STUDY GUIDE

UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (UNWOMEN)

Women in Corporate and Electoral Governance
Dear delegates,

Hello everyone and welcome to this year’s edition of Villa Maria MUN! My name is Juan Raunelli and I will be your Co-Director for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). Currently, I am studying Economics at Universidad del Pacífico. For the remaining years, I would like to focus on Finances and I particularly look forward to an MBA abroad.

I started doing MUN as a delegate for Peruvian Universities, and I have been part of the team for over two years now. With them, I have participated in national and international college conferences, including Harvard National Model United Nations-Latin America in Mexico 2016 and Lima 2017, Oxford International Model United Nations in 2016, and this year’s Harvard World Model United Nations in Montreal, as well as International Delegation of Peru Model United Nations and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú Model United Nations. On the other hand, my participation in MUN has not only been as a delegate but also, as a Director and Assistant Director in LiMUN 2016 and 2017, for the World Conference on Indigenous People and the Disarmament and International Security Committee, respectively.

Finally, I would like to tell you that MUN does not only provide a space for learning, but also to seek solutions for real and present problems. If this is your first time, I encourage you to put on the bathing suit and dive into the pool! In other words, even though this is your first time in MUN, the only way of really learning how it works is by getting inside committee. And if you have already participated in MUN before, use this conference to continue learning. In both scenarios, I would like to observe full commitment and a special focus on teamwork. Also, and most importantly, I expect a debate full of content and diplomacy.

If you have any questions or comments before committee starts, please contact me or Lucrecia. We will be happy to help you. I am looking forward to meeting you all and having a great experience together at VMMUN.

Kind regards,

Juan Raunelli
Co-Director, UNWOMEN
unwomen.vmmun@prideperu.org
Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Villa María MUN 2017, and most importantly, to United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also called UNWOMEN. My name is Lucrecia González-Olaechea, I am 19 years old and I study Law at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. I am both Peruvian and Panamanian, and have lived in 4 different countries throughout my life, giving me a unique interest in culture and diverse customs and, apart from studying. Additionally, I regard music and art as very important aspects of my life, having passed through various instruments and art expressions. It is my pleasure to be this year’s co-director in this committee along with Juan Raunelli.

MUN has been a part of my life since middle-school, where I started participating in these debates in Italy, continuing here in Lima and traveling to Boston for HMUN 2014. Since then, I have had the pleasure of joining the MUN team Peruvian Universities. With their training and companionship, I have participated in WorldMUN 2016 in the Legal Committee in Rome, HNMUN-LA 2017 in UNEP in Lima and WorldMUN 2017 in SOCHUM in Montreal. As for the future, I look forward to directing local MUNs like LiMUN, VMMUN and UPMUN, as well as MUNUR in Bogotá, Colombia.

Regarding this committee, I am very excited to see the same enthusiasm I felt while debating, especially since this is a crucial topic for the development of every nation, non-exclusively. This highly empathic topic that has increasing potential will serve as a great platform for avid discussion, diplomacy and innovative solutions.

Again, I am very glad to be this year’s co-director in UNWOMEN and I urge you to make the most of this experience and opportunity.

Sincerely,

Lucrecia González-Olaechea
Co-Director, UNWOMEN
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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Gender inequality and women’s underrepresentation in positions of leadership encompass a whole spectrum of different aspects. These range from small percentages of women holding high charges and responsibilities - like CEO - in private corporations, to political groups with traditional male predominance. Women’s participation in the labour force has decreased almost three points between 1995 and 2015 to 49.6 per cent\(^1\), with as little as 12 per cent of women accounting for the world’s board seats\(^2\). As a result, their needs and rights are often disregarded, as is the case of maternal benefits and equal pay, which widens the gender gap and feeds a vicious cycle of injustice.

The first organization to advocate for the rights of women was the International Council of Women in 1888\(^3\). Since its establishment, many other international institutions and initiatives that fight for women's empowerment have been conceived, and women have seen a significant improvement to their situation, as is the right to vote worldwide, with a few exceptions; Saudi Arabia was the last to join the list in 2015\(^4\). However, women still continue to fight for equal recognition: as of 2016, women accounted for only 22.8 per cent of national parliamentarians\(^5\), and held barely 24 per cent of senior business roles\(^6\).

