

# **GECMUN 8**

## **Background Guide**

### Economic and Social Council

Achieving gender equality: broadening the scope of women's political participation and employment

SDG: 5. Gender Equality

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# Committee Introduction

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945 for coordination of economic, social, humanitarian, and cultural activities carried out by the UN. ECOSOC identifies solutions, facilitates international cooperation, and encourages universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The council maintains a consultative status to more than 3900 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which allows them to attend UN conferences and speak about their concerns to the UN. The consultative relationship was established by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

ECOSOC membership is based on geographic representations such as Africa, Asia, Eastern/Western Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Members are elected by the General assembly every 3 years. At the ECOSOC World Summit 2015, it was commanded that the council convene annual ministerial reviews to monitor progress on global partnerships and agree on development goals.

ECOSOC's role in reviewing international goals was enhanced by the creation of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which is the meeting created for the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The HLPF meets to provide political guidance on implementation, review the progress, and support the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is within the purview of ECOSOC, discussing current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women. It was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

The United Nations Economic and Social council expresses deep concern over the lack of women's participation in politics, and the discrimination involving their employment. Under the agenda, 'Broadening the scope of women's political participation and employment, the committee will discuss practical solutions and draft resolutions that encourage women's active participation in different roles in the society.

# Agenda Introduction

It has long been said throughout the last century that the human population has only been half-represented through male-dominated society. And while the discrimination against women has been widely disputed with immense efforts, the inequality among genders remains undeniably evident in every society.

The UN raises concerns over the concrete facts that reveal the reality of women's global underrepresentation in all levels of the decision-making process and the rigid limitation of women's economic participation. UN Women, one of UN's many entities, clearly reveals that "As of 2020, women held only 20.5% of high-level legislative positions, which is still too low a percentage to have an effective influence on policy making" and that "Proportion of young women who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are 17 percent point higher than that of men."

Women's representation in politics and the job market is crucial for the global economy; the achievement in gender equality not only has enormous ramifications from a socio-economic standpoint, but it also reaches for the fundamental rights that women had fought for centuries. Through the agenda, *Achieving gender equality: broadening the scope of women's political participation and employment*, this committee endeavors to expedite the advancements for gender equality, resolving a deep-rooted, imminent conflict that has existed for centuries.

# Letter from the Chairs

Dear esteemed delegates,

Welcome to the United Nation Economic and Social Council! My name is GhaBin Kim, and I am a sophomore at St.Johnsbury Academy Jeju. I'll be serving as a head chair for the ECOSOC committee. GECMUN 8 will be my third conference participating as a chair, and for my vice-chairs, it will be their second time chairing. My deputy and associate chairs in this committee are Harry Jung and Alyssa Choi, who are also sophomores at SJAJ. It is an honor for us to be part of this fabulous conference as chairs.

Our MUN journeys all started in Middle school. We enjoy Model United Nations because it provides wonderful opportunities to learn about past and current global affairs. I liked the excitement of the process from the opening speeches to drafting resolutions.

As your chairs, we will be moderating the committee and helping delegates to draft a practical resolution with their fellow delegates. We highly encourage you to research the agenda, have a passion for representing your country, and be engaged. We recommend all delegates to have plentiful background knowledge about the agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) for a successful debate.

We all understand that participating in MUN conferences might be stressful for beginners, however, I can assure you that this experience will help you a lot in the future. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, and remember to have fun!

Sincerely,

ECOSOC chairs

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# Key Terms

## **Gender Equality/Equity**

Gender Equality is the concept that both genders have equal opportunities for their full potential, human rights, and dignity, and contributing to economic, social, cultural, and political development. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender. The process to achieve gender equality is called gender equity, which recognizes that women are not at the same starting point as men due to historical and social disadvantages.

## **Gender Balance**

Gender balance is a situation where both males and females have equal opportunities and access to matters in all the institutions of the society, namely, religion, economy, education, culture, and polity. One of the erroneous beliefs about gender is that it is about women. However, a definition of gender explores a combination of subjects affecting both men and women within a society. It is a social construct identifying relationships, expectations, and roles of both males and females in any given society.

## **Glass Ceiling**

The term "glass ceiling" is a metaphor that has often been used to describe invisible barriers ("glass") through which women can see elite positions, for example in government or the private sector, but cannot reach them. These barriers prevent large numbers of women and ethnic minorities from obtaining and securing the most powerful, prestigious, and highest-paying jobs in the workforce.

## **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people live in peace by 2030. One of the universal goals, Goal 5 was created to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. As a correlation between politics and gender equality, target 5.5 of SDG 5 states 'Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.

## **Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

## **Gender Norms**

Gender Norms are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture, and community at that point in time. They are ideas about how men and women should be and act. Gender Norms significantly affect women in the workplace, preventing women from employment and promotion.

