

UN Gender Network: Policy Proposals on Gender Equality and Parity

The UN Charter envisages a role for women within the UN organisation. The Preamble and Articles 1(3) and 8 directly address women as part of the UN Secretariat. The geographic requirements contained in Article 101 can be interpreted as requiring gender equality.

The phrase 'We the peoples of the United Nations' includes all of the world's population - including women.

Currently the UN Secretariat is not representative of 'the peoples'.



Ave. Women in Senior Positions:
33.26% D1 level & 30.4% D2 level

31.8%



Ave. Women in Junior Positions:
60.5% at P1 & 57.5 at P2

59%



The statistical breakdown shows that women remain overrepresented at the two lowest levels within the Secretariat and underrepresented at the two most senior levels of management.

The 100-year anniversary of the creation of the League of Nations is fast approaching. This is a momentous event for women working at the international level. At a time when, bar a very small minority, all states excluded women from acting as diplomats the League of Nations following the intervention of women's organisations, specifically stated in its Covenant that women were as entitled to work for the Organisation as men... Unfortunately, now, the UN is no longer at the vanguard falls behind many member states.

Prof Rosa Freedman & Prof Aoife O'Donoghue



Image from Angela Hayden

Policy Proposals on Gender Equality and Parity

A Tale of Missed Targets

1986: General Assembly Resolution 41/206 gender inequality officially recognised as a problem within the UN target of 30% subject to geographic representation by 1990.

1996: General Assembly Resolution 51/67 sets the year 2000 as a target for gender parity.

1998: General Assembly Resolution 52/96 creates the Focal Point for Women (FPW).

2001: General Assembly Resolution 55/69 gender

parity in 'the very near future'.

2005: General Assembly Resolution 59/164 gender parity in 'the very near future'.

2010: General Assembly Resolution 64/141 gender parity without any deadline.

2016: General Assembly Resolution 70/133 reiterated the need to meet a target of 50/50.

Gender Equality Policy Proposals

Foundational and Legal Mandate

The United Nations (UN) should recognise that it has legal gender mandate within the UN Charter based on the Preamble, Article 1.3, Article 8 and Article 101.

The UN should consider the legal mandate for **geographical representation** to include gender difference.

Gender Parity is the equal representation of genders, at all levels and in all areas, in the workplace. Full and equal workplace parity is contingent upon their equal representation in decision-making positions. Similar or equivalent participation rates within a 40 to 60 range of representation over a sustained period of time.

Mandatory training for all staff on **unconscious bias, gender equality, bullying and harassment**

The UN should conduct a full study of its **Organisational Culture**.

Gender Equality is the concept that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities, and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles; that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

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Harassment and Bullying:

Unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Managers are potentially liable when they are aware that harassment or bullying has taken place, and have not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

Evaluation and Accountability

The UN should conduct a series of tests to consider whether it would meet the requirements of

- a. International Labour Organisation Gender Equality Standards
- b. Sustainable Development Goal 5 standards,
- c. United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979.

The UN should rename the term '**temporary special measures**' as permanent. Their title is part of their ineffectiveness.

The UN should formalise a system of **mentoring, coaching and sponsoring**.

The UN should consider the **artwork** in all its workplaces. It should consider who the artists are and who is represented and celebrated in the art work. It should also consider the gender specific roles given to individuals in the artwork.

KEY DATES

1919 Women succeed in getting into the League of Nations

1945 Women delegates insist on women's insertion into the UN Charter

1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

1986 General Assembly Resolution recognises gender as an issue for the Secretariat

1998 Creation of *Focal Point for Women*

2000 Goal of gender parity by 2000 missed

2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security

2010 Creation of *UN Women*

2015 General Assembly Res.70/133 50/50

2017 UN System Strategy on Gender Parity

"We the peoples of the United Nations...reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women..."
Preamble, UN Charter

UN Gender Network

The UN Gender Network (UNGN) is rooted in both strengthening the UN's leadership of gender equality and the empowerment of women working within the UN Secretariat, Funds, Programmes and Agencies.

The UNGN believes that to enhance the UN's leadership legitimacy in all areas but society, member states and

particularly regarding gender individuals working at the UN equality; to ensure the UN attracts the best talent from around the globe and to guarantee the UN fully represents 'we the peoples' It aims to achieve a deep significant change regarding gender equality amongst UN staff is impact of gender inequality within the UN and the impact this has on its leadership.

to enhance the UN's leadership The UNGN brings academics, civil society, member states and



UN Gender Network: Policy Proposals based upon five premises:

1. Gender equality requires change in organisational culture. This necessitates attitudinal, practice and purpose change. The idea that working at the UN is a 'calling' ought not to be the basis for forestalling change in the workplace.
2. Gender parity requires representation of women across the Organisation as a whole and at all levels of seniority. Parity is not simply measured by a snapshot of a particular date but rather a longitudinal understanding of women's presence or absence.
3. The UN, as a global leader, must undertake the best practices that have emerged from state-based activity. A culture of exceptionalism for the 'special' nature of employment at the UN cannot be a basis for intransigence.
4. Partial change and numerical targets, thus far, have not succeeded, more radical steps are required.
5. The aim of gender equality and parity is to assist in making a workplace a space where all can flourish and develop.

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References

'Beyond Hortatory Language: The United Nations Secretariat and the Charter's Mandate for Gender Equality'

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<https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/united-nations-gender-network/>