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## Commission on the Status of Women Background Guide 2022

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This year's staff are: Directors Tiffany Dao (Conference A) and Nada Nassereddin (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Nidhi Jariwala (Conference A) and Nicole Fett (Conference B). Tiffany Dao is a legal assistant in the business/corporate law department at a full-service law firm in Seattle, USA. She is completing her Master of Studies in Law at the University of Southern California. Nada graduated from the American University of Sharjah in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and is currently pursuing a Masters of Public Policy at the University of Central Florida. Nidhi Jariwala is a fourth-year student at Hamline University in St. Paul, USA studying Economics and International Studies. This is her fourth year in Model United Nations, and she is excited to be serving as Assistant Director for CSW. Nicole Fett is a bachelor's student in European Studies at the University of Magdeburg. She attended her first NMUN conference as a delegate in 2019.

The topics under discussion for CSW are:

1. Achieving Gender Equality in the Context of Climate Change
2. Realizing the Rights of Women in the World of Work

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal intergovernmental body dedicated to the advancement and advocacy of gender equality and the empowerment of women around the globe. The Commission prepares reports presented to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations on issues of women's rights, and the remaining work left to be achieved on global gender equality. Additionally, the Commission produces Agreed Conclusions on the priority themes discussed at its annual plenary meeting. To accurately simulate the Commission, it will be key for delegates to emulate the normative and best practice-setting approaches of the Commission's annual plenary meetings.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2022 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Economic and Social Council Department, Lauren Kiser (Conference A) and Eileen Austin (Conference B), at [usg.ecosoc@nmun.org](mailto:usg.ecosoc@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

## Conference A

Tiffany Dao, *Director*

Nidhi Jariwala, *Assistant Director*

## Conference B

Nada Nassereddin, *Director*

Nicole Fett, *Assistant Director*

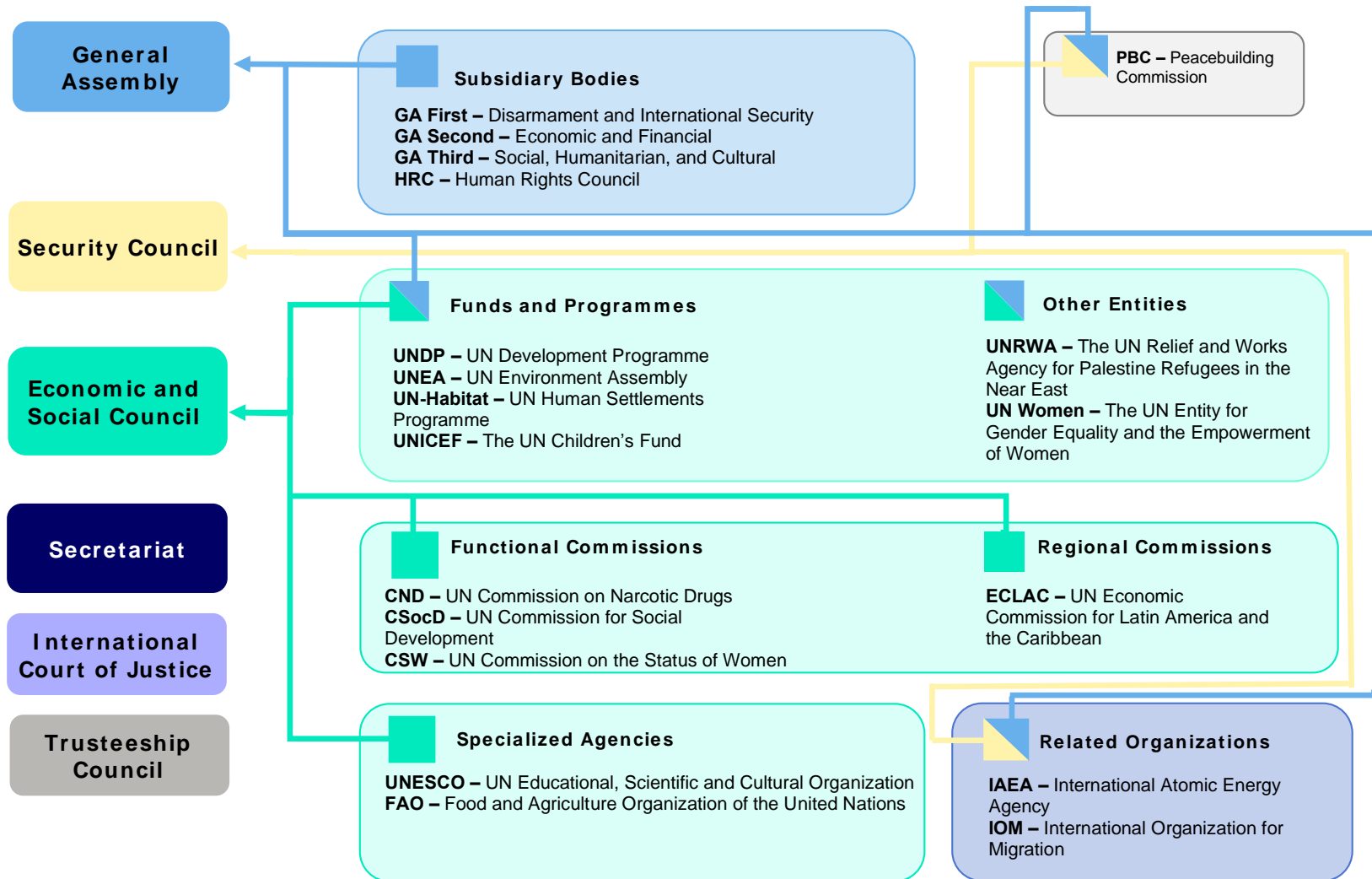


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## United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the principal international body for discussion on women's empowerment and gender equality.<sup>1</sup> The CSW and its secretariat, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), have gained significance within the international system as the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls have become an increasing focus of the international system and gained prominence as policy priorities.<sup>2</sup> In 1946, the first United Nations (UN) debates on issues of gender equality were carried out in a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights.<sup>3</sup> As a result of these debates, CSW was established as a functional commission under the auspices of ECOSOC through ECOSOC resolution 11(II).<sup>4</sup> CSW's mandate is to mainstream gender equality within the UN system and link women's empowerment to sustainable development, annually reporting to ECOSOC on its efforts.<sup>5</sup> UN Women provides programmatic support for all of the work performed by CSW while facilitating civil society actors' participation in the Commission.<sup>6</sup>

CSW is the main forum for discussion on the ongoing process of creating and implementing international norms and standards related to the advancement of women.<sup>7</sup> CSW's work is guided by the principles of the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the 1993 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA), and the outcome document of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the UN General Assembly as a follow-up to BPfA, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century" (2000).<sup>8</sup> The BPfA outlines the goals that the international community set to achieve gender equality, such as ensuring the full implementation of women's human rights and promoting women's economic independence.<sup>9</sup> CSW is also influenced by various UN Security Council resolutions, with resolution 1325 (2000) on "Women and Peace and Security" being among the most significant.<sup>10</sup>

In 2015, the international community transitioned from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a collection of 17 goals adopted by the General Assembly as part of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.<sup>11</sup> The overall work of CSW is closely aligned with SDG 5 ("gender equality") though women's empowerment and gender equality is mainstreamed across several SDGs.<sup>12</sup> Among other targets, SDG 5 aims to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, and to adopt policies and legislation promoting gender equality.<sup>13</sup>

The Beijing+20 conference, also held in 2015, marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and the BPfA.<sup>14</sup> Beijing+20 drew particular attention to 12 critical areas of concern

<sup>1</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018; UN Women, *A Brief History of the CSW*.

<sup>3</sup> UN Women, *A Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2006, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2021-22*, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, *A Brief History of the CSW*, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> UN Women, *A Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2006, pp. 9-15.