### **Women's political participation**

Women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of political life and decision-making. Women's participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries. There is a steady upward trend in women's political participation and representation in developed countries, particularly in Nordic countries. Out of twelve countries where women's representation in parliament is more than 33%, nine of them are ranked in the high human development category.

### **Discrimination against women**

Women often experience gender-based discrimination in any aspect of their daily lives. Sex discrimination can be divided into three types: direct, indirect, harassment, and victimization. It is direct discrimination to treat someone less favorably because of their sex. Indirect discrimination refers to situations where policies or practices provide disadvantages to women. Lastly, victimization happens when a victim of discrimination is treated unfairly because of the fact that she complained about the discrimination.

### **Gender quotas**

Positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or several places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria.

# Historical Background

Disclaimer: Considering the nature of the agenda, this historical background only provides a broad overview of the history, taking into account the vast and expansive history of women's rights. Also, please note that the background might be centered on the US due to the limited availability of various sources from other countries.

## Timeline:

### *Rise of feminism & Women activists*

- July 19-20, 1848: In the first women's rights convention organized by women, the Seneca Falls Convention was held in New York. In this convention, 68 women and 32 men signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which would trigger decades of activism towards the 19th Amendment: women's right to vote.

### *Suffrage Movement*

- May 15, 1869: National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) was founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The association coordinated the national suffrage movement.
- December 18, 1894: The Australian State of South Australia was the first sovereign state in the world to officially grant full suffrage to women.
- April 2, 1917: Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a longtime activist with the NWSA, was sworn in as the first woman elected to be a member of the House of Representatives.
- Aug 18, 1920: Ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is made, declaring "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

### *World War II (1939-1945)*

- It is widely known that women famously joined the labor force in the chaos during World War II to support the nation's economy. And despite the decrease in the percentage of women workers shortly after the war, women's economic participation has risen relatively steadily throughout the years; According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force participation rate increased from 30% in 1950 to around 60% in 2010.

### *Expansion of women's rights*

- June 10, 1963: Equal Pay Act, a law prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination between men and women performing the same job in the same workplace, is signed by President John F. Kennedy.
- July 2, 1964: Civil Rights Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson; Title VII bans employment discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, or sex.
- October 28, 1974: Equal Credit Opportunity Act illegalized banks and financial firms to deny credit based on sex or marital status.

- October 31, 1978: Civil Rights Act was amended to outlaw job discrimination because of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.
- March 12, 1993: Janet Reno is sworn in as the first female attorney general of the United States, nominated by President Bill Clinton.
- Jan 23, 1997: Also nominated by Clinton, Madeleine Albright became the nation's first female secretary of state.
- Jan 4, 2007: U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) became the first female speaker of the House.
- July 26, 2016: Hillary Clinton became the first woman to receive a presidential nomination from a major political party.
- January 20, 2021: Kamala Harris is sworn in as the first woman and first woman of color vice president of the United States.

*Major UN Involvement (THIS SECTION IS NOT CHRONOLOGICALLY ALIGNED WITH THE REST OF THE SECTION):*

- 15 September 1995: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was produced in the Fourth World Conference on Women, with 189 Member States present. Even after 20 years, the Platform for Action is considered one of “the most progressive blueprints ever for advancing women’s rights.”
- July 2010: United Nations General Assembly established ‘UN Women’, addressing the issues of gender equality.
- 2015: UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Current State of Affairs

Amid an ongoing crisis of Covid-19, the consequences appear to exacerbate women's participation in politics and job markets, a recent UN report reveals. In the UN's report published in 2020 October, it asserted that not only the growth of working-age women stagnated-- or showed minimal change-- over 25 years in the labor market, but the managerial positions of women also remained the same proportion as in 1995. The report quotes, "while women's representation in parliament has more than doubled globally, it has still not crossed the barrier of 25% of parliamentary seats in 2020."

However, it is also important to note that the representation of women in politics varies significantly depending on the region. Generally, recent research reveals that Nordic nations-- with 40% of women representation in parliament-- performed well, while Pacific nations showed contrasting results with the lowest rate of women's representation. Recent efforts in developing countries in Latin America or the Caribbean saw an increase in women's representation through the adoption of gender quotas and milestones, UN mentioned.

In terms of the economic participation of women, women are inclined to work part-time in almost all countries (95%), a possible explanation for the observed persistent gender pay gap at around 12%, although both women and men are typically employed in different sectors appears to be a more notable factor of a difference in the pay gap. Regardless, research shows that a great proportion of women lack economic opportunities globally compared to those of men.

Upon actions from intergovernmental organizations and voices from activists, many countries have individually made efforts to set policies against gender discrimination. However, some countries are confronted with backlashes from men for so-called 'reverse discrimination'. For instance, in South Korea, the recent political clash regarding the termination of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family demonstrates how a cohort of certain male politicians are raising their voices. While these events brought more conflicts in gender issues, it is also noticeable how few women were involved in such political discourse.