Increasing women’s participation in businesses, and governance in general have proven to bring a series of benefits both for the public and private sectors: On the one hand, increased female labour force participation leads to faster economic growth. Likewise, companies have shown to benefit from female leadership, particularly on the area of organizational effectiveness\(^7\). A study for the Peterson Institute for International Economics even shows there is a strong, positive relationship between women holding positions of power and the business’ performance\(^8\). On the other hand, a higher participation of women in politics can help promote women’s rights, and overall, gender sensitive policies, which lead to a more equitable and advanced society. The Commission on the Status of Women even went as far as asserting that “the absence of women from leadership positions undermines democracy and women’s empowerment”\(^9\). Therefore, it is not only the duty of the United Nations, but also, every participant of the international community, including local governments and non-state actors, to address this issue as a priority.

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gender-reality-in-statistics-or-making-leadership-attractive-to-
women/#37ef09516883
II. ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

During the last century, the United Nations and its Member States have made great efforts to eliminate every form of discrimination against women, to empower girls from a young age, and to achieve equal opportunities between men and women. Under this umbrella, in 2010, the General Assembly created the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, to support intergovernmental organizations to frame new policies, norms and international rules in regards to gender-related issues. Likewise, UN Women provides technical and financial assistance to countries, and offers monitoring in regards to advancements in this field in the UN system and in its Member States.

As one can observe, UN Women has no boundaries between countries and works in close proximity with governments for them to achieve their goals in the relevant fields. For example, it provides assistance to main social groups, lead by women, to reach leadership and political participation. Further, it seeks economic empowerment, to end every form of violence against women, and to reinforce peace and security, among others. This is obtained through regional and worldwide coordination, technical programs, and by providing research and know-how, and special training to develop different capacities to rise in an economic, social and political spectrum.

III. HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

Private Sector: Women’s Leadership in Business

Women have become important actors in boosting productivity among economies, and their active role as leaders allows businesses to achieve high levels of performance. Also, companies’ commitments to change their practices and culture to attain greater gender equity in corporate leadership enables them to reach their full potential. Bearing this in mind, companies and governments, for over 20 years, have introduced policies towards reducing the gender gap in top managerial positions. However, the participation of women in leadership roles, such as CEOs or members of boardrooms, is still very poor. For instance, in Latin America (see the graph below) only 17 per cent of women fit a C-Suit position and around 10 per cent of the world’s board seats belong to women. Therefore, even though one can observe an advance in this field, this is still insufficient and unsustainable in the long term.


The Glass Ceiling

The “glass ceiling” is a theory to explain why women have lower wages than men, and the low ratio of female to male leaders. It also involves the remaining gender discrimination in top management. The glass ceiling serves as an analogy for the barriers women experience in the workplace that stymie their progress. For example, in Sweden, the wage gap in the top positions is higher than in the lowest ones. Also, in U.S. financial services firms, women are more likely to get promoted than hired into management positions and, in comparison with men, women get less promotions in high-level positions than in lower levels.

The glass ceiling theory does not only apply directly to companies, but also to other variables that affect the hiring and promoting process of women. There is evidence that the glass ceiling effect persists for different ages, education, sectors, industries, etc. So what exactly stops women from getting a promotion or getting hired in a leadership position? Gender stereotypes, biases and discrimination are the main factors that hinder their progress. Policymakers are in a constant fight to defeat these obstacles; however, substantial progress in the field will require a multidimensional and comprehensive approach.

Talent Pools

Women around the world represent half of the talent pool. In other words, half of the most gifted professionals around the world are women. Tapping in the undiscovered female talent pool in the corporate sector could lead to the inclusion of the best - yet unknown - professionals in the labour market. In that sense, OECD data provides that 46 per cent of women of ages 25 to 34 attained tertiary education compared with a 35 per cent of men of the same age. Also, women hold 60 per cent of Master’s Degrees and 52 per cent of Doctorate Degrees; ergo a large number of women can be in charge of a business and successfully lead a company.

Nevertheless, the share of female management employment varies considerably between countries - as shown in the graph above. This can be observed in the Talent Pipeline of each country: what are the main benefits of being an employee? How can a woman achieve a management role? And how long does this take? Also, it is necessary to pay attention to coaching, mentoring and access to effective networks, which can move up to a leadership hierarchy and raise women empowerment. More specifically, the latter creates opportunities for professional exposure, factor that becomes particularly essential for young women as they seek for role models. Even though the performance of women is important to earn a high position, effective networks provides social capital that is equally important for the advancement of women in the field. This is a main issue that policymakers and corporations have dealt with for the past two decades.

Gender Gap

According to the OECD data, if the gender gap in the workplace is reduced by 2030, the GDP of the OECD countries will boost in

around 12 per cent. Moreover, an inclusive environment at work will lead to more investment in women and, therefore, reduce inequality. For instance, figures show that cutting the gender gap by 25 per cent in the next 10 years will represent the addition of 100 million women into the workforce\textsuperscript{15