<sup>9</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in post-conflict peace-building (ECOSOC/2004/12)*, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> UN Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> UN Women, *SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls*, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> UN Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*, 2021.

for the continued empowerment of women including poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, and armed conflict.<sup>15</sup> The session concluded with an examination of potential opportunities for the global community to achieve gender equality in alignment with the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).<sup>16</sup> Additionally, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BPfA, UN Women’s “Generation Equality: Realizing women’s rights for an equal future” campaign was launched, focusing on women rights that include equal pay, end to sexual violence against women and girls, health care services that respond to women needs, and equal participation in public life.<sup>17</sup>

### **Governance, Structure, and Membership**

CSW consists of 45 Member States elected for four-year terms.<sup>18</sup> The allocation of seats by ECOSOC follows proportional geographical distribution and is comprised of 13 African states, 11 Asia-Pacific states, four Eastern European states, nine Latin American and Caribbean states, and eight Western European and Other states.<sup>19</sup> The Chair and the four Vice-Chairs of CSW’s Bureau rotate without specific geographical regulations and are elected for two-year terms.<sup>20</sup> The Chair of the Bureau for the 65<sup>th</sup> session is His Excellency Mr. Mher Margaryan of Armenia.<sup>21</sup> The Bureau is supported programmatically by UN Women, which provides CSW with reports on the discussed topics and supports national and regional reviews on the implementation of the policies set forth by CSW and ECOSOC.<sup>22</sup>

In 2010, the UN restructured its operational framework on women’s issues in order to improve efficiency and streamline its work on gender equality.<sup>23</sup> The four major UN agencies that previously addressed women’s issues merged and resulted in the establishment of UN Women.<sup>24</sup> UN Women is the Secretariat of CSW and provides guidance on operational activities aimed at the advancement of women.<sup>25</sup> UN Women supports the work of CSW substantively by providing annual documentation on critical areas of concern regarding gender equality and facilitates interaction between the Commission and civil society organizations (CSOs) at its annual meeting.<sup>26</sup> CSW and UN Women work closely together: UN Women as a programmatic body implements programs and CSW, as a policy-making body, shapes international norms and standards rather than implementing reforms and activities directly.<sup>27</sup> CSW also has a Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women, which produces an annual report to CSW identifying “trends and patterns of reliably-attested injustice and discriminatory practices against women.”<sup>28</sup>

CSW commits to multi-year program of work to track progress on the realization of the BPfA’s goals.<sup>29</sup> A new program of work and review themes for CSW sessions for the years 2021-2024 was established by ECOSOC in July 2020 through its resolution 2020/15, titled “Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women.”<sup>30</sup> For CSW’s upcoming 66<sup>th</sup> session, the resolution designates 2022’s priority theme as “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes” and the review theme as “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> UN Women, *Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20*, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> UN Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> UN Women, *Generation Equality: Realizing women’s rights for an equal future*, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *United Nations Handbook 2021-22*, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> UN Women, *CSW65 (2021)*, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, pp. 9-11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> UN Women, *Programme implementation*; UN Women, *Outcomes*.

<sup>28</sup> UN Women, *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2020/15)*, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

ECOSOC also utilizes CSW to coordinate and deliver thematic reviews during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) to determine the progress on the SDGs relating to women's empowerment.<sup>32</sup> The 2021 HLPF discussed the sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to promote different dimensions of sustainable development, including gender equality.<sup>33</sup> CSW's input to the 2021 HLPF stressed that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting women and girls and is deepening the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they experience.<sup>34</sup> CSW also emphasized the necessity to strengthen participation of all women in all stages of COVID-19 response and recovery.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Mandate, Functions, and Powers***

The original mandate of CSW, adopted in 1946, was to provide "recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social, and educational fields... [and] urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights."<sup>36</sup> This mandate was substantially expanded as a follow-up to the UN Decade of Women from 1975 to 1985, and the Third and Fourth World Conferences on Women in Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995.<sup>37</sup> As a result of the Fourth World Conference and the adoption of the BPfA, ECOSOC stated in resolution 1996/6 (1996) that CSW, as its primary responsibility, must take actions to mainstream "a gender perspective in policies and programs," as well as to assist ECOSOC and Member States in the implementation and achievement of the goals set in the BPfA.<sup>38</sup> This was re-emphasized at the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly in 2000, which set the goal of achieving full global gender equality.<sup>39</sup>

CSW now works together with the General Assembly and ECOSOC in a multi-tiered intergovernmental process to provide normative guidance to achieve gender mainstreaming and equality.<sup>40</sup> Gender mainstreaming is the process of integrating the different needs, living conditions, and circumstances of men and women when designing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs, and activities.<sup>41</sup> Gender mainstreaming works to benefit both women and men by decreasing gender inequality.<sup>42</sup> Good gender mainstreaming practices include establishing accountability mechanisms; developing guidelines and tools to support mainstreaming; and providing training on gender mainstreaming incorporation.<sup>43</sup> Gender analysis is another gender mainstreaming tool used to recognize the differences between men and women in a specific situation with regards to their needs, conditions, opportunities, roles, access to resources, and levels of power, and the impact of these differences on their lives.<sup>44</sup> Aspects of fiscal policy formulation can be taken as an example when incorporating gender perspectives, where choices of revenue-raising method, such as user fees and consumption taxes, can have different implications for women and men.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>32</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2016/3)*, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> UN Women, *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*.

<sup>34</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)*, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Commission on the Status of Women (Res. 11(II))*, 1946, p. 525.

<sup>37</sup> UN Women, *A Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2006, pp. 9-15.

<sup>38</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/RES/1996/6)*, 1996; UN General Assembly, *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 (A/RES/55/71)*, 2000.

<sup>39</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> UN General Assembly, *Proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017: Programme 14, Gender equality and empowerment of women (A/69/6 (Prog. 14))*, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> UN Women, *Gender Mainstreaming*; ILO, *Definition of Gender Mainstreaming*.

<sup>42</sup> UN Women, *Gender Mainstreaming*; ILO, *Definition of Gender Mainstreaming*.

<sup>43</sup> UN Women, *Good practice examples*; UN OHCHR, *Integrating gender into human rights monitoring*, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> UN Women, *Good practice examples*; UN OHCHR, *Integrating gender into human rights monitoring*, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*, 2002.

The main functions and primary responsibilities are outlined in the original mandate of CSW, its expansions, and several ECOSOC resolutions on the methods of work of the Commission.<sup>46</sup> These methods of work have been examined and expanded several times by ECOSOC over the years, most recently in ECOSOC resolutions 2015/6 (2015) and 2016/3 (2016), in order to ensure coherence with the work of the Council.<sup>47</sup> Adopted on the recommendation of CSW, ECOSOC resolutions 2015/6 (2015) and 2016/3 (2016) reaffirmed the intentions of the Commission to contribute to the thematic reviews of progress on SDGs in order to improve global gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>48</sup> The aim of these expansions was to set an effective approach to mainstream gender within the entire UN system and engage in discussions with governmental representatives, experts, and non-governmental actors to identify gaps and challenges to gender equality.<sup>49</sup>

At its two-week annual meetings at UN headquarters in New York, CSW publishes agreed conclusions that are included in an annual report to ECOSOC, in addition to resolutions.<sup>50</sup> Agreed conclusions are similar to resolutions adopted by other UN entities; however, their purpose is to call attention to challenges in achieving gender equality which guide its Member States, international governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations when making substantive calls to action.<sup>51</sup> The Bureau of CSW takes on all necessary preparation for the annual meetings of CSW, identifying emerging issues, trends, focus areas, and possible new approaches to implementing the BPfA and all other relevant policy guidelines, and provides its findings as a summary for the Chair.<sup>52</sup> This work is done in consultation with all the Member States of the Commission and the regional groups, experts, and other relevant stakeholders, promoting interactive dialogue, such as high-level ministerial panels or expert group meetings for interactive dialogue on "steps and initiatives to accelerate implementation and measures to build capacities for mainstreaming gender equality across policies and programmes."<sup>53</sup>

CSW continues to organize the Beijing reviews, which are often used as a platform to foster political will for actions that promote gender equality and recommit Member States to relevant frameworks and goals.<sup>54</sup> CSW also contributes to the annual theme of ECOSOC, strengthening the Council's impact, and works closely with all other gender-specific UN entities, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to augment their work.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, CSW considers the active participation of non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and WomanKind Worldwide, and CSOs such as CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an essential element in shaping the framework on women's empowerment and gender equality.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> UN General Assembly, *Proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017: Programme 14, Gender equality and empowerment of women (A/69/6 (Prog . 14))*, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Future Organization and Methods of Work of the Commission on the Status of Women (A/RES/2015/6)*, 2015; UN ECOSOC, *Multi-year Programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2016/3)*, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Future Organization and Methods of Work of the Commission on the Status of Women (A/RES/2015/6)*, 2015; UN ECOSOC, *Multi-year Programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2016/3)*, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> UN CSW, *Report on the fifty-ninth session (E/2015/27-E/CN.6/2015/10)*, 2015, pp. 11-15.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.

<sup>54</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Future Organization and Methods of Work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2015/6)*, 2015, pp. 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-5.

<sup>56</sup> Amnesty International, *The Time is up to Deliver on Women's and Girls' Rights: Public Statement*, 2020; CIVICUS, *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)*, 2020; UN Women, *NGO participation*, 2021; WomanKind Worldwide, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2021.



## Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

CSW's 64<sup>th</sup> session was scheduled to be held in March 2020, but was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, CSW published the *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women* in March 2020, reaffirming its commitment to gender equality.<sup>58</sup> CSW also outlined the international community's renewed commitment to gender equality and called for all Member States who have not yet ratified the Beijing Declaration to do so.<sup>59</sup> CSW64 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the *Beijing Declaration* and the 5-year anniversary of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.<sup>60</sup> The 64<sup>th</sup> session would have focused on healthcare, its role in empowering women, and improving women's access to quality medical services.<sup>61</sup> In September 2020, a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women was held with the theme of "Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."<sup>62</sup>

In its most recent 65<sup>th</sup> session, held between 15 to 26 March 2021 in a hybrid format with mostly virtual meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CSW adopted *Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2021/L.3) (2021)* on the priority theme "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."<sup>63</sup> The session also discussed women's active participation and leadership in COVID-19 response and recovery.<sup>64</sup> CSW urged Member States to take account of the specific needs of women and girls in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, and to increase participation of women in decision-making bodies and processes.<sup>65</sup> Other topics discussed at the session address women's participation in public life; women's representation in executive offices and national and local legislatures; violence against women in public life; and women's access to social protection.<sup>66</sup> At the session, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, said in her closing statement "This Commission is not just vital for the women and girls of the world, it is also a deeply relevant body for the whole UN System," emphasizing the role of CSW in promoting all SDGs.<sup>67</sup> For the 66<sup>th</sup> CSW session, which will take place between 14 to 25 March 2022, the Commission will "make a recommendation on how best to utilize the year 2025, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women."<sup>68</sup>

CSW's 65<sup>th</sup> session was an important bridge to the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the Governments of Mexico and France, in partnership with youth and CSOs, which took off in Mexico City from 29 to 31 March 2021 and culminated in Paris from 30 June to 2 July

<sup>57</sup> UN CSW, *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, (E/CN.6/2020/L.1), 2020.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> UN CSW, *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls: Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2019/L.3)*, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> UN CSW, *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, (E/CN.6/2020/L.1), 2020.

<sup>63</sup> UN Women, *CSW65 (2021)*, 2021.

<sup>64</sup> UN CSW, *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girl: Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2021/3)*, 2021; UN Women, *CSW65 (2021)*, 2021.

<sup>65</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girl: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2021/3)*, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> UN CSW, *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girl: Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2021/L.3)*, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> UN Women, *Remarks by Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the closing of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women*, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> UN Women, *CSW66 (2022)*.

2021.<sup>69</sup> The Forum intended to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and fuel a powerful coalition for gender equality to achieve transformative change for gender equality implementation.<sup>70</sup> The Forum concluded with the launch of a global five-year action journey to accelerate gender equality by 2026.<sup>71</sup> The Forum's action agenda is driven by the Generation Equality Action Coalitions, which are global, multi-stakeholder partnerships working to drive urgent action from governments, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector, towards gender equality.<sup>72</sup> The Generation Equality Action Coalitions take on six critical issues that underpin gender equality: gender-based violence; economic justice and rights; bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; feminist action for climate justice; technology and innovation for gender equality; and feminist movements and leadership.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

CSW is working towards achieving gender equality by setting global standards, establishing a legally binding global framework, and promoting women's rights in all its projects and communications.<sup>74</sup> For several years, the international community has increased its focus on achieving equality for women and reaching the SDGs through women's empowerment and equal participation on society.<sup>75</sup> The Commission has developed education and training programs and gathered data to help improve and define avenues for achieving gender equality.<sup>76</sup> With the help of CSOs, its annual meetings, and programmatic support from UN Women, CSW can continue to identify new challenges to gender equality and effectively advise ECOSOC to take action to empower women.<sup>77</sup>

## Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. (2020). *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, (E/CN.6/2020/L.1). Retrieved 27 June 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2020/L.1>

*This Political Declaration was published by CSW in March 2020 while announcing that CSW64 would be suspended until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the document, CSW outlines the continuing mandate and the importance of the work of the body and its stakeholders. This document also gives details on the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. In this source, delegates will find a concise overview of CSW's mandate as well as the most recent recommendations made by the body.*

United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. (2021). *Report on the sixty-fifth session* (E/2021/27-E/CN.6/2021/14). Retrieved 26 June 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2021/27>

*This report summarizes the overall conclusions from CSW's sixty-fifth meeting in March 2021. The report details the final conclusions agreed upon by all Member States at the meeting, and specifies the comprehensive work discussed. Some of the conclusions highlighted include strengthening normative, legal, and regulatory frameworks; preventing and eliminating violence against women in public life; and strengthening gender-responsive institutional reform. From this resource, delegates will gain insight into the*

<sup>69</sup> UN Women, *Generation Equality Forum*; UN Women, *Press Release: UN's largest gathering on women's rights delivers robust blueprint on strengthening women's leadership and participation in public life*, 2021.

<sup>70</sup> UN Women, *Generation Equality Forum*.

<sup>71</sup> UN Women, *Press release: Generation Equality Forum concludes in Paris with announcement of revolutionary commitments and Global Acceleration Plan to advance gender equality by 2026*, 2021.

<sup>72</sup> UN Generation Equality Forum, *About*, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2015.

<sup>75</sup> UN DGC, *Economic and Social Council Adopts Texts on Sustainable Development Goals, Women, Non-communicable Diseases, as Coordination, Management Session Commences* (ECOSOC/6846), 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Ways and means to further enhance the impact of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women: Report of the Secretary-General* (E/CN.6/2014/14), 2013.

*latest areas of focus in CSW and be able to learn the Committee's goals moving forward from the most recent session.*

United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. (2021). *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls: Agreed Conclusions (E/CN.6/2021/L.3)*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2021/L.3>

*The 2021 Agreed Conclusions offer a summarized review of decisions and conclusions arrived at during CSW65, including addressing root causes of gender inequality and strengthening women's voice, as well as improving global access to social protection and public services. The document also acknowledges the specific needs of women and girls in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Additionally, it gives an update on the status of women and how certain ongoing gender equality goals are progressing versus others. This is a great resource for understanding CSW's most up-to-date goals and perspectives when beginning research for the conference.*

United Nations, Economic and Social Council. (2018). *Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3844034?ln=en>

*This report of the Executive Director of UN Women to ECOSOC clarifies the linkage between UN Women and CSW. This source will help delegates identify the distinct features of CSW as a functional commission reporting to ECOSOC, and UN Women as a composite, operational entity. The report of the Executive Director of UN Women will be helpful to understand how UN Women supports and complements the work of CSW. The report highlights key CSW reports, the relationship with the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Security Council, and UN Women's role in implementing policy advice and guidance from CSW.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2015). *Commission on the Status of Women*. Retrieved 26 June 2021 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

*This website is an ideal starting point for understanding CSW and serves as the primary overview on its foundation, mandate, methods of work, and multi-year programs of work. It is a great source for information on the various priorities and reviews themes the Commission has dealt with in recent years, especially the 65th (2021) and 66th (2022) sessions. For further research, it also provides links to the history, official outcome documents, and non-governmental organization participation, as well as CSW Communications Procedure of the Working Group. This source will act as the main reference point for delegates to further understand the topics within the context of the mandate of the committee.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2021). *CSW59/Beijing+20 (2015)*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015>

*This source is a useful introduction to Beijing+20 and to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The continued implementation of the Beijing Declaration comes at a crucial moment for the UN, as its aims form the basis of several of the SDGs. The Declaration and its implementation are leading the work of CSW through the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. This brief overview of Beijing+20 is also a useful source for delegates' further research on the key issues the Commission is tasked with addressing.*

United Nations, Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Retrieved 27 June 2021 from: [https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800)

*The Beijing Declaration is the guiding document in all work done by CSW and UN Women. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies the continued challenges that the world*

*faces in achieving gender equality and protecting the rights of women and girls. The framework of the Beijing Declaration remains crucial to the UN, especially influencing the targets of SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 4 (quality education), and SDG 5 (gender equality). The Declaration and its implementation continue to shape the work of CSW through the achievement of SDGs. Chapter IV outlines specific strategic objectives and actions frame CSW session discussions. Delegates will find this document to be essential to understanding the mandate of CSW.*

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# 1. Achieving Gender Equality in the Context of Climate Change

## **Introduction**

As of 2018, about 80% of all the global climate refugees, or people forced to leave their livelihood due to the negative effects of climate change, are women.<sup>78</sup> According to the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), climate change, the changes in environment caused directly and/or indirectly by human activity, is not a gender-neutral or gender-blind issue, and its impacts are not globally homogenous.<sup>79</sup> Achieving gender equality in the context of climate change means ensuring that women and men have equal treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, and that there is the inclusion of the perspectives of women in climate change strategies and policymaking to combat the economic, political, social, and health issues people face on an international scale.<sup>80</sup> Inequality in the context of climate change can be seen in a number of areas, such as the differences in women's healthcare as women are more likely than men to suffer from mental health issues, domestic violence, and food insecurity, which can be exacerbated by the effects of climate change.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, women of different backgrounds disproportionately face struggles in the context of climate change.<sup>82</sup> Climate change inordinately affects women of color, women in developing countries, and women in rural and indigenous communities, where less infrastructure and fewer resources may exist to support them and sustainable climate change response policies.<sup>83</sup>

The UN Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) calls for climate change strategies to be gender sensitive, meaning that these strategies must include considerations of the differences pertaining to genders in policies and programs in order to eliminate gender inequalities, create respect and equality for individuals regardless of gender, and be aware of and adjust to gender differences.<sup>84</sup> CSW focuses on capacity-building for women which includes improving skills, abilities, and resources needed by communities and organizations to function and survive.<sup>85</sup> CSW's methods to achieving gender equality in the context of climate change also includes empowering women to take on positions in policymaking in government and other leadership positions to form effective policies for climate change.<sup>86</sup> CSW also focuses on methods to improve socioeconomic and educational status of women through the provision of education, training, and resources that may be otherwise difficult to obtain due to the impacts of climate change.<sup>87</sup> By advancing gender equality and allowing for gender perspectives to be included in climate change strategies and policy making, women, specifically those in rural areas and developing countries who are historically underrepresented in these arenas, are empowered to advocate for more effective environmental policies.<sup>88</sup>

## **International and Regional Framework**

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) is the key international framework on human rights, which includes women's rights and environmental rights.<sup>89</sup> Articles 25, 26, and 27 note that women and girls deserve equitable access to healthcare, education, and participation in community activities, including in the context of climate change.<sup>90</sup> Specifically on gender issues, the UDHR was followed by the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the first international

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<sup>78</sup> Halton, Climate Change 'impacts women more than men', *BBC News*, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> UN Women Watch, *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> UN International Children's Emergency Fund, *Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts*, 2017.

