

## Concept Note for CSW70 Side Event

# Strategic Responses to Backlash against Gender Justice and Women's Access to Justice

**Time:** Monday, 16.03.2026, 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM  
**Location:** Conference Room 11, General Assembly Building  
**Hosts:** FES and UNRISD  
**Co-sponsors:** Finland, Germany, UK, UNAIDS  
Costa Rica (tbc)

This panel discussion will offer expert presentations on global trends as well as strategic responses to backlash against gender justice as a central driver of contemporary democratic erosion, with a specific focus on its impact on women's and girls' access to justice, and the integrity of democratic institutions.

As legal frameworks, judicial independence, and accountability mechanisms come under increasing pressure, women and girls - particularly those facing intersecting forms of discrimination - are often among the first to lose effective access to justice, remedies, and protection of their rights. In this sense, gender rollback is not only a rights concern but an early warning signal of democratic regression.

The event is hosted by UNRISD and FES and will bring together a group of thought leaders, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to explore strategic responses to the impact that anti-gender movements and democratic erosion have in terms of undermining gender equality, the rule of law, and women's ability to claim, use, and trust justice systems at national, regional, and international levels.

The session aims at demonstrating the urgency for gender champions governments, multilateral organisations and CSOs to organise and counter the backlash against gender justice not only at the national level but in multilateral spaces. It will facilitate collective and strategic exchange among likeminded allies to defend rights-based and democratic governance on a policy and UN level.

[Please register here for the event.](#)

## Speakers

### Introduction

- **Katia Schnellecke**, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Berlin

### Keynote

- **César Antonio Núñez**, UNAIDS New York Office

### Panel

- **Haley McEwen**, University of Gothenburg & University of the Witwatersrand
- **Laura Turquet**, UN Women
- **Lata Narayanaswamy**, School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Leeds
- **María Noel Estrada (*Noni*)**, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
- **Joy Chia**, Prospera
- **Laxman Belbase**, MenEngage Alliance

**Moderator**

- **Merle Rutz**, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York

Target Groups: Government representatives, multilateral actors, donor agencies, civil society leaders, and policy influencers engaged in gender justice, rule of law, and democratic governance processes at national and international levels.