



Freshfields



CONCEPT NOTE

OFFICIAL SIDE EVENT – CSW 60th Session

Achieving Gender Parity in International Representation

ORGANIZERS: GQUAL; Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

SPONSORS: Costa Rica, European Union, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Panama, Paraguay, United States, Diplomatic Courier, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP

WHEN: March 17, 2016, 6:30 – 7:45 pm

WHERE: Conference Room 1, United Nations 405 East 42nd Street, New York, NY, 10017

WHAT: The sixtieth session of the Commission will take place from 14 to 24 March 2016. The Commission will address as its priority theme 'Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development'. In addition, it will evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the fifty-seventh session (2013) on 'The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls'.

A critical, but often not visible, component towards women's empowerment and equality is the representation of women on international adjudicatory and monitoring bodies, such as international tribunals, international and regional human rights commissions, United Nations Treaty Bodies, and United Nations Special Procedures. Such bodies make important and wide-reaching decisions for society and individuals yet women are woefully underrepresented in the vast majority of them.

Some facts as of January 2016:

- only 1 out of 7 judges serving on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights is a woman;
- only 3 out of 15 judges at the International Court of Justice are women;
- only 5 out of 28 judges within the European Court of Justice are women;
- only 5 out of 18 members of the UN Human Rights Committee are women:

- only 4 out of 18 members of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination are women.
- 6 out of 18 judges of the International Criminal Court are women.

Moreover, [a study of the numbers](#) conducted by the GQUAL Campaign shows that this current imbalance has affected international bodies since their establishment. Of the 40 individuals who have held positions within the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea since its inception, only 1 has been a woman; and of the 52 Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, 19 have never been held by a woman.

The study shows that the participation of women in these spaces is not experiencing linear nor sustainable improvement. Furthermore, the data shows that regressions are frequent, making it unlikely for this imbalance to correct itself over time. In light of this information, it is imperative that concerted measures and efforts are implemented to increase the participation of women in international tribunals and bodies.

Promoting gender parity in international tribunals and bodies strengthens the legitimacy and impact of these international bodies. Fundamentally, it constitutes a necessary measure to guarantee the right to equality of all, and specifically the right of women to enjoy equal access and representation in international bodies. Adopting measures that promote gender equal representation in international bodies falls within Member States obligations to eradicate gender discrimination.

This side event will discuss means of tackling the underrepresentation of women and explain why this is important to the making sustainable development a reality for all.

FORMAT: The event will feature a presentation of the GQUAL Campaign and a conversation with Member State representatives regarding the importance of promoting the equal participation of women in international positions of authority as means of contributing to promoting sustainable development. Participant will discuss different measures and approaches that Member States could adopt to do so. A Questions and Answers session will follow to allow for broader stakeholder engagement. At the conclusion of the event, participants in the side event will be invited to join the GQUAL Campaign by signing the Declaration in a personal capacity. Should official government signatures be confirmed, protocol will be followed in to reflect the importance of these pledges.

WHO: Speakers include:

Welcoming remarks:

- **Viviana Krsticevic**, Executive Director, CEJIL, and Member of the GQUAL Campaign Secretariat
- **Judit Arenas**, Director, Department of External Relations, IDLO

Remarks by:

- **Alejandra Mora**, Minister, Ministry of Women Affairs, Costa Rica
- **Hon. Ms. Sicily Kanini Kariuki**, Cabinet Secretary, Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Kenya
- **Catherine M. Russell**, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large, Global Women's Issues
- **Ann Bernes**, Ambassador-at-Large, Global Women's Issues, Sweden, and Coordinator of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy
- **Stefan Barriga**, Deputy Permanent Representative, Liechtenstein
- **Liriola Leoteau**, Director, National Institute of Women, Panama
- **Mariella Mazzotti**, Director, National Institute of Women (INMUJERES), Uruguay
- **Mara Marinaki**, Principal Advisor, Gender and Women Peace and Security (WPS), European Union



– **PARTICIPANTS:**

The following stakeholder groups will be invited to participate in the side event:

- National delegations participating in CSW
- Civil society delegates
- Legal professionals
- Gender experts
- Academics
- UN Staff

GQUAL: a Campaign for Parity in International Representation, is a global initiative that seeks to achieve parity in international tribunals and monitoring bodies.

The campaign's strategies are incorporated into the [GQUAL Declaration](#). To date, the Declaration has received the endorsement of over 800 women and men, among them Vice-Presidents, Foreign Ministers and other high level State officials; former and current international judges, Special Rapporteurs, and members of international bodies and commissions; prominent lawyers, human rights activists, and academics. The Declaration is open for signature on the campaign's website, and thus far has raised more than 400 signatures from all over the world.

More information on the campaign is available here www.gqualcampaign.org.