<sup>81</sup> WHO, *Gender, Climate Change and Health*, 2010, p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> UN Women Watch, *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2021.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



landmark document dedicated to issues of gender equality.<sup>91</sup> CEDAW was the culmination of the first three decades of work by CSW, and remains instrumental in recognizing all areas where women are still denied gender equality.<sup>92</sup>

Early sustainability frameworks, including the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (1992) (UNFCCC) signed by 154 states at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (the Earth Summit) and the *Kyoto Protocol*, which was signed in 1997 and ran from 2005 to 2020, as the first implementation of measures under the UNFCCC, included preliminary references to gender that would form the foundation for later documents.<sup>93</sup> More recently, the UN has adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and *Paris Agreement* (2015), both of which address the issue of gender equality in the context of climate change.<sup>94</sup> The 2030 agenda is the current global development framework and notably mainstreams gender equality into each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).<sup>95</sup> Of the 17 SDGs, SDG 5 (“gender equality”), SDG 11 (“reduced inequalities”), and SDG 13 (“climate action”) are most applicable to the topic at hand.<sup>96</sup> *The Paris Agreement* (2015), the first legally-binding international document on climate change, discusses the importance of promoting and respecting gender equality and the empowerment of women in taking action to combat climate change under Articles 7 and 11 of the document.<sup>97</sup> The agreement further recommends taking gender-responsive action, including the provision of different support and resources among genders.<sup>98</sup> Under this agreement, Member States are encouraged to promote human rights, the rights of indigenous people, and the rights of marginalized populations by following a gender-responsive transparent approach wherein vulnerable groups, ecosystems, and knowledge from indigenous people must all be taken into consideration during policy development.<sup>99</sup>

Adopted in 1995, the landmark *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Beijing Declaration, BPfA) emphasized that governments at all levels in all Member States must ensure opportunities for women, especially indigenous women, to participate in environmental decision-making.<sup>100</sup> The declaration called for an increase in women’s access to information and education to enhance opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, it called for Member States to take measures to lessen the risks women face from environmental disasters such as integrating appropriate technologies and gender perspectives into infrastructure development projects in rural and urban areas.<sup>102</sup> The declaration also emphasized the need to take gender impact into account under the Commission on Sustainable Development and other UN bodies, and to revise any gender-blind policies.<sup>103</sup> The declaration expressed the importance of involving women in projects funded under the Global Environment Facility and other UN organizations, and the importance of including women’s knowledge in sustainable development policies.<sup>104</sup> The Generation Equality forum held in France and Mexico this year addressed the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and re-established the importance of participation from civil society, governments, the private sector, international organizations, and other parties.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (A/RES/34/180), 1979.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> UNFCCC, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992; UNFCCC, *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1997.

<sup>94</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995; COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

<sup>95</sup> UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Generation Equality Forum, *Accelerating Progress for Gender Equality*, 2021.

## ***Role of the International System***

At the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of CSW in 2008, participants, including members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), discussed and advocated for increased women’s participation in environmental policy and in climate change negotiations, and emphasized the need to promote gender perspectives in policymaking.<sup>106</sup> Participants discussed that the issue of climate change from a gender perspective should be included in all international policies and programs relating to sustainable development.<sup>107</sup> CSW called for increased involvement of women in international policies on climate change, more support for women’s groups who are raising awareness on climate change, and increasing the number of partnerships and collaborations between international organizations and science communities to enforce gender perspectives in long-term scientific climate change solutions.<sup>108</sup> For example, the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) was established to explore opportunities that technological advancements offer and collaborate with the international scientific community, with the goal of strengthening inclusion of low-income and middle-income countries and including gender mainstreaming in recommendations.<sup>109</sup>

Participants at the 52<sup>nd</sup> CSW further emphasized the importance of providing capacity-building opportunities for women, as this allows women to become better advocates and more equipped to protect their livelihoods in natural disasters.<sup>110</sup> Capacity-building includes increasing technology and innovation, improving data, and any other processes that strengthen skills and abilities for communities to thrive.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, CSW recommended a human rights approach to tackling climate change because many UN policies prior to the Beijing Declaration lacked gender perspectives on climate change solutions.<sup>112</sup> Specifically, they emphasized that action should be taken to ensure compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also occurs within human rights frameworks, such as CEDAW, and in accordance with the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC).<sup>113</sup>

The UNFCCC, which acted as the parent organization for the *Kyoto Protocol* (1997) and currently monitors the *Paris Agreement* (2015), continues to recognize the importance of involving women and men equally in sustainability processes, and ensuring that all national climate policies are gender-responsive.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change, and regularly publishes their comprehensive official Assessment Reports on existing knowledge on climate change, its causes, potential impacts, and response options.<sup>115</sup> At the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the IPCC in February 2020, the Panel adopted their official “Gender Policy and Implementation Plan,” which aims to promote a gender-inclusive environment and enhance gender equality in IPCC processes, among other goals.<sup>116</sup> Other UN departments and programs, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the UN Global Compact continue to push forward important programmatic work on this issue, including integrating gender perspectives into mitigation and adaptation action; conducting evidence-based analyses of gender roles in sectors impacted by climate change; and ensuring results-based management for gender equality.<sup>117</sup> All of these organizations also continue to update their

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<sup>106</sup> UN CSW, *52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women*, 2008.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> UNCTAD, *Commission on Science and Technology for Development*, 2021.

<sup>110</sup> UN CSW, *52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women*, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> UN GCD, *Academic Impact, Capacity Building*, 2021.

<sup>112</sup> UN CSW, *52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women*, 2008.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> UNFCCC, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992; UNFCCC, *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1997; UNFCCC, *Introduction to Gender and Climate Change*, 2021.

<sup>115</sup> IPCC, *Reports*, 2021.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> UNDP, *GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE: Overview of linkages between gender and climate change*, 2016; UNEP, *Gender*, 2021; UN Global Compact, *Gender Equality*, 2021.

methodologies and approaches based on the United Nations Systems-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 1.0 (2012) and 2.0 (2018) frameworks.<sup>118</sup>

The roles of Member States and the private sector can further promote and support this progress by collecting and publishing data on gender representation in the context of climate change, sharing free technology resources especially for those with little to no access to these programs, and supporting organizations and programs that expose women and girls to computer science and other useful technology sources, such as Girls Who Code, TECHNOLOchicas, and Black Girls Code.<sup>119</sup> These civil society organizations teach women and girls about technological developments, coding literacy, and can further empower them to contribute to current climate change and sustainability issues.<sup>120</sup>

Regionally, a report published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean entitled *Advancing gender equality in environmental migration and disaster displacement in the Caribbean* (2021), focused on the gendered impacts of displacement due to climate change and emphasized the importance of women's roles in adaptation responses.<sup>121</sup> The report addresses the gender gap in existing data and how disaster caused by climate change worsens inequalities for women and girls and other marginalized groups, especially when they are in the process of migration.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the European Union's (EU) European Institute for Gender Policy examines how European environmental policy can best include gender considerations, as well as compiling relevant disaggregated statistics annually.<sup>123</sup> As well, the African Union's (AU) Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) ensures the implementation of the *AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (GEWE) (2021), and ensuring that African countries comply with the *AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa* (2004), including on the issue of climate change.<sup>124</sup>

### **Gender disparities in rural communities**

Climate change impacts all populations; however, women in rural and agricultural communities are disproportionately impacted by its effects as they are often primarily responsible for maintaining the land.<sup>125</sup> In many countries, women often carry out labor-intensive tasks including subsistence farming and raising livestock.<sup>126</sup> As climate change events, such as droughts and floods, worsen the conditions of the land, women may need to spend more time caring for and maintaining the land.<sup>127</sup> In turn, this affords them little to no time for education or other opportunities to earn income.<sup>128</sup> Women especially have been shown to have less access to educational and environmental resources and services that may allow them to more efficiently participate in combatting climate change.<sup>129</sup> For example, in 2020, the literacy rate for adult males in sub-Saharan Africa was 72% whereas it was 59% for women, which limits their accessibility to resources and decision making.<sup>130</sup>

Certain sociocultural expectations also make women more vulnerable in the wake of climate change.<sup>131</sup> Socio-cultural stereotypes and ideologies often prevent women from seeking refuge in areas less

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<sup>118</sup> UN Women, *Promoting UN accountability (UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP)*.