Governments and other intergovernmental organizations such as the UN or EU have continuously endeavored to call for actions and commitments for gender equality. In recent cases, The Commission on the Status of Women held a conference on March 5, 2021, advancing discussions on gender equality amid covid-19. EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 also focuses on the policies within all nations within the EU, potentially bringing major influence to many nations in the EU. Despite these efforts, however, the improvements on gender equality are far from sufficient; thus, our committee calls for innovative, progressive initiatives that would shift the direction of gender disparity, and leap for the advancements of humanity by achieving the fundamental rights women require: gender equality and the representation of women in politics and economics.

# Stances of Parties

## United States of America

Women's elective office-holding stands at an all-time high in the United States. As of 2021, there are 119 women in the U.S. House of Representatives, making women 27.4% of the total of U.S. representatives. The employment rate of women is about 10% lower than men, with a 20% wage gap. Although the United States of America is attempting to improve the situation, more active changes are needed.

## United Kingdom

Although the UK still has a gender pay gap higher than the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development average (OECD), it is relatively successful at getting women into leadership positions. For example, the recently implemented requirements for mandatory gender pay gap reporting should help promote pay transparency and force companies to acknowledge the size of their gender pay gaps. In regards to women's political participation, there are 222 women in the House of Commons, which takes 34% of the whole and is the first time that female representation in the House of Commons is at more than a third.

## China

China is far beyond achieving gender equality in workspace and politics. On October 1, 2020, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech to commemorate the Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. He stated that women are increasingly playing an important role of "supporting half of the sky", and gender equality and women's empowerment are now important goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## France

France has a 16.5% wage gap which is higher than the average rate of EU-27. Compared to its economic growth, the country has a low rate of women's employment and political participation rate. It only had one woman so far to have held the office of Prime Minister of France. In February 2019, the Ministry of Labour launched a Gender Equality Index to measure and fight the gender pay gap and other gender-related inequalities at work.

## India

Women's political participation has emerged as a key issue of the state elections in India. According to the WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2020, India ranks 18th in terms of political empowerment, showing the country's effort to achieve gender parity. However, the gender wage gap in India reaches 19%, requiring better solutions to improve the current status.

## Canada

In Canada, women in the core working ages of 25 to 54 earned 13.3% less per hour on average, than men. In addition, the lack of women's political participation is also a rising issue of gender inequality. As of 2021, only 100 out of 338 members are elected

as representatives of the House of Commons in Canada. Canada was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which set international standards for eliminating gender discrimination

### **Russian Federation**

Women's political activism and participation in the decision-making process may be considered as one of the controversial issues in Russia. Considering the female to male ratio in Russia, only a few women have occupied positions in the executive branch of the Russian government. The president of Russia called for an end to global gender inequality, stating "We should solve the problem of gender inequality and open the doors for necessary education for every girl on the planet."

### **Germany**

At just over 70%, the female employment rate in Germany is now over ten percentage points higher than the OECD average, but still eight percentage points below that of men. In addition, the highest percentage of women taking positions in the parliament was 36.3%, which is relatively higher than other countries with low female participation.

### **Sweden**

As a leader in achieving gender parity, Sweden has achieved one of the highest female employment rates(72%) in the OECD. As of 2020, 47.2% of the 349 members of the Riksdag are women. This is the world's seventh-highest proportion of females in a national legislature. Two parties have a majority representation of female MPs as of 2020; the Left Party (66%) and the Moderate Party (52%).

### **Republic of Korea**

The Republic of Korea is one of the countries that require urgent solutions to the issue of gender inequality. According to the Korea Economic Research Institute, 57.8 percent of South Korean women were employed in 2019, ranking 31st among the 37 OECD countries. In addition, The gender pay gap in Korea is 34.6%, while the OECD average is 13.1%. The gap has improved by 7% since 2000, though the rate of improvement has been slower than in other OECD countries.

### **Japan**

At the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Abe emphasized Japan's intention to enhance cooperation with the international community and its assistance to developing countries for women's empowerment and gender equality, as part of its effort to address the global agenda. Although women's unemployment is a rising problem in Japan, the leader shows a strong willingness to strengthen women's rights.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Women's rights in Saudi Arabia are slowly increasing. However, women are not yet allowed to be executive members of government. Even outside of the government, decision-making remains largely in the hands of men, and women's participation in the workforce only occupies 33% of the total.

## **Congo**

Since only a few women have access to quality education, employment is one of the biggest challenges for women in Congo. “When there are problems in the DRC, it’s women who suffer the most,” said Chantal Moboni Mpeme, a female politician. She also stated that only 7.8% of the assembly’s current membership is women.

