equality is the result.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues – Report on the eleventh session (7-18 May 2012) (E/2012/43-E/C.19/2012/13), paragraphs 56, 58, 64 and 66. And Report of the Thirty-second FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC/12/REP), paragraph 25.

<sup>2</sup> <http://globalfoodpolitics.wordpress.com/2012/11/30/food-security-vs-food-sovereignty/>

<sup>3</sup> Trade reforms and food security: conceptualizing the linkage, FAO, Rome, 2003

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime website 2017

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aidsaccountability.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CSO-SRHR-ADVOCACY-IN-POST-20151.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See: Climate Justice for a Changing Planet, UN NGLS, 2009

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO’s Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework Baseline definitions of key concepts and terms, last updated April 2003.

**Gender balance/Gender parity:** These terms are primarily about the numbers in meetings, school, labor force, political office, not the quality or the structures or discrimination that influence the numbers of women who can or wish to participate in furthering women's rights, social justice, etc.

**Gender responsive:** This term implies more than having women in the room. Policies must specifically address discrimination and work to end it via capacity building, additional resources, gender analysis and budgeting, among others.

**Asylum seeker:** A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, the person must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any non-national in an irregular or unlawful situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.

**Forced migration:** A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects).

**Internally Displaced Person (IDP):** Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places

of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, UN Doc E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.). See also de facto refugees, displaced person, externally displaced persons, uprooted people.

**Labour migration:** Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment. Labour migration is addressed by most States in their migration laws. In addition, some States take an active role in regulating outward labour migration and seeking opportunities for their nationals abroad.

**Refugee:** Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection. The refugee definition can be found in the 1951 Convention and regional refugee instruments, as well as UNHCR's Statute.<sup>12</sup>

**Family:** A family unit is often equated to a nuclear family with mother, father, and children. And, generally the term "family" is preferred by conservative delegates over "household" in order to preserve patriarchal notions of what a family is and to block recognition of diverse types of families and household structures, including those of gay/lesbian/transgender families.

**Families:** Using the plural, it is a more inclusive notion that recognizes the diversity of family types, and it goes beyond the traditional unit of household with male head, female and children.

**Work:** According to the ILO (International Labour Organization), work is “any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use.” Work may be unpaid, informal, or unaccounted for in national planning.

**Unpaid work:** This encompasses a variety of activities. Unpaid work should not be confused with the concept of the informal sector. Most work in the informal sector generates income, however small and unrecorded that may be. The informal sector can be seen as an intermediate zone between unpaid work and regularly paid employment.<sup>9</sup>

**Unpaid care work:** This term covers tasks such as child care, and household work such as fetching water, which is most often considered “women’s work.” Its value is estimated to be roughly US \$10 trillion, or 13 percent of global GDP. In many cultures, unpaid care work is assumed to a normal part of women’s responsibilities and thus is not considered an important economic issue.<sup>10</sup>

However, women’s rights groups have argued that it must be given economic value and accounted for in national statistics.

**Decent work:** The pillars of ILO’s decent work agenda are job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, with gender equality as a crosscutting objective. The ILO states that decent work “delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”<sup>11</sup>

**Corporate social responsibility:** This term refers to voluntary actions undertaken by a corporation to demonstrate that it is a good citizen and contributing to the welfare of the community. The term implies a voluntary willingness to contribute to society and human welfare.

**Corporate accountability:** Involves formal duties and obligations, and liabilities. Corporations—like individuals—become “duty-bearers” within a human rights framework.

<sup>8</sup> Resolution of the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, ILO (2013): <http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/19/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>9</sup> ST/ESA/1999/DP.4 DESA Discussion Paper No. 4 Unpaid Work and Policy-Making Towards a Broader Perspective of Work and Employment Joke Wiebel February 1999 United Nations

<sup>10</sup> Leave No One Behind: Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment (2016): <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/2016/unhlp-womenseconomicempowerment-overview.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Decent Work, ILO: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work>

<sup>12</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

## 8.2 Zeroing in on language at the CSW

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The following outlines “sticky points” and “contentious issues” at the CSW.

In 2003 at CSW 47, there were no agreed conclusions on the theme of “Women’s Rights and Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls”. There was declining multilateralism as the US and UK unilaterally declared war on Iraq. Violent extremism and rising sectarianism were also important factors. Key issues of contention were:

- Violence Against Women (VAW) correlated with HIV/AIDS
- Use of religion to justify VAW
- Unpaid care work
- Ending impunity for VAW in armed and post-conflict situations
- Not recognizing women’s right to control their sexuality and access to SRH free of coercion
- Human rights under attack and Parties weakening the text

Once again, at CSW 56 in 2012 on Rural Women, governments could not reach consensus on an outcome document. The session was marked by:

- Attacks by conservative governments on women’s human rights and SRHR
- Traditional patriarchal values and practices vs. human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Backlash on Gender Equality perspective (“equality” not accepted after “gender”)
- SRHR placement not agreed; governments evoked so-called “moral” values to deny women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Controversial views on family planning and contraception
- Conservative governments not accepting “women of all ages” (in their view, it implies that girls had sexual rights); moving ahead with this was not successful, even using CSW agreed language
- Some delegations did not accept language stating that women cannot be discriminated because of their marital status’ - although this is already in CEDAW



Below are some of the negative trends that have impeded progress:

- Narrowing the concept of gender to only refer to women and men
- Dissent between pro-life and pro-choice groups
- Opposition to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, in particular sexual rights
- Opposition to “sexual orientation and gender identity” or SOGI
- Opposition to “diverse forms of families”
- Opposition to Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- Opposition to language that recognizes violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated by partners or husbands is a form of violence against women
- Failure to recognize root causes of financial and economic crisis and structural causes of inequality

Positive developments from past CSW sessions:

- Gender-responsive analysis of revenues and expenditures in all arenas and of policy and programmes related to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, external debt problems and taxation
- Women human rights defenders (WHRD) the necessity to protect them, prevent violations against them and punish perpetrators for the first time mentioned in CSW62
- Condemnation of all forms of violence against women and girls and a call to refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration
- Strong language recognizing the importance of a global economic and financial architecture
- Strong language on the universality and indivisibility of human rights
- Strong language on increasing funding for women’s rights, including for women’s rights organizations

## 9 THE CSW AS A CASE STUDY

At CSW 59, the Outcome of the CSW was a Political Declaration to implement the BPfA and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the sustainable development goals. This Declaration was adopted by ministers and heads of state during a "high-level" segment of the CSW. Declarations are the outcomes of "commemorative sessions," such as those that occurred during Beijing Plus Five, Beijing Plus 10 and Beijing Plus 15. Like the BPfA, such a Declaration is not legally binding, but carries the weight of a consensus document.

Other modalities, such as the Agreed Conclusions and/or resolutions, are negotiated at CSW. CSW 63 will also produce an outcome document that will be negotiated related to the priority theme of "social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure".

The United Nations is an intergovernmental body. Thus, the principle negotiating actors of the United Nations are Member States. Similarly, the main actors of the "informal consultations" are government representatives. In many cases, the actors are diplomats based at a UN mission, but working in constant consultation with their central offices in their home capitals. NGO participation and ways to influence this process was under review during CSW 59 discussions of the Working Methods.

### THE BUREAU

Members of the CSW Bureau are key in deciding the formalities and negotiations processes at the CSW. Here are the key players:

- H. E. Geraldine Bryne Nason (Ireland), Chair (Western European and other States Group)
- Ms. Koki Muli Grignon (Kenya), Vice-chair (African States Group)
- Mr. Mauricio Carabali Baquero (Colombia), Vice-chair (Latin American and Caribbean States Group)
- Ms. Rena Tasuja (Estonia), Vice-Chair (Eastern European States Group)
- Mr. Shah Asif Rahman (Bangladesh), Vice-chair (Asia-Pacific States Group)

\* (As of 25 August 2017; note country representatives may change.)

## 9.1 Decision-making at the CSW

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Contentious and “sticky issues” are negotiated at the Commission on the Status of Women. The following presents details to understand the structure and process of the CSW.

The CSW generally attempts to achieve a consensus on Agreed Conclusions and Declarations. A consensus means that all Member States declare their support to the agreed statement. This is why the “informal consultation” to negotiate decisions on the outcome document is open to all UN Member States, even those that are not members of the discussing body.

(Note that the only body of the UN where all Member States have a vote is the General Assembly. All other bodies have only a limited number of voting-members that were elected by the General Assembly).

What constitutes a “conservative” point of view? Some governments and NGOs have negative views about the purpose and outcome of the CSW.

- “This radical feminist agenda reduces the diverse economic, political, and social needs of women around the world to issues of sexuality and fertility. At the U.N., nearly every conversation, forum, and program that purports to be concerned with women has a monomaniacal focus on such matters as sexual rights, reproductive health, contraception, and abortion.” (Heritage Foundation)
- Expression of a conservative victory, “Negotiations stalled over definition of gender: renewed push to expand the definition of gender to include socially constructed roles and sexual orientation... When the CSW 58 finally concluded its session, the agreed-upon conclusions did not include a new definition of gender”
- On the CSW Agreed Conclusions, “The bottom line is that this is a non-binding document. It has no legal standing anywhere, and can only be misinterpreted and then used by UN agencies and radical pro-abortion NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organizations) to try to browbeat countries into changing protective pro-life laws. They, unfortunately, have plenty of those documents already, none of which call for a right to abortion—and this one is essentially more of the same.”
- On the Conference on Population and Development, “The annual meeting of the CPD is consistently a battleground upon which radical feminists and their U.N. allies fight conservative and ‘pro-family’ advocates over acceptable language in outcome documents and, more broadly, over political and funding priorities in development. When the lines are drawn among the delegations to the CPD, the feminist camp usually includes European and Western delegates, while their opponents most often include developing countries and the Holy See.”

## 9.2 Composition of the Delegation and Relationship to the “Capital Cities”

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A government delegation to the CSW includes a high-level representative – a member of the government or head of ministerial office – who leads the delegation. Other members are representatives of national offices or ministries that address the issue discussed during the session. NGOs may also be on official delegations. The delegations are supported by diplomats who work at the UN missions. The latter are accustomed to the UN system and develop working relations with other UN Permanent Representatives or ambassadors.

Political positions defended by a delegation come from the central government, sometimes referred to as “the capital” or “capital city.” However, some UN representatives may also act independently.

## 9.3 The CSW Official Program

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CSW meetings have a Priority Theme and a Review Theme. There can also be an emerging issue. For example, as previously stated, the Priority Theme for CSW 61 is “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. The review theme is “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the

Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. The emerging theme is “The empowerment of indigenous women”.

### **PRIORITY AND REVIEW THEMES FOR CSW 63**

The priority theme for CSW 63 is “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. The Review theme is “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development“ (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session).