<sup>119</sup> Microsoft, *Microsoft and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> UN ECLAC, *Advancing gender equality in environmental migration and disaster displacement in the Caribbean*, 2021.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, *Environment and Climate Change*, 2021.

<sup>124</sup> AU, *Women, Gender and Development*, 2021.

<sup>125</sup> UN Women Watch, *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, 2009.

<sup>126</sup> Osman-Elasha, Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change, *UN Chronicle*, 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> World Bank, *Literacy rate, adult female (% of females ages 15 and above)*, 2020; World Bank, *Literacy Rate, adult male (% of males ages 15 and above)*, 2020; Osman-Elasha, *Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change*, 2012.

<sup>131</sup> Osman-Elasha, *Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change*, *UN Chronicle*, 2012.

exposed to natural disasters or conflict.<sup>132</sup> For instance, women are often socially expected to maintain the agricultural land rather than moving their livelihoods to safer areas, in addition to managing their households and parenting.<sup>133</sup> This can result in travelling long distances to collect clean drinking water, food, and fuel, making women and girls vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of violence.<sup>134</sup> As of 2019, women and young girls make up 72% of human trafficking victims, many of them being used for sexual exploitation and violence.<sup>135</sup> 15 million girls internationally from the ages of 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex as a result of vulnerability and other gender-related disadvantages.<sup>136</sup> Solutions to these issues resulting from agricultural gender disparities include providing opportunities for women in agriculture to share their knowledge.<sup>137</sup> NGOs can play an especially important role in supporting women, who are often instrumental in providing agricultural goods and services, by providing a platform for them to speak about resources they need and how NGOs and civil society can share their knowledge about overcoming agricultural hardships resulting from negative effects of climate change.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Women and girls in areas of conflict***

Women and girls in areas of conflict disproportionately face economic inequality and lack of political representation.<sup>139</sup> As climate change exacerbates conflict, women face distinct challenges in obtaining necessities to survive, preserving their homes, and maintaining a steady income.<sup>140</sup> In addition to the effects of climate change, displacement, poverty, and disease also exacerbate the pre-existing vulnerabilities of women in areas of war and conflict.<sup>141</sup> In Syria alone, there are currently over 1.2 million refugees, and many women and girls turn to sex work or the informal due to conflict and natural disasters worsening their vulnerabilities.<sup>142</sup> While employment in these areas may offer an income, they also present additional security challenges to participants.<sup>143</sup>

Droughts and floods that lead to decreasing availability of fertile land also cause conflicts between people in the agricultural labor force.<sup>144</sup> These conflicts disproportionately impact women as agriculture is often a leading source of income for women, particularly in developing countries, and maintenance of this sector is often delegated to women and girls.<sup>145</sup> Additionally, conflicts often cause men to leave their homes in search of better economic and social opportunities, requiring women to both take care of their children and earn an income.<sup>146</sup> Together, climate change and conflict also perpetuate existing power structures by degrading a state's capacity to govern and function thereby leaving little to no ability to prioritize gender equality and women empowerment.<sup>147</sup> Many conflicts in the Northwest Africa and Arab (Maghreb) region have also continued under natural disasters, causing already inflated unemployment rates for women to exceed 16%.<sup>148</sup> Regions with wars or conflict are also more likely to dedicate a majority of their budget to military spending, with little funding dedicated to education or social services, especially for women and girls.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Osman-Elasha, UN Chronicle, *Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change*, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization: Crops and Drops, Floods and Droughts, 2002; Osman-Elasha, UN Chronicle, *Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change*, 2012.

<sup>134</sup> UN Women, *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*, 2021.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Osman-Elasha, UN Chronicle, *Women... In the Shadow of Climate Change*, 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> UNEP, *For people on the front lines of climate change and conflict, COVID-19 is a new challenge*, 2020.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Roberts, War, Climate Change, and Women, Race, *Poverty & the Environment*, 2009, pp. 39-41.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> UNEP, *For people on the front lines of climate change and conflict, COVID-19 is a new challenge*, 2020.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> UNESCO, *Climate change raises conflict concerns*, 2021.

<sup>148</sup> ILO, *The gender gap in employment: What's holding women back?*, 2018.

<sup>149</sup> Roberts, War, Climate Change, and Women, *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, 2009, p. 39-41.

Empowering and supporting women to take on positions of leadership can lead to more effective climate change policies in areas of conflict.<sup>150</sup> The involvement of women in policy-making is key to implementing climate change solutions with gender perspectives and having more effective conflict- and natural disaster-responses.<sup>151</sup> While women are more likely to prioritize environmental issues in professional roles, they are less likely to hold positions of influence and power in policymaking, particularly in fragile- or conflicted-affected states.<sup>152</sup> For example, there are currently no women serving leadership roles in Yemen, despite the fact that women are the most economically- and socially-affected by this conflict.<sup>153</sup> The effects includes increased malnutrition, higher displacement, and gender and sexual based violence (SGBV).<sup>154</sup> Despite these structural challenges, Yemeni women have created the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security (2015) which has submits policy recommendations to the government and international organizations on ending the conflict, including conflict exacerbated by climate change, and beginning inclusive peacebuilding.<sup>155</sup> These women and their recommendations are playing an integral role in creating and maintaining peace in their communities.<sup>156</sup> While CSW focuses on understanding and combating the hardships women face due to the negative effects of climate change, especially women in rural areas and developing countries, this work cannot be done without the impacted women themselves supporting the development of effective policy frameworks.<sup>157</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Millions of women and girls reside in areas affected by the effects of climate change, preventing them from achieving their full potential.<sup>158</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened these effects, and CSW continues to advocate for the women most affected through policy recommendations and best practices.<sup>159</sup> Overall, as seen through recent examples, empowering and supporting women impacted by climate change, especially in rural and indigenous communities and areas of conflict, is an effective pathway forward to promote gender equality, building peace and security, and creating strong communities.<sup>160</sup> Gender equality matters in combating climate change because women and girls in developing countries are most affected, but hold the least power to mitigate its effects.<sup>161</sup> The provision of resources and educational tools to women in these areas remains a challenge, as does securing the political will to elect women to positions of political and policy-making power.<sup>162</sup> However the voices and actions of women at the grassroots level and civil society are a powerful tool in combating environmental issues and achieving gender equality in the context of climate change.<sup>163</sup>

### **Further Research**

Questions delegates should consider when beginning their research include: How can UN bodies, Member States, and NGOs come together to provide resources to women in rural areas and indigenous communities? How can women gain access to socioeconomic resources to maintain and protect their livelihoods from the consequences of climate change? How can CSW better operationalize its recommendations on empowering women affected by climate change? How can CSW help Member States in prioritizing and implementing the collection of sex-disaggregated data? How should the global community focus on including women's perspectives, mainly from rural and indigenous communities and

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<sup>150</sup> UNFCCC, *5 Reasons Why Climate Action Needs Women*, 2019.

<sup>151</sup> UN Women Watch, *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, 2009.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Silk, *Women Deliver, Pathways for Peace: Case Studies of Women's Leadership in Peace Processes*, 2019.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2021.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> UN Women, *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*, 2021.

<sup>161</sup> Yavinsky, Population Reference Bureau, *Women more Vulnerable than Men to Climate Change*, 2012.

<sup>162</sup> UN Women, *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*, 2021.

<sup>163</sup> UNFCCC, *5 Reasons Why Climate Action Needs Women*, 2019.

areas of conflict? How can civil society's recommendations be better utilized by CSW and other international actors?