## **Singapore**

As one of the few countries with female presidents, the labor force participation rate of women in Singapore has been consistently increasing since 2009. President Halimah Yacob said she called for governments to prioritize gender equality and place it at the center of their development programs, and to ensure women have equal access to education.

## **Spain**

Spain’s new parliament has the largest share of women in any European legislature. At 47% or 165 of 350 seats, Spain has a bigger proportion of female lawmakers than even Sweden, which has a far longer history of promoting gender equality. However, the country still has a wage gap of 19.3% in the conventional workspace.

## **Iran**

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2016, the participation of women in the Iranian labor force was 17%. Moreover, The World Economic Forum’s 2017 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Iran 140 out of 144 countries for gender parity, highly encouraging the country to improve women’s rights.

## **Israel**

Women in Israel earn on average 35 percent less than their male colleagues and are grossly underrepresented in leadership roles across different sectors and in local government. When it comes to the proportion of female legislators in the Knesset, Israel’s House of Representatives, Israel perennially lags behind the OECD member country average for female legislators, which is only 28.8 percent.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is ranked at 93 among 153 countries in women’s political empowerment, where 20.2% of women are legislators, whereas 12% of women are appointed at ministerial positions, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020. The female employment rate is only 22.2%, as compared with 77.8% for men.

## **Bangladesh**

Despite a steep 35% growth in female employment in the last decade in the industrial sector, the number of women overall in the job force remains low compared to their male counterparts in Bangladesh. According to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) flagship report titled “World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018,” female employment in Bangladesh has seen a 35% increase while male employment has seen an 11% increase, reaching 45.7 million.

## **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is one of the most dangerous countries for women and has the sixth-lowest women's employment rate globally. Women's security concerns even prevent them from working, which is a fatal issue regarding women's rights and employment. There are only a few female politicians taking positions in the government.

## **Indonesia**

Indonesia's women are slightly less likely to be participating in the economy. In Indonesia, 54 percent of working-age women are active in the labor force compared to 82 percent of working-age men. Women's participation in labor will not only raise women's equality but also be helpful in recovering the Indonesian economy.

## **Uganda**

According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, women's employment rate in Uganda is 49.29%, which is relatively higher than the percentage in most developing nations. Currently, Uganda's parliament has 529 members. It is a policy that out of the 529, 146 seats are reserved for women – one woman per district. More women can stand for the open seats and compete with men.

## **Turkey**

Turkey is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women since 1985. Women in Turkey have active participation in national politics, and the number of women in the Turkish parliament has been increasing steadily in recent elections. On the other hand, the employment rate is only about 34.5% while the labor participation rate stands at 71.8% for men.

# **Possible Solutions**

## **Funding**

The biggest factor of women not participating in politics is the lack of economic bases. Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized, and there are lots of procedures to do, although one of the finest ways to participate is doing a campaign. Alternatively, the cost of campaigning is very high, and the lack of an economic base limits women to participate freely. Hence, supporting women by funding may support women in overcoming the barriers to political participation.

In addition, gender inequality is a global issue involving all countries all over the world. Consequently, all countries striving to improve gender inequality are of the essence. However, many developing countries such as Congo, Indonesia, and one of the least developed countries, Afghanistan, may not have enough economic base for their practical implementation. Therefore, essential information and solutions should reach out to all countries and provide enough support materially or economically from other nations.

## **Education**

Education is one of the essential ways to increase women's empowerment. According to OECD, they stated that education for gender equality enables both women and men to participate in social, political, and civic participation which results in the development of a democratic society. Moreover, gender equality education in school for children and teens may result in higher participation in future politics and society due to the education that they had in the past. Not only education for teens and children, but expanding the educational opportunities to adults and others will encourage the public to reach our goal, gender equality, and help to have higher participation in politics and civic participation for women in the modern world.

### **Exposure of gender equality through mass media:**

Social media plays an important role in society. They report current events, mobilize users with regard to various issues. As such, this massive social media can be an important factor for promoting gender equality. However, the research shows that children are exposed to gender stereotypes that the media presents to them. Yet, the transformative role of mass media may play in achieving gender equality by fixing these unpleasant exposures. In 2020, there will be 3.97 billion people using social media in the world. By exposing gender equality through social media, more than 3.97 billion people, including men and women, can rebuild their thinking of gender equality.

## Questions to Consider

1. How has the country implemented international treaties such as CEDAW?
2. How is your country's public view on gender equality? Is there a consensus that the majority of the public share?
3. Should all countries need to add or advance MOGEF (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family) to their government? Is it necessary?
4. How can developed countries assist developing countries struggling with gender disparity, in part due to the lack of education and human capital?
5. In what ways would the UN set up a practical resolution for nations to actually implement initiatives on gender equality?
6. How can governments pursue a bilateral approach to implement policies that can prevent possible mutin?

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