

From Words to Change: How the UN System Champions Women’s Participation in Public Life

CSW70 UN Women Side Event on the Review Theme

led by UN Women Coordination Division, IANWGE, and PPID/Leadership Section

Date and Time: 12 March 2026, 13:15 – 14:30 (1 hour 15 minutes)

Venue: UN Secretariat, CR-2

Format: Fully in-person at UNHQ, New York

Background

On the occasion of the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), UN Women, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Gender Equality (IANWGE), will organize a side-event spotlighting the UN system’s coordinated and strategic support to Member States in implementing the CSW65 Agreed Conclusions on *“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.”*

Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life remains both a foundational human right and a prerequisite for achieving gender equality. Three decades after the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progress remains slow and uneven to meet the 2030 targets. As documented in the Secretary-General’s review theme report for CSW70 (E/CN.6/2026/4), at current rates it will take over four decades to achieve gender parity in national parliaments. Women in public life face escalating risks, including gender-based violence – both offline and amplified through technology – shrinking civic space, organized backlash, and persistent structural barriers like unpaid care work and discriminatory social norms. The 2024 “mega-election year” saw stalled progress, and women remain significantly underrepresented in executive, diplomatic, and corporate leadership.

Against this backdrop, the UN system has been actively working to translate global commitments into national action. Aligned with the UN system-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP) and UN Development System reforms, entities are increasingly moving beyond siloed approaches to deliver integrated support, including through strengthened normative guidance, enhanced shared data systems and tools, and joint programming on women’s political participation. This is particularly evident in the [IANWGE Compendium on promising practices on gender mainstreaming](#), showcasing UN system-wide initiatives on supporting women’s leadership (pp.92-104).

The discussion will critically examine how the UN system is addressing the significant challenges to women's leadership and how global and national efforts made thus far can be more effective, integrated, and scaled up. The event will identify further actionable solutions and strengthened partnerships – with civil society, national institutions, and youth – required to ensure women's safe and effective leadership and decision-making in public life becomes a cornerstone of sustainable development by 2030. It will highlight specific examples of joint programs, shared tools, and UN system-wide strategies, including those that address male accountability and social norms, to create a supportive environment for women's leadership.

Objectives

- Highlight concrete examples, good practices, and lessons learned from the UN system's joint initiatives, tools, and data in supporting Member States to implement the CSW65 Agreed Conclusions and demonstrate how UN entities are jointly supporting and responding.
- Discuss the current status and progress made, through data and trends, and persistent challenges hindering women's participation and representation, including the impact of conflict, digital violence, structural barriers, etc.
- Propose actionable recommendations and strategies for a more coherent UN system support to accelerate progress and explore how partnerships with civil society, youth, electoral bodies and other stakeholders strengthen impact.
- Advance system-wide alignment for the Beijing+30 Agenda by positioning women's leadership as a core accelerator under the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, and identify opportunities for strengthened coordination across UN agencies, regional bodies, and country teams.