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<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/panels/summaries/Summary%20Emerging%20Climate%20Change%206%20MAR.pdf>

*This document provides an overview of the 52nd session on CSW where participants discussed issues of gender perspective through climate change. Women in rural and indigenous communities are those who are most affected by but least responsible for climate change. Participants emphasized climate change disproportionately affects the poor, especially poor women, and discussed solutions to the issues. Delegates will find this resource useful because this report is crucial to CSW's involvement in achieving gender equality in the context of climate change, and it effectively discusses past and emerging issues and the necessary responses to these issues.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2018). *Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 20 June 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/sdg-report-gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018-en.pdf?la=en&vs=948>

*The report provides background on the Sustainable Development Goals and describes on each of their targets through a gender perspective. It provides relevant recommendations pertaining to gender for each goal and discusses the positive results of incorporating gender equality into each goal. For example, the report addresses access to affordable and clean energy, and the importance of combatting climate change and sustaining women's livelihoods. This report is useful for delegates as it provides concrete solutions to incorporating gender perspectives in climate change response policy, and specifically discusses the issues women face from the lack of gender perspectives in sustainability frameworks.*

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*This report provides recent data and statistics about violence against women (VAW) on a global scale. The data also discusses how VAW is linked to climate change and COVID-19 and provides data that proves access to education for women is one of the most effective tools for achieving gender equality. This resource is important for delegates because it discusses the detailed methodology behind these statistics and allows for inference on possible solutions.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2021). *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*. Retrieved 22 June 2021 from:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

*This report collects data and statistics on women and girls, and their participation in the Sustainable Development Goals. It provides data from international, federal, and local levels of government, and quantifies women's involvement in decision-making. This report will be a useful resource for delegate research because it discusses expanding participation of women in decision-making and allows for predictions on effective solutions and how this issue will evolve in the future.*

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*This article collects stories and data about people on the frontlines of climate change and conflict in their countries. It further expresses how COVID-19 has impacted them, particularly women and girls, and how they have adapted. For example, water shortages in Pakistan expose women and girls to violence and sexual exploitation since they are the main providers of water. These stories are important for delegates to research as they act as evidence for the importance of gender equality in climate change and provide potential entry points for solution proposals.*

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## 2. Realizing the Rights of Women in the World of Work

*“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”*<sup>164</sup>

### **Introduction**

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) recognizes that all human beings hold equal rights, including the right to work, to free choice of employment, and to just and favorable working conditions.<sup>165</sup> Nonetheless, in 18 countries, husbands can legally restrict their wives from working, and in 104 economies, there are laws preventing women from working in specific jobs.<sup>166</sup> As a result, 2.7 billion women globally are legally deprived from having the same job opportunities as men.<sup>167</sup> Women face a multitude of structural barriers in the work of work, including unequal access to resources, gender-based violence, and gendered stereotypes.<sup>168</sup> These barriers persist despite the fact that economic equality could have a significant economic impact, as the income loss caused by gender inequalities is estimated at 16% of the global gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>169</sup>

Women’s right to work, as defined by international human rights law, takes a wide-ranging view on the world of work by including not only formal and informal work, public and private spaces of work, and remote working, but also the commute to and from work, and work-related trips and events.<sup>170</sup> In 2020, the UN Human Rights Council’s (HRC) Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, concluded in its report titled *Women’s human rights in the changing world of work* that realizing women’s rights in the world of work includes removing legal and sociocultural barriers, publicly supporting paid and unpaid care work, granting women equal access to leadership positions, and ensuring freedom from any form of violence.<sup>171</sup>

During its 61<sup>st</sup> session in 2017, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) considered “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” as its priority theme.<sup>172</sup> The Member States concluded that the realization of women’s equal economic rights is crucial to women’s economic empowerment and therefore to the achievement of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), which contains the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).<sup>173</sup> Eradicating structural and social barriers for women in their access to equal opportunities in the world of work would therefore make a significant contribution to achieving these SDGs, in particular SDG 1 (“no poverty”), SDG 5 (“gender equality”), SDG 8 (“decent work and economic growth”), and SDG 10 (“reduced inequalities”).<sup>174</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

The foundation of women’s rights in the world of work was first enshrined in the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), which declared equal rights for men and women.<sup>175</sup> These rights were further reinforced by the UDHR and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966), which proclaim not only the rights to work and to fair and equal remuneration, but also the rights to safe

<sup>164</sup> Annan, Secretary-General says women’s wisdom, energies, creativity must be harnessed to build new Africa (SG/SM/6544), *UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, 1998.

<sup>165</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>166</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018*, 2018.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> UN Women, *Remove the barriers*.

<sup>169</sup> Ferrant & Kolev, *Does gender discrimination in social institutions matter for long-term growth? Cross-country evidence*, 2016.

<sup>170</sup> UN HRC, *Women’s human rights in the changing world of work: Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (A/HRC/44/51)*, 2020.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> UN CSW, *Report on the Sixty-First Session (E/CN.6/2017/21)*, 2017.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2017/3)*, 2017.

<sup>175</sup> *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

and healthy working conditions, rest, leisure, social security, and maternity leave.<sup>176</sup> The adoption of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979) further manifested the equal rights of women in the world of work and established a review mechanism on the implementation of CEDAW.<sup>177</sup> Articles 10 to 14 of CEDAW focus on specific economic rights, including the right to free choice of employment, to promotion, and to social security and the introduction of paid maternity leave.<sup>178</sup> Articles 17 to 22 established the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, consisting of 23 independent experts on women’s rights from around the world.<sup>179</sup> The Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of CEDAW by regularly reviewing submitted reports of the States parties to the convention and expressing general concerns, recommendations, and suggestions to States parties.<sup>180</sup>

These major international treaties are accompanied by several conventions, adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which cover principal international labor standards.<sup>181</sup> Two key conventions on women’s economic rights are the *Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)* (1951) and the *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)* (1958).<sup>182</sup> They present specific provisions on equal pay for work of equal value, equal opportunities for men and women, and the elimination of any discrimination in employment or occupation.<sup>183</sup> One of the most recent ILO conventions, the *Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)* (2019), provides a detailed definition of violence and harassment in the world of work and sets out specific provisions that governments need to follow to ensure a world free from any form of violence.<sup>184</sup>

The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA) was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and includes commitments to promote women’s economic independence, to ensure women’s equal access to economic resources, and to develop gender-sensitive multisectoral programmes.<sup>185</sup> The BPfA emphasizes that discrimination in education, job recruitment, job promotion, and remuneration continue to restrict economic opportunities for women.<sup>186</sup> Thus, the BPfA urges governments to promote women’s economic rights by enacting and enforcing legislation that guarantees the right of equal pay for work of equal value and legislation that is free from gender-based discrimination.<sup>187</sup> On the BPfA’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020, CSW adopted the “Political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women” and expressed its concern that the progress towards the implementation of the BPfA has not been sufficient, since no country has fully achieved gender equality.<sup>188</sup> On the same note, a report of the Secretary-General titled “Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2020/3)” (2020), confirmed that although 80% of Member States have strengthened their legislation to advance gender equality, the

<sup>176</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

<sup>177</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979; OHCHR, *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*.

<sup>180</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979; OHCHR, *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*.

<sup>181</sup> ILO, *ILO and gender equality*.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> ILO, *C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)*, 1951; ILO, *C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*, 1958.

<sup>184</sup> ILO, *C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)*, 2019.

<sup>185</sup> UN Women, *Global Norms and Standards: Economic Empowerment*.

<sup>186</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> UN CSW, *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, 2020.

progress in closing the global gender gap in labor force participation has stalled and gross inequalities among women in the world of work persist.<sup>189</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

During its 61<sup>st</sup> session in 2017, the Commission considered its priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” and set out a series of actions to be taken by all relevant stakeholders in seven key areas.<sup>190</sup> The report of the Secretary-General on the same occasion titled “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work (E/CN.6/2017/3),” found that the structural barriers to gender equality manifest in many different ways and were rooted in historically unequal power relations, discriminatory laws, and the unequal sharing of family responsibilities.<sup>191</sup> The world of work is further subject to significant changes caused by innovations that have spread throughout our globalized world faster than ever before.<sup>192</sup> These recent trends can provide women with new employment opportunities, but also pose great challenges to the achievement of gender equality.<sup>193</sup> A report by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) titled *The Digital Revolution: Implications for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights 25 Years after (2020)* also raises concerns over existing patterns of gender inequalities that limit women’s participation in the design and development of new digital technologies and thereby further reproduce biases against women.<sup>194</sup>

UN Women, which supports all programmatic aspects of CSW’s work, facilitates the active participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the sessions of CSW.<sup>195</sup> Before the 61<sup>st</sup> session of CSW in 2017, the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) and the Gender & Development Network (GADN) came together with their partners to formulate recommendations for governments attending the session.<sup>196</sup> In doing so, they urged governments to provide adequate universal social protection, address violence at work, redistribute unpaid care work, and include gender and climate justice in economic discussions.<sup>197</sup>

Besides CSW and UN Women, many other UN entities work towards the realization of gender equality in the world of work.<sup>198</sup> Major steps have been achieved by the ILO in aiming for the elimination of discrimination based on gender and actively promoting more inclusive workplaces by providing advice, tools guidance and technical assistance.<sup>199</sup> Work is also being done by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, which was established by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2010, including the recently published report *Women’s human rights in the changing world of work (2020)*, which focused on the future of work, including the impact of technological change, demographic change, accelerated globalization, and the shift to sustainable economies, and the anticipated impact on gender equality.<sup>200</sup> Additional UN programs and offices also do key programmatic work on this issue, including the UN Global Compact, which recently released the *Women’s Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business* framework and commitment in to foster support for women’s equality at the

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<sup>189</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2020/3)*, 2020.

