**54th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout   
the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms**

***Theme: Revisiting gender parity and its contributions to the integration of gender into the work of international human rights bodies, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms***

*Concept note*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Monday, 25 September 2023, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (UTC+2)‎**  **Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcast live and archived on* [*https://media.un.org/en/webtv*](https://media.un.org/en/webtv)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | The panel discussion will focus on gender parity as a key element of gender equality and how it contributes to the integration of a gender perspective in the work of international human rights bodies, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.  The panel discussion aims to:   * **Take stock** of developments since the last annual discussion focusing on gender parity, held in September 2019, including the most recent assessments and the available figures on the current levels of gender parity in international human rights bodies, in particular the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms; * **Discuss** the progress achieved in the past years, including new gender-responsive initiatives and successful practices and their potential to drive change in the international human rights bodies; * **Analyse remaining challenges** to achieve parity in international human rights bodies, in particular the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and to ensure more balanced participation of men and women in decision-making processes. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Ms. Maira Mariela Macdonal Alvarez**, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statement:** | **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif**, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Aua Baldé**, Chair of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances * **Prof. Frans Viljoen**, Member of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee * **Ms. Alejandra Vicente**, Legal Director of Redress and member of the GQUAL Campaign Secretariat |
| **Outcome:** | As a result of this discussion, the Human Rights Council, States and relevant stakeholders will:   * Be better informed of the most recent assessments and available figures on the current levels of gender parity in international human rights bodies; * Learn from shared experiences, new initiatives and successful practices that have helped improve gender parity in international human rights bodies; * Reflect on the remaining challenges to achieve gender parity and to enable an organizational culture that supports the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women; * Reflect on recommendations and concrete measures to accelerate gender balance and to advance gender equality in the agendas and outcomes of the international human rights bodies, in particular in the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. |
| **Mandate:** | In 2007, the Human Rights Council adopted [resolution 6/30](http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_30.pdf) entitled “**Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system**”, in which it decided to incorporate into its programme of work an annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout its work and that of its mechanisms, including the evaluation of progress made and challenges experienced.  In this resolution, the Council encouraged Member States to promote gender balance by, inter alia, taking all the necessary measures, including budgetary and institutional measures, to guarantee the full participation of women in medium- and high-level ranks, regularly nominating more women candidates for election and appointment to the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, international courts and tribunals, the specialized agencies and other organs, including the Human Rights Council subsidiary bodies. Furthermore, in accordance with its decision 6/102 on the follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, while nominating, selecting and appointing mandate holders, as well as when electing members of the Advisory Committee, the Council should give due consideration to gender balance and appropriate representation of different civilizations and legal systems. |
| **Format:** | The panel discussion will be limited to two hours. The opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists, the latter guided by the moderator, will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and conclusions by the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statement, moderator’s introduction and panellists’ presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States and observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Panellists will respond to questions and comments during the remaining time available.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who could not take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Background:** | Equality and non-discrimination are the bedrock of the international human rights system. The Human Rights Council is mandated to make these principles a reality in peoples’ lives, and to ensure broader protection and promotion of human rights for all. This includes the protection and promotion of the right of women to active, free and meaningful participation in decision-making and in public life, which is at the heart of their universal and fundamental rights, and is essential for the realization of all other human rights.  This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a fundamental document which was influenced and shaped by the work of the visionary women who contributed to its drafting. Both as part of the Drafting Commiteee and of the Commission on Human Rights, women delegates introduced particular rights and tailored the language of the text to ensure that women’s human rights were adequately integrated into the Declaration.  The participation and equal representation of women in such international human rights bodies is therefore paramount to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights for all. It is not only a question of justice or democracy, but represents a necessary condition for women’s rights to be respected and for their concerns and interests to shape public decisions.  The Human Rights Council has long sought to achieve balanced gender representation, including as part of the existing system-wide strategy on gender parity and the implementation of Council resolution 6/30. Over the years, the Council has made consistent efforts to implement a gender parity strategy and integrate a gender perspective in their work.  In 2019, the Council adopted [resolution 41/](http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_30.pdf)6, in which it requested the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee to prepare a report on current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms. The report[[1]](#footnote-1) was submitted to the Council at its forty-seventh session in June 2021. It includes findings on the current levels of representation of women in United Nations human rights bodies and puts forth recommendations on how to promote and implement gender balance in these organs, including specific recommendations to the Human Rights Council.[[2]](#footnote-2)  In its resolution [50/18](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2Fhrc%2Fres%2F50%2F18&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False), adopted in 2022, the Human Rights Council took note of the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee and encouraged States to consider ways to enhance the participation of women in the work of the Human Rights Council, taking into consideration existing guidelines and standards. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 6/30](http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_30.pdf) entitled “Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system” (*adopted by consensus on 14 December 2007*) * [General Assembly resolution 69/151](https://undocs.org/A/RES/69/151) entitled “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly” (*adopted by consensus on 18 December 2014*) * [General Assembly resolution 70/1](https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1) entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (*adopted by consensus on 25 September 2015)* * [Human Rights Council resolution 41/6](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/41/6) entitled “Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls” (*adopted by consensus on 11 July 2019*) * [Human Rights Council resolution 50/18](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2Fhrc%2Fres%2F50%2F18&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False) entitled “Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls” (*adopted by consensus on 8 July 2022*) * Current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms: ensuring gender balance. Report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee ([A/HRC/47/51](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F47%2F51&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)) * Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), [General recommendation No. 23: Political and Public Life](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCEDAW%2FGEC%2F4736&Lang=en) |
| **Prior topics covered:** | The following topics have been covered during previous Council annual discussions on gender integration:   * Integrating a gender perspective into the work of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (2008); * Integrating a gender perspective in the universal periodic review (2009); * Integrating a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council: lessons learned, shortcomings and future challenges – 2007-2010 (2010); * Promoting gender equality as institutional practice: from policy to action (2011); * Economic, social and cultural rights of women (2012); * Civil society’s contribution to the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms (2013); * Gender integration in the country-focused work of the Council (2014); * Gender parity and its contribution to gender integration in the work of the Human Rights Council (2015); * Gender integration in the resolutions and recommendations of the HRC (2016); * The universal periodic review and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5) (2017); * Gender integration and human rights investigations: strengthening a victim-centred approach (2018); * Gender-responsive initiatives to accelerate gender equality (2019); * Gender and diversity: strengthening the intersectional perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council (2020); * The gender digital divide in times of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021); * Overcoming gender-based barriers to freedom of opinion and expression (2022). |

1. [A/HRC/47/51](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F47%2F51&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The report shows that while gender parity has been reached in some United Nations bodies (in some cases very recently), women generally remain underrepresented in treaty bodies, among special procedure mandate holders and in the Advisory Committee. Moreover, the figures show that women’s representation is largely concentrated in bodies or mandates specifically dealing with issues related to women or children. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)