The first week of the CSW is called the “High-Level Segment,” which ministers of gender equality and women’s affairs usually attend. This is also the main period of “general discussions.”

A general discussion at the United Nations includes statements delivered by the delegations of Member States, observers, organizations, and representatives of civil society. All statements are available on the website of the CSW.

See: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017>

Panels may include experts, government representatives, academic researchers, NGOs, civil society, other stakeholders, politicians, artists, and UN agencies. Interactive panels are less formal, and NGOs may sign up to participate. These sessions are often webcast live:

See: [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org)

## 9.4 Side Events and Parallel Program

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The Side Events include panels and discussions, including some organized by conveners of the Conference and others by Member States or other stakeholders.

The Parallel Program, organized by the conveners of the conference, often concerns negotiations on the possible outcomes of the meeting. These negotiations, called “informal meetings,” can be open or closed; the confidentiality changes from one meeting to another.

### BEIJING PLUS 25

In 2020 the UN will celebrate the anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the massive gathering of more than 50,000 participants that took place in Beijing 25 years ago. The commemoration of “Beijing Plus 25” will include a three-day special event during the September session of UN General Assembly in New York. In those meetings, the world’s governments will make commitments to speed up and scale up the promises made in the historic Beijing Platform for Action. The international feminist and women’s movements are mobilizing to celebrate Beijing Plus 25 and make governments and the UN accountable.

For information on Beijing Plus 25 and the UN see:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

For information on civil society preparations see:

<https://www.ngocsw.org>

# 10 THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESS

As stated above, most of the outcome documents are produced through a process of negotiations called “informal consultations.” This section will discuss who usually takes part in these negotiations and how the process is conducted. The next section will identify when and how the NGOs can influence this process. See: [www.un-ngls.org/orf/d\\_making](http://www.un-ngls.org/orf/d_making)

The chairperson chairs the official meetings of the session and is helped by the other vice-chairpersons. The facilitator(s) lead the negotiations taking place during the informal closed discussions.

## 10.1 What Happened in 2015

As already mentioned, in 2015, 193 Members States of the UN unanimously adopted “the Post-2015 development agenda” that marked the end of the Millennium Development Goals and set new targets for the next 15 years known as the “Sustainable Development Goals”. The challenge is to ensure that these reference the Beijing Platform for Action that remains the golden standard to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. It laid the foundation for SDG 5 to “Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls”. However, It also needs to be connected to other intergovernmental decisions such as those on climate change and financing for development. The close inter-connection between the BPfA and sustainable development is shown in the diagram.



## 10.2 Preparation and Consideration of Initial Draft Outcome Text (Zero Draft)

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Every decision begins with a first draft of the basic text. Different actors can prepare this draft:

- A Member State
- A group of States
- The Secretariat of the UN body
- The Facilitator(s) who will chair the negotiations during the informal closed discussions.
- The Chair of the UN body who chairs the official meetings of the session and is helped by the other vice-chairpersons. This first draft is called the “Zero Draft.” The Zero Draft is distributed to all the Member States and observers. It is also possible to download it on the UN Women’s CSW website.

In the case of the 58th session of the CSW (2014), the seven page Zero Draft was proposed by the Bureau of the CSW. Most of the paragraphs proposed in the text were quoted language from existing texts.

The quoted texts can come from:

- Former agreed outcomes of the same body of former sessions
- Texts agreed by other UN bodies
- Reports delivered by the Secretary General or by any entity of the UN System
- Research conducted under a mandate of the UN

If the quoted text comes from a text approved by a consensus in any UN body, this text is called “agreed language.” This means that this “language,” or this paragraph, has already been approved once.

## 10.3 First Amendments Proposed by the Member States to the Zero Draft

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Negotiations begin after the Zero Draft is distributed. The Member State has limited time to propose amendments to the Zero Draft. There are only two options of amendments:

- To add some language
- To delete certain language present in the Zero Draft

This means that if a delegate wishes to replace one word with another, (s)he must first delete the word and then add the word as two separate proposals to be considered during the negotiations. Only States can propose these amendments directly to the chair. The UN entities, NGOs, and any other entity cannot bring new language or ask for any removal.

There is often a timeframe of two weeks for the proposals of amendments after release of the Zero Draft.

## 10.4 Integration of the Proposals by the Secretariat, the Chair or the Facilitator – A Distribution of a New Document: Version 1

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The Secretariat, the chair, or the facilitator collects the proposals and edits them into a new version, the “compilation text.”

The new versions use square brackets. The brackets usually contain the text to add or to remove. If two different groups and three countries ask for the same change, the change will appear five times in Version 1, or the “compilation text.” Each change is followed

by the name of the group or the State asking for it. If three countries are listed in the same “square brackets” or added text, that means that the countries have discussed together and have presented the change jointly. Version 1 is then difficult to read because of the numerous square brackets in the text.

All the elements above would take place via Internet or mail.

## 10.5 Rounds of Negotiations and Changes

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Rounds of negotiations are called “readings.” The purpose is to have a common reading of the different paragraphs and to discuss each of them.

### THE FIRST READING

The “first reading” is the first meeting of government representatives at the UN to discuss the “outcome document.”

The “first reading” is the presentation of the government proposals. The negotiations to arrive at a consensus have not really begun. This is an observation round, a time to discover the position of Member States on issues.

This first reading is important for the future of the negotiations. At this stage, the facilitator is responsible for establishing good working relations among delegations.

Square brackets are removed from text as delegates reach agreement.

If the facilitator concludes that there is consensus in the room about a language proposal, (s)he would propose a streamlining of the paragraph for the next version. (S)he usually

announces it to the States during the reading, summarizes the expressed positions, and gives an idea of what (s)he wants to outline in the streamlined version. The streamlined text would then appear between square brackets, as it still needs an agreement.

If the room confirms its agreement about changes, the newly agreed language would then appear in the text, and the brackets would disappear. The goal of the negotiations is to remove every single square bracket in the text.

### THE FOLLOWING ROUNDS

After the removal of brackets and the streamlining of other paragraphs, a new compilation text is distributed to the Member States: Version 2.

During the 58th session of the CSW, the facilitator proposed to remove all the names of the different States moving this or that language. This was done in order to prevent a position against a wording influenced by which Member State made the proposal. This unusual way of working was agreed by the negotiating States.

Version 2 of the CSW was a document of 34 pages. Some paragraphs appeared in two or three contradictory forms, and at the time, were still being negotiated.

The following rounds are the beginning of the evaluation of the political weight of every single word remaining in the square brackets. The delegations go on with the readings, reducing the text.

Between or parallel to the readings, small discussions occur between some countries on specific paragraphs. The facilitator can propose to Member States that support

contradictory paragraphs to hold separate negotiations and to come back with an agreed solution. Very often, other States would then agree on the proposed paragraph.

An example was Version 3, which was proposed at the 58th session of the CSW before the last reading, was a text of 27 pages. It contained a certain number of paragraphs marked by two words: “AD REF” or “Ad Referendum.” This means the text has been agreed in New York but diplomats must still refer to the central government or “capital city” for final approval.

#### TACTICS AND TRADE-OFFS DURING NEGOTIATIONS

Successful negotiations depend on planning a strategy. It is very important for the diplomats to act carefully in order to achieve most of the goals set by the “capital city.”

These are some strategies used during the negotiations:

- Never reveal all positions at once: This is the most commonly used tactic. An experienced diplomat will only reveal his or her positions

gradually. It is important to take note of the positions presented by governments.

- Offer hardline language: The delegation will begin by supporting very hardline positions in order to bring the other governments closer to an acceptable position. This tactic gives room for “trading” of positions.
- As the negotiations progress, the most difficult paragraphs are put aside. They may be discussed in smaller groups. However, the best tactic would be to keep these points for the end of the discussion. The diplomats would then be aware of all the compromises made by all groups of States.
- The last paragraphs of the draft text would constitute the final round of negotiations. At that point, meetings may take place at a higher level such as between the ambassadors that have the rank of Permanent Representatives or contacts between “capital cities.”

#### THE FINAL ROUND

The final round depends on/of the will of Member States to reach an agreement. If they have this will, a large number of caucuses will discuss the remaining square brackets and the last negotiations will occur.

#### Example of a negotiated text:

“6. The Commission reaffirms that gender equality, the empowerment of women **[and girls] [and the full realization]** and enjoyment of **[their]** human rights **[and fundamental freedoms] [including the right to development] [women’s social and economic contributions to the welfare of the family and the social significance of maternity]**, and the eradication of poverty are essential to economic and social development, including the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Commission also reaffirms the vital role of women **[and girls]** as agents of development. *(Note: language on family to be addressed together)*”

At the end of the negotiations, different scenarios are possible:

- All Member States adopt AD REF to all the paragraphs during a plenary session of the negotiations or during sessions of different caucuses. It is then agreed language.
- The facilitator or the Chair or the Bureau streamlines the remaining square brackets and proposes a final text. This text is proposed for an agreement. If the States agree, it is then agreed language.
- If no agreement can be found on any of the former proposed texts, the latest version is submitted to a vote. Even though a large majority approves the text, the language will not be accepted as an “agreed language” based on consensus.

## 10.6 Notification of Any “Reservations” by Individual Governments

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When a text has been adopted or agreed upon, there still is the possibility for individual governments to make a comment or a reservation. The comment can be positive or negative. A “reservation” can be made on the text by a Member State. This implies that the government is not going to implement a particular action or only according to the limits set by its own legislation, tradition or existing policies.

# 11 HOW AND WHEN NGOS CAN INFLUENCE THE PROCESS

The most important starting point to influence the UN process is at the national level. NGOs should submit shadow reports to their governments, seek opportunities to discuss the government positions, and establish good relations with delegations, as well as try to join the official delegations as members of Civil Society.

Regional level NGO activity is also extremely important. NGOs often have closer contact with delegations at the regional level than during the CSW or other global UN meetings. Below is the schedule of regional consultations that will take place in preparation for the High Level Political Forum.

## Regional Consultations for the SDGs 2019

- *Asia and Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development*  
ESCAP  
Bangkok, Thailand
- *ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development*  
ECE  
Geneva, Switzerland
- *Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean*  
ECLAC  
Mexico, City, Mexico

- *Regional Forum on Sustainable Development*  
ECA  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- *Regional Forum on Sustainable Development*  
ESCWA  
Beruit, Lebanon

## 11.1 General Tips for NGOs<sup>1</sup>

**Tip I. Long term preparation is key.** Member States begin their preparation at least one year in advance – a practice that NGOs need to adopt in order to successfully influence the outcome of the CSW.

**Tip II. Gather information about the issues and allies.** NGOs should gather good information through readings of UN documents and research. It is important to know the position and background of one's allies – NGOs and governments – but also the position of those defending another position.

**Tip III. Reach out to other NGOs as well as governments.** To be influential at the United Nations, NGOs need States that are ready to champion their proposals. These “friendly States” can be identified during the year prior

<sup>1</sup> An Advocacy Toolkit expands on some of these ideas in Chapter 11.

to the CSW. Generally, progressive States concentrate their effort on one or two topics and become the “specialists” on them.

NGOs must reach out to interested States, go to side events organized by these countries, and talk to the diplomats working at UN Missions.

The NGOs should also contact the main government body responsible for the negotiations at the UN in their own countries such as the Ministries of Women’s Affairs. They must present themselves as well-prepared partners who can bring added value during the negotiations.

**Tip IV. Intervene at key moments during the lifecycle of a decision.** The negotiations on a UN outcome document move as fast as a train, and NGOs must be prepared to get on at the right “stations.” In other words, NGOs’ actions must be in sync with the lifecycle of a decision. For example, it will be very difficult to introduce a new theme in the final round of the negotiations. The right moment is at the very beginning. Similarly, streamlining wording just after the arrival of the Zero Draft in the “capital cities” is too early to have an impact.

**Tip V. Written and oral statements need to be strategic.** Usually, the CSW takes place in the first half of March. Around September of the year before, there is a call for written statements by ECOSOC-accredited NGOs. For example, the deadline for written statements for CSW 61 was 17 February 2017. The deadline for oral statements and interactive panel participation is usually set later in December or January.

Why so early? These statements need to be checked for NGO accreditation, translated and edited. They are published on the website of

the CSW and distributed to the Missions to the United Nations. There is a word limit, and an NGO can only deliver one written statement although they may sign on other group statements. The UN encourages NGOs to submit group statements. It is important to note that NGOs without ECOSOC status cannot sign such statements presented officially to the UN.

**Tip VI. Amendments to the zero draft should begin at the national level.** As soon as the Zero Draft is available on the UN website, NGOs should contact their own government delegates to the CSW and UN missions with concrete proposals for wording. New topics are not likely to be included at this point. As explained above, Member States have only two weeks to change language, to have it approved by their administration, and to deliver it to the Secretariat (UN Women in the case of the CSW). Time is very limited and decision-making goes very fast. This is the key moment to introduce a new and non-agreed language in the Zero Draft.

**Tip VII. Be vigilant during the negotiations.** First readings can start prior to the beginning of the official program. This was the case for the 59th session of the CSW, when informal negotiations began several weeks before the official beginning of the session.

It is difficult for NGOs to follow up with what is happening during the debates, as they are not admitted in the room. NGOs have requested to self-select observers in limited numbers. It is understood that NGO observers would not speak during the negotiations unless invited to do so.

If progressive language disappears at an early stage, this means that enough governments did not support it. As the streamlining occurs

and the “square brackets” indicating added text disappear, you will be able to understand the political weight of the different language.

After each new version, the Member States will reflect on possible language that would offer an acceptable formulation for the other side. This is when NGOs can be supportive by proposing language to streamline the text, as well as supporting arguments for governments to defend preferred language. It is important to keep in mind that new issues cannot be introduced at this stage.

**Tip VIII. A last and important step in negotiations is to identify the last “square brackets” and the last “deals.”** As explained above, the last “square brackets” are the most controversial issues, comparing the last brackets with the final text allows the NGOs to see what was adopted and what was not.

**Tip IX. Work with coalitions, caucuses and forums.** Overwhelming negotiators with numerous messages, phone calls and meetings is not an effective NGO strategy. Rather, NGOs should work collectively in caucuses, coalitions or forums. Often, the most powerful messages are those supported by a large number of NGOs. For example, caucuses can be created on many levels: national, regional and global. National caucuses are equally important because they are direct links to the grassroots organizations.

Caucuses meet with government delegates and track progress of the Zero Draft. During CSW, meetings with NGOs on official delegations are planned and will provide important forums for updates on the negotiations.

Other opportunities to influence the negotiations occur during the CSW when the NGO

A mobile app of this booklet “A guide for NGOs and women’s human rights activists at the UN and CSW”, has been developed by NGO CSW/ NY in collaboration with global and regional trainers and experts. The guide is updated annually to reflect and highlight issues discussed at UN Commission on the Status of Women and other UN meetings including the High-Level Political Forum. Search “NGO CSW” for a free download. The mobile app can be downloaded for smartphones and tablets from Apple App Store or Google Play.

CSW Forum holds daily morning briefings. Members of the Bureau as well as UN Women attend and update NGOs on negotiations. Regional caucuses give updates and key announcements related to UN meetings are made.

Throughout the commission meeting, NGO CSW regional caucuses are held along with some thematic groups, such as the Youth Caucus and Migration Caucus. Advocacy trainings for NGOs are generally held during the first session of NGO CSW regional caucuses.

The schedule and venue will be posted on the NGO CSW Forum website: [www.ngocsw.org](http://www.ngocsw.org).

**Tip X. Use mobile technologies and electronic media.** One important technical support that the NGO can bring is in “the wording” to express a particular position. This wording should be based as much as possible on the

“agreed language” that from previous UN documents. This can entail hours of research to find this agreed language. Every agreed language should be quoted with the reference of the text.

There are different tools to find the adequate language. Two applications for mobile phones and tablets have been created to support the work of the NGOs and diplomats in their research for agreed language on women’s human rights.

**a) Women’s Human Rights or W’sHR**

The Swiss administration in cooperation with the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights and the Interdisciplinary Center for Gender Studies at the University of Bern developed this App. This is the most complete app with access to the texts and it has a search function.

**b) Women, Peace & Security**

PeaceWomen and the Women’s International League have created a second App Women, Peace and Security (WPS) with the support of Switzerland and Liechtenstein. This App is now available for Apple and Android.

**c) Other tools are available for different thematic areas**

See: [http://www.peacewomen.org/publications\\_home.php](http://www.peacewomen.org/publications_home.php)

**Tip XI. Vary your lobby strategies.** It is important to lobby in various ways:

- Email proposals of agreed language or new language based on the agreed language to UN missions. In addition, it is important to provide supporting points for why the language proposed is preferred.



A great advocacy tool to research previous agreed text is now available via mobile technology. The

Swiss government has produced one for Women’s Human Rights documents.

See: [www.womenshumanrights.ch](http://www.womenshumanrights.ch).

- Organize panels and discussions during the period of negotiations on an issue. Keep your statements short and concentrate your presentation on the most important issues.
- In your own country, pressure can be exercised on the government directly or through the media as the discussions evolve.

**Tip XII: Keep a positive outlook.** Negotiations are arenas in which various tactics are used to gain political sway. Some of the tactics are psychological. One of the most efficient and often used is the “negative rumor.”

In the second half of the negotiations, rumors may spread that hard line positions are immovable. The malicious intent is to reinforce pessimism and discourage compromise, which could cause some diplomats and NGOs to lose hope and stop fighting to the finish line.

**Tip XIII. Plan a media strategy that includes the “capital city” as well as the CSW (see Chapter 12).** NGOs often forget that those who cannot attend the CSW have a critical role to play at home. This includes media strategies, such as press releases, public hearings and advocacy events in the “capital city” during

the CSW. As many delegations must follow guidelines from their central governments, pressure to “hold the ground” on sticky issues and to move forward is extremely important.

**Tip XIV. Follow the document in different ways.** The “informals” are off the record or informal negotiations that are held in closed meetings, so there is a challenge in getting information due to the confidentiality of the documents. However, during CSW 58, NGOs pressed for observation status, stating that they would be willing to self-select observers. As noted before, some Member States are willing to share documents such as the intermediate versions of the outcome documents. If the content of these documents is published entirely or even partly on the web or in the media, it could have consequences for the person who transmitted this information.

Nevertheless, if a national NGO caucus thinks that the government is not supportive enough of an issue during the negotiations, it could be efficient to write an article or post messages on social media.

NGOs should also work on strong and proactive media strategies throughout the negotiations. They can prepare press releases, hold public hearings, and post social media messages in support of strong government positions and commitments already made. This is an advocacy opportunity that has, thus far, been underutilized and should be central to an effective NGO strategy.

**Tip XV. Negotiations mean to “be ready to lose something to gain something else.”** When an NGO prepares its work around an intergovernmental negotiation setting, it must be clear from the beginning that it will be very difficult to have 100 percent success.

The negotiations are the product of a discussion in which no government wants to lose face. To obtain what a negotiator really wants, (s)he might need to ask for much more. The ratio between what governments want and the price of it (the points on which they are ready to make concessions) is referred to as “trading.”

This means that NGOs have to be clear from the beginning about what to ask for and what is wanted. All the tactics and trade-offs described above are also valid for the NGOs.

**Tip XVI. NGOs must have Member States as allies.** At the CSW, NGOs accredited through the Department of Public Information or attendance at a UN conference are not entitled to make statements at the UN. They should therefore work with ECOSOC-accredited NGOs and with governments. The intergovernmental negotiations are mostly open to government delegations and representatives of the two States with Observer status: the Holy See and the State of Palestine.

NGOs must then have allies among the Member States. The alliances between NGOs and Member States need long-term collaboration. If it is not possible to go to one’s own governmental delegation, one can go to a delegation having strong relations with one’s country.

# 12 ADVOCACY TOOLKITS

This chapter provides a compact description of important advocacy strategies, skills and tools for women’s human rights advocates working in processes related to the United Nations. This introduction is based on examples from the CSW as well as the meetings on Sustainable Development Goals. However, it can be applied in other processes, and it can stand alone.

## 12.1 Preparations for the event

Learn the schedule of meetings and events: This includes the typical daily schedule of plenary meetings, briefings from the Secretariat, CSO coordination meetings, and general information about side events.

Find out where to get important documents: Official conference documents, CSO information and media coverage are often online, via an electronic app, at a documents center, or from a Member State when negotiations are closed.

## 12.2 Map people and positions

Start your mapping by thinking about the political climate and context.

Review outcomes of recent conferences/negotiations in the region and globally and ask: Was the focus on already agreed language or was new ground broken? Did the conference risk rolling back women’s rights?

**Map the non-state actors:** Who are the Women’s Groups/Networks/Coalitions and other CS Networks working on rights and justice (allies)? Who are the groups/networks/coalitions with opposing views? Which UN organizations are relevant such as UN Women, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO?

**Map delegates and ally delegates:** Identify them by name, title and country. Consider creating a “face” book to recognize them, by finding photos online. Is your country a member of the Commission<sup>1</sup> at the moment?

**Once you know who you are watching, find out who’s saying what:** You can do any of the following: Read statements submitted during the preparatory process, review previous years’ submissions, identify trends and messages, set up meetings with your ministry and delegation in-country.

<sup>1</sup> Forty-five Member States of the United Nations serve as members of the Commission at any one time. The Commission consists of one representative from each of the 45 Member States elected by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, and members are elected for a period of four years: 13 members from Africa; 11 from Asia; 9 from Latin America and Caribbean; 8 from Western Europe and other States; 4 from Eastern Europe

What should you ask a delegate? Ask them what their goals are for the process in question—and find out what their “red lines” or immovable positions are in your area of interest. Ask how they are relating to the various UN processes currently in play such as the CSW, the 2030 sustainable development agenda, climate change treaty and disaster risk reduction conference.

## 12.3 Building Alliances

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Based on what you have mapped out, take the next step in preparations to build and strengthen alliances, identify your focus, and do your homework.

**Alliances:** Reach out to allies in civil society, UN agencies, governments, and the media. Make phone calls and request meetings; call back a few times – everyone is busy! Propose joint messaging, a press release and share key facts. Identify some potentially shared “red lines.” Find out if NGOs can join your country’s delegation.

Plan your entry point for your issues and messaging. Is your issue one of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the BPfA? Is it linked to the Priority Theme, the Review Theme, or the Emerging Issue of CSW this year?

### Skill! Develop your key messages.

- A clear message contains an overall declaration or statement for the advocacy, supported by facts and rationale to prove the validity of the declaration and its relevance for action.
- Key messages can end with calls for action and recommendations.

### Prepare tools and resources.

Some tools and resources are internal, like a brief on the topic that prepares you to respond to questions about specific text.

### Tool! Issue brief:

- Briefly summarise any recent new policies, events, or publications related to this agenda item or highlight key issues.
- How does the issue relate to your national/regional concerns and/or organizational concerns?
- What positions have negotiating groups such as the G77 & China, African Group, CARICOM, European Union, JUSCANZ, AOSIS taken on this issue (see Appendix for list of groupings)?
- Present excerpts of agreed language with sources that support your point of view.

### Tool! Factsheet on the topic

- Work with like-minded allies and coalitions whenever possible to ensure the messaging is applicable to a range of stakeholders
- Try to keep to between 2 to 4 pages (2 sheets double-sided maximum; no one reads more than that)
- Include clear sections, such as:
  - Introduction
  - Key facts and messages on the topic (to substantiate its relevance/importance)
  - Recommended language (if appropriate to your goals)
  - Agreed-upon language that supports the recommendations (from CSW and other global/regional processes)
  - Contact information

### Skill! Specific language recommendations

- Once the draft has been distributed, and also as the mark-ups continue, ensure that recommended changes/deletions are clearly indicated by using a “Key”
- Include rationales and references to agreements that influenced the language

You have a mapping, you have allies, you have a focus and you have tools. Now what?

## 12.4 Advocacy on the Ground!

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### Suggested methods to DO the advocacy

This is not an exhaustive list, but it provides an overview.

- Use your factsheet.
  - First, decide if it is for everyone, or only for allies. Is the information sensitive? Would the opposition use it to discredit you—or to develop counter-arguments? This is especially the case around issues of SRHR
- Disseminate your factsheet.
  - Print it and hand it out
  - Email it to UN missions and to staff in “capital cities”
- Set up meetings with members of delegations
- Set up meetings with UN agencies
- Attend parallel events and side events
- Host a side event or an NGO CSW parallel event
- Use your allies to access the information in real time
- Follow what the delegates say and what text they submit in the negotiating rounds
- Talk to your colleagues/government contacts in your “capital city” when you see that delegates at the main conference are not maintaining the progress made nation- ally/ regionally.

### How to meet with delegates?

- RSVP to side events in the UN building to ensure you are in the halls
- Use your “face” book/LinkedIn to make contact with delegates in the halls
  - Greet delegates with a smile and a firm handshake and your name and organization – always thank governments for their support.
  - Invite them to coffee or to sit briefly with you
  - Give your business card and get theirs
  - Hand over any documents you have (ideally short and to-the-point)
  - Highlight your key messages and any time-sensitive recommendations
  - Offer your continued technical support on the issues under discussion
  - Follow up with an email

### Following-up. Advocacy is only as good as its analysis!

Follow up your work with an analysis of the text – what made it in and what didn’t? Which countries supported the concepts? Send them thank you messages; speak with them; Tweet at them!

### Report Back to your NGO, caucus or other group

- What is your advocacy strategy?
- Fish Bowl for role play with both ally and opposition delegate
- Discuss the results. What did you learn in the process? What did you like about other groups’ approaches?

# 13 ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is essential to a good media strategy.

This excerpt from the Sustainable Development 2015 training manual, “Engaging with the media,” outlines how different media works with different focus. The manual notes that not all social media are the same. Here is the list of the most commonly used social media.

## The Big Four

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**FACEBOOK** allows you to set up a page with photos and regular updates about your work. Other Facebook users can show their support by clicking on a “like” button and sharing the information with their own contacts.

**TWITTER** is very good for referring people elsewhere and giving short snippets of information to keep people up to date. Topics can be “labeled” with “hash tags” (using the symbol “#” in front of a word) to allow similar tweets to be grouped together.

**GOOGLE+** (“Google Plus”) is a tool for communicating and sharing information with people you know in a similar way to Facebook. It also has a group video conferencing feature.

**LINKEDIN** is a professional networking tool, and therefore a bit more serious than Facebook or Twitter. It allows you to set up a “company page” to talk about developments in your organization.

## Some Other Commonly Used Social Media Tools

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**INSTAGRAM** allows people to share photographs, images, and very short video clips. (The BBC has started experimenting with very short news videos using Instagram.)

**VINE** encourages people to create and share short videos which repeat in a loop.

**PINTEREST** calls itself a “social catalogue” and allows people to bring together photos and links around any subject. The aim is to “inspire”. It is also possible to set up a “business account” on behalf of your organization.

**REDDIT** describes itself as the “front page of the internet”. It allows users to collect links in one place and add comments or discussions about them.

**TUMBLR** is a “micro-blogging” website which allows links, photos, and other content to be brought together in short articles.

**STUMBLEUPON** brings together items from around the Web, grouped according to a user’s interests. Users can rate their interest in the items they collect.

**WHATSAPP** is a free SMS communication tool that can be used while in NYC and from anywhere to pass important messages or key information to others in your group/caucus.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX I. MONITORING AND EVALUATION GUIDE AND METHODS

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|    |  |     |    |
|----|--|-----|----|
| 1  | It was my first training about UN processes  | Yes | No |
| 2  | It was my first training on the Commission on the Status of Women CSW  | Yes | No |
| 3  | I learned new information about the process of CSW negotiations  | Yes | No |
| 4  | The training was too short and I do not understand all the details of the CSW process  | Yes | No |
| 5  | I think the training was helpful and should be offered to all NGO representatives attending CSW                                      | Yes | No |
| 6  | I will share the training information with other NGOs and would like to receive more training booklets/manuals                       | Yes | No |
| 7  | I now know how I can influence the intergovernmental negotiations, especially during the CSW   | Yes | No |
| 8  | I will try to establish a contact with the Gender Equality Office in my country  | Yes | No |
| 9  | I will try to establish a contact with foreign ministry in my country  | Yes | No |
| 10 | I will try to establish a contact with other official delegates from my country  | Yes | No |
| 11 | I would like to attend this kind of training more often  | Yes | No |
| 12 | I would like to have a resource person to ask questions concerning strategies to follow in the intergovernmental negotiation process | Yes | No |
| 13 | I now know where to find documents about women's human rights  | Yes | No |

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## APPENDIX II. LEARN THE LINGO

### HERE ARE ACRONYMS THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)
- Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)
- Business and Industry NGO (BINGO)
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)
- Conference of the Parties (COP)
- Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
- Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
- Equity is about each taking actions that are appropriate to their responsibilities.
- High Level Political Forum (HLPF)
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- Kyoto Protocol (KP)
- Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS)
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education (STEM)
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- Women's Human Rights (WHR)
- Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)
- Voluntary National Report (VNR)

## APPENDIX III. CSW MEMBERSHIP 2019

### YEAR INDICATES END OF TERM

- |                                |                                     |                                      |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Albania 2019                | 17. Ghana 2022                      | 33. Niger 2021                       |
| 2. Algeria 2022                | 18. Guatemala 2020                  | 34. Nigeria 2020                     |
| 3. Bahrain 2021                | 19. Haiti 2022                      | 35. Norway 2020                      |
| 4. Belgium 2019                | 20. Iraq 2022                       | 36. Peru 2021                        |
| 5. Bosnia and Herzegovina 2019 | 21. Iran (Islamic Republic of) 2019 | 37. Qatar 2020                       |
| 6. Brazil 2020                 | 22. Ireland 2021                    | 38. Republic of Korea 2022           |
| 7. Canada 2021                 | 23. Israel 2021                     | 39. Russian Federation 2020          |
| 8. Chile 2021                  | 24. Japan 2022                      | 40. Saudi Arabia 2022                |
| 9. China 2021                  | 25. Kenya 2022                      | 41. Spain 2019                       |
| 10. Colombia 2019              | 26. Kuwait 2020                     | 42. Trinidad and Tobago 2020         |
| 11. Comoros 2022               | 27. Liberia 2019                    | 43. Tunisia 2021                     |
| 12. Congo 2022                 | 28. Liechtenstein 2019              | 44. Turkmenistan 2022                |
| 13. Ecuador 2022               | 29. Malawi 2019                     | 45. United Kingdom 2020              |
| 14. Equatorial Guinea 2019     | 30. Mongolia 2019                   | 46. United Republic of Tanzania 2018 |
| 15. Eritrea 2020               | 31. Namibia 2021                    | 47. Uruguay 2018                     |
| 16. Estonia 2021               | 32. Nicaragua 2022                  |                                      |

## APPENDIX IV

### NEGOTIATION GROUPINGS

#### EU (European Union)

The European Union is a politico-economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe.

#### G77/China (the group of the 77 and China)

This bloc was established in 1967 and groups today around 133 countries.

#### JUSCANZ (Japan, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand)

Joined regularly by Iceland, Mexico, and South Korea, these countries represent the non-EU industrialized countries.

#### NAM (Non-Aligned Movement)

Created in 1961, NAM has now 114 countries and takes the lead for political issues as G77/China covers the economic and development issues.

#### The Rio Group

It is a permanent mechanism for political consultation of the countries from Latin and Central America and some Caribbean countries.

#### CARICOM (the Caribbean Community)

It includes all English-speaking countries of the region.

#### AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States)

This informal group of 43 Small Island and low-lying coastal developing countries was formed in 1990 to work on climate change and related issues.

#### OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference)

This intergovernmental organization was created in 1969 with 56 members having a strong Islamic community.

#### WEOG (Western European and Other Groups)

This geopolitical grouping of 27 States shares a Western-Democratic common denominator.

#### Regional groups

These were created to identify regional candidates for the UN bodies. Sometime the African and Latin American groups can work on substantive positions.