<sup>190</sup> UN CSW, *Report on the Sixty-First Session (E/CN.6/2017/21)*, 2017.

<sup>191</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2017/3)*, 2017.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> UN Women, *The Digital Revolution: Implications for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights 25 Years after Beijing*, 2020.

<sup>195</sup> UN Women, *NGO participation*.

<sup>196</sup> AWID, *Webinar highlights: Corporate power and women’s economic justice*, 2017.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> UN Women, *Remove the barriers*.

<sup>199</sup> UN ILO, *Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch (GEDI)*.

<sup>200</sup> UN OHCHR, *Working group on discrimination against women and girls*.

highest levels of business leadership.<sup>201</sup> UN Women also works through a number of coalitions with civil society, including the Unstereotype Alliance and the Global Innovation Coalition for Change, as well as campaigns such as HeForShe and Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality.<sup>202</sup>

On a regional level, the European Union (EU) is protecting women's rights through legislation, funding, networking, and awareness raising.<sup>203</sup> For example, the *2014 Non-Financial Reporting Directive* (2004) obligates large listed companies and banks with more than 500 employees to publish reports on their diversity on company boards, in terms of age, gender, and educational and professional background.<sup>204</sup> The African Union (AU) declared the years 2020-2030 as the new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion.<sup>205</sup> In this, African leaders committed themselves to increase efforts towards progressive gender inclusion by enabling all women to work, to be paid, and to participate in their country's economy.<sup>206</sup> In Latin America, more than 600 companies from 14 countries have committed themselves to reducing gender gaps and promoting gender equality under the Gender Equality Seal (GES) Programme.<sup>207</sup> The GES Programme was launched in 2009 with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and actively engages the private sector to achieve women's empowerment in the business world.<sup>208</sup> The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), another public-private partnership (PPP), supports governments and employers' and workers' organizations to raise awareness, share knowledge, embrace innovation, and scale up initiatives, thereby taking concrete steps towards an equal and inclusive world of work.<sup>209</sup>

In their role as worker's rights defenders, international trade unions have also intensified their efforts towards the realization of women's rights in the world of work.<sup>210</sup> At CSW's 65<sup>th</sup> session, Global Unions, a coalition of international trade unions and workers' federations, called on Member States to realize a gender-equal new social contract, to ensure a world free from violence and harassment, and to secure equality in decision-making and leadership.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is campaigning to ensure the universal ratification and effective implementation of ILO Convention No. 190 (2019) by raising public awareness and supporting workers' representative organizations.<sup>212</sup>

### **Addressing Sexual Harassment and Violence in the World of Work**

As established in framework international treaties and documents, including CEDAW (1979), BPfA (1995), and several ILO conventions, everyone has the right to live and work free from violence and harassment.<sup>213</sup> However, it is estimated that no less than 75% of the world's women have experienced sexual harassment or violence in their lives.<sup>214</sup> With a lack in global data, national figures on sexual violence in an employment context vary greatly.<sup>215</sup> A study from in France revealed that one in three women workers have experienced sexual harassment; in Mexico survey results show that 46% of women have been a victim to sexual harassment; and in Indonesia 85% of women reported to have been concerned with sexual harassment.<sup>216</sup> As a form of sexual violence, sexual harassment can be defined as "any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature [...] with the purpose or

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<sup>201</sup> UN Global Compact, *Endorse the Women's Empowerment Principles*, 2020.

<sup>202</sup> UN Women, *Businesses and Philanthropies*, 2021.

<sup>203</sup> European Commission, *Spotlight on EU Action for Women*, 2020.

<sup>204</sup> European Parliament, *Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD)*, 2021.

<sup>205</sup> AU, *A new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion; why scaling up actions is inevitable*, 2020.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> UNDP, *The Gender Equality Seal Programme*, 2019.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> EPIC, *The Coalition*, 2018.

<sup>210</sup> ITUC, *Women*, 2021.

<sup>211</sup> Global Unions, *UNCSW65 Global Unions Statement*, 2020.

<sup>212</sup> Global Labour Institute, *Facilitator Guide: Train the Trainers Toolkit on the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206)*, 2021.

<sup>213</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>214</sup> Chamie, *Sexual Harassment: At least 2 Billion Women*, 2018.

<sup>215</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

effect of violating the dignity of a person,” as comprehensively established by the EU.<sup>217</sup> Sexual harassment may include leaning over, cornering, stalking, indecent comments, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, unsolicited touching, sexual assault, and rape.<sup>218</sup> The development of new technology has also led perpetrators to exploit the lack of legislation on newer forms of sexual harassment, such as unwanted sexually explicit emails or text messages, sharing unsolicited pornographic material, and inappropriate advances on social media.<sup>219</sup> While anyone can be affected by sexual harassment, women report the majority of cases and can experience sexual harassment regardless of their age, location, income, or social status.<sup>220</sup>

Sexual harassment in the workplace is considered to be a result of unequal gender roles and power dynamics between men and women, which are rooted in social norms that maintain harmful stereotypes and behavioral patterns.<sup>221</sup> According to the UN, this includes “the ideology of men’s entitlement and privilege over women, social norms regarding masculinity and the need to [...] prevent, discourage or punish what is considered to be unacceptable female behavior.”<sup>222</sup> For example, women in higher management positions are more likely to face sexual harassment than women in other occupational groups because they may be perceived as a threat to traditional gender power dynamics.<sup>223</sup> A 2018 survey commissioned and conducted by CARE International in Australia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom and Viet Nam found that men often perceive sexual harassment and abuse to be acceptable behavior in the workplace.<sup>224</sup> Among the participants, 23% of men believe that asking for or expecting sexual interactions from an employee is sometimes or always acceptable.<sup>225</sup>

Sexual harassment in the world of work can have devastating consequences for a woman’s wellbeing, safety and health and result in compromised performance, higher rates of absenteeism, and harmful coping mechanisms, including alcohol or substance abuse.<sup>226</sup> By affecting women’s physical and mental health, it also restricts women’s economic and social potential, which is why it poses a great obstacle to achieving gender equality in the world of work.<sup>227</sup> While the impacts on the affected women are devastating, sexual harassment can also have severe effects on the workplace and other employees, including decreased workers’ productivity, negative company reputation, and higher turnover.<sup>228</sup> A country’s economy can also suffer from the negative impact of sexual harassment.<sup>229</sup> In Australia, for instance, the annual financial burden of sexual harassment in the workplace is estimated at \$3.5 billion, caused by absenteeism, staff turnover, costs of the health system, legal fees and other costs.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> EU, *Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast) (2006/54/EC)*, 2006.

<sup>218</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>219</sup> EU FRA, *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results*, 2014.

<sup>220</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2017/3)*, 2017; UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>221</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>222</sup> UN CEDAW, *General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (CEDAW/C/GC/35)*, 2017.

<sup>223</sup> EU FRA, *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results*, 2014; UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>224</sup> CARE International, *New Global Poll: Significant Share of Men Believe Expecting Intimate Interactions, Sex from Employees is OK*, 2018.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>227</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2017/3)*, 2017.

<sup>228</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, *The economic costs of sexual harassment in the workplace. Final report*, 2019.

Globally, there are still 50 economies that do not have legislation protecting women from any form of sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>231</sup> Nevertheless, governments are the primary actors tasked to implement the obligations raised by several international and regional instruments, which contain specific provisions on sexual harassment.<sup>232</sup> For example, ILO Convention No. 190 (2019) obligates States parties to adopt legislation that guarantees women to work free from discrimination, violence, and harassment.<sup>233</sup> However, it is important to acknowledge that some states have become more aware of the issue, and passed effective legislation on sexual harassment.<sup>234</sup> For example, in Sierra Leone, a new law was introduced that includes comprehensive definitions and concrete disciplinary measures for such offenses in the workplace, and Georgia now provides civil remedies for unfair dismissal of victims of sexual harassment.<sup>235</sup>

As the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the transition of many workers to home office situations, the risk for female workers to be domestically abused, especially when being quarantined with their abusive partners, has dramatically increased.<sup>236</sup> Since the beginning of national lockdowns, reported cases of domestic violence have increased dramatically worldwide.<sup>237</sup> Singapore registered an increase of 33% in helpline calls; in France, reported cases have increased by 30%; and Argentina reported 25% more emergency calls for domestic abuse.<sup>238</sup> As working from home has complicated reporting abuse cases or seeking help, companies have implemented various measures to protect their female workers from domestic violence in home office situations.<sup>239</sup> For instance, the North American branch of Rio Tinto set up an email for their employees to seek help in situations of domestic abuse, declares them as “essential office workers” to transfer them to safe locations and offers up to 10 days of paid leave on a case-by-case basis.<sup>240</sup> UN Women also stresses the importance of the private sector in raising awareness, conducting risk assessments, and taking security measures to support their employees, and urges governments to take accelerated action against the increased violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>241</sup> As a number of companies intend to permanently shift to flexible workspaces, that combine office and remote working, they need to be aware of their responsibility in protecting their employees from domestic abuse.<sup>242</sup>

### **Tackling the Gender Pay Gap**

By adopting the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), the international community committed itself to ensuring “that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment,” with SDG target 8.5 calling for the implementation of equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>243</sup> Equal pay for work of equal value, or equal remuneration, directly refers to the wage paid for the same job.<sup>244</sup> Therefore, this term is distinct from the gender pay gap, which is defined as the gap between the average wage paid to women compared to men.<sup>245</sup> Globally, the gender wage gap is estimated at

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<sup>231</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2020*, 2020.

<sup>232</sup> UN Women, *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*, 2019.

<sup>233</sup> ILO, *C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)*, 2019.

<sup>234</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2020*, 2020.

<sup>235</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2020*, 2020; World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2021*, 2021.

<sup>236</sup> Meyer, *Domestic Abuse Reports Fueled by More Remote Workers*, 2020.

<sup>237</sup> UN Women, *Covid-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, 2020.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> UN Women, *The Covid19 Shadow Pandemic: Domestic Violence in the World of Work*, 2020.

<sup>240</sup> Rio Tinto, *North America Announcement: Family & Domestic Violence and COVID-19*, 2020.

<sup>241</sup> UN Women, *The Covid19 Shadow Pandemic: Domestic Violence in the World of Work*, 2020; UN Women, *Covid-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, 2020.

<sup>242</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, *The future of work after COVID-19*, 2021; UN Women, *The Covid19 Shadow Pandemic: Domestic Violence in the World of Work*, 2020.

<sup>243</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>244</sup> ILO, *C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)*, 1951.

<sup>245</sup> UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016.



23%, which means that women only earn 77% of what men do, and without targeted action this gap is not estimated to close before 2086.<sup>246</sup>

The lack of equality in remuneration and average wages can be directly linked to practices of discrimination and the undervaluation of women's work, but the causes can also be wide-ranging and not limited to the discrimination women face in the world of work alone.<sup>247</sup> On average, women take on a large share of family responsibilities and therefore do more unpaid work than men, including housework and childcare.<sup>248</sup> By this unequal sharing of care work, women are left with less time for paid work, may often base their career choices on their family responsibilities, and are far more likely to have career breaks than men.<sup>249</sup> The *2019 report on equality between women and men in the EU* (2019) from the European Commission further shows that about 30% of the gender pay gap in EU Member States can be explained by the fact that women are overrepresented in low-paying sectors, including care and education.<sup>250</sup> Women are also often excluded from the highest positions in companies as only about 22% of enterprises report to have a female chief executive officer (CEO).<sup>251</sup>

UN Women further identified several reasons that explain the difficulties in closing the gender pay gap.<sup>252</sup> They include discriminatory social norms and deeply-rooted attitudes that lead to the systematic denial of women's access to equal payment.<sup>253</sup> These practices were illustrated in UN Women's "Gender equality attitudes study 2019" that found that 34% of men and 24% of women agree that, for the same job, men should earn more than women.<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, legislation on equal pay for work of equal value is not only ineffective, but also limited, as only 90 economies have legal obligations for companies to follow the value of equal remuneration.<sup>255</sup> UN Women further criticized reduced regulation and transparency, which further complicate closing the gender pay gap.<sup>256</sup>

Proposed solutions towards closing the gender pay gap include: undertaking legislative measures, including laws that enforce the principle of equal remuneration, raising minimum wages, and obligating employers to undertake gender pay audits.<sup>257</sup> Non-legislative measures include raising awareness, combating gender-stereotypes, and creating incentives for all relevant stakeholders.<sup>258</sup> ILO's *Women at Work* report from 2016 further concluded that equal remuneration can be promoted through wage transparency and gender neutral evaluation methods.<sup>259</sup> Limiting overtime hours, strengthening collective bargaining, countering stereotypes towards unpaid care work, and normalizing part-time work can also be helpful towards closing the gender pay gap.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016; ILO, *Women at Work, Trends 2016*, 2016.

<sup>247</sup> ILO, *Women at Work, Trends 2016*, 2016; European Parliament, *Understanding the gender pay gap: definition and causes*, 2021.

<sup>248</sup> European Parliament, *Understanding the gender pay gap: definition and causes*, 2021.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> EU, *2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU*, 2019.

<sup>251</sup> ILO, *The business case for change*, 2019.

<sup>252</sup> UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016.

<sup>253</sup> UN Women, *Are you ready for change? Gender equality attitudes study 2019*, 2020.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016; ILO, *Women at Work, Trends 2016*, 2016.

<sup>256</sup> UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016.

<sup>257</sup> UN CSW, *Report on the sixty-first session (E/2017/27-E/CN.6/2017/21)*, 2017; UN Women, *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: From Individual Choices to Institutional Change*, 2016.

<sup>258</sup> UN CSW, *Ministerial round table: Gender pay gaps in the public and private sectors: how can equal pay for work of equal value be achieved in the changing world of work? (E/CN.6/2017/13)*, 2017.

<sup>259</sup> ILO, *Women at Work, Trends 2016*, 2016.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Women's rights in the world of work are enshrined in several international human rights documents, especially ICESCR and CEDAW.<sup>261</sup> Nevertheless, women remain less likely to participate in the labor force, are overrepresented in low-paying sectors, are paid less than men, and are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence in the workplace.<sup>262</sup> Adopted in 1995, the BPfA urges governments to take accelerated action towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and though there has been progress, structural barriers and discriminatory practices persist.<sup>263</sup> CSW, mandated to promote the rights of women, to build up global standards on gender equality and women empowerment, and to reflect the situations women are living in worldwide, is closely connected to the realization of the rights of women in the world of work.<sup>264</sup>

## Further Research

Keeping in mind the mandate of CSW, as an intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of women's rights, delegates should consider questions when starting their research such as: How can Member States accelerate the implementation of the BPfA on the issue of women's economic empowerment? What kind of recommendations can CSW make to Member States to effectively engage the private sector in realizing women's rights to and at work? How can Member States successfully address deeply rooted social norms that maintain harmful stereotypes and behavioral patterns? Which stakeholders are crucial for realizing the rights of women in the world of work and how can they be actively engaged in the realization of women's rights in the world?

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*The 2019 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) requires governments to respect, promote and protect the right to work free from violence and harassment, and obliges them to adopt laws and policies that ensure the right to equality in the world of work. This guide published by Human Rights Watch in 2020 describes and explains the articles, definitions, scope, and ratification of the convention and includes promising examples of effective government practices. It provides an excellent resource for delegates to understand this key framework treaty and its contents.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2019). *Handbook: Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work*. Retrieved 23 June 2021 from:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/handbook-addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work>

*This handbook published by UN Women and ILO gives a broad overview on key definitions, legal and policy frameworks, and good practices in the field of violence and harassment against women in the world of work. As it examines the role of state and non-state actors and suggests a transformative approach to ending these violations of women's rights in the world of work, it provides an excellent foundation for research on sexual harassment in an employment context. This is an important source for delegates to develop a comprehensive understanding for the topic at hand, including definitions, policy examples legal frameworks and a transformative approach to ending violence and harassment in the world of work.*

<sup>261</sup> UN HRC, *Women's human rights in the changing world of work: Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (A/HRC/44/51)*, 2020.

<sup>262</sup> UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

<sup>263</sup> UN CSW, *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, 2020.

<sup>264</sup> UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2020). *Gender Equality – Women’s Rights in Review 25 Years after Beijing*. Retrieved 24 June 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-womens-rights-in-review-en.pdf?la=en&vs=934>

*25 Years after the Fourth World Conference, UN Women reviewed the progress and problems in the implementation of BPfA. The report examines the status quo in the implementation of the Declaration and proposes a variety of solutions to overcome the many remaining gaps in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Delegates will find this document helpful to viewing the progress in the implementation of BPfA and the steps that still need to be taken, especially on women’s economic empowerment.*

United Nations, Human Rights Council, Forty-fourth session. (2020). *Women’s human rights in the changing world of work: Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (A/HRC/44/51)*. Retrieved 19 June 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/51>

*The report by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls provides a gendered perspective on the most significant trends in the world of work. It gives a comprehensive introduction into women’s rights in the world of work, and analyses challenges and opportunities that may arise with these new technological trends. Delegates will find this report particularly helpful to gain an overview of the topic, including definitions, the status-quo, and current trends.*

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*With this briefing, Womankind Worldwide provides a useful overview of women’s economic rights, the barriers to the full achievement of gender equality, best practices, and areas for priority action. It is particularly useful as an outline of the most important aspects of women’s rights in the world of work, including climate justice, paid work, and access to education. This source will help guide delegates through more detailed research of the topic at hand and develop action plans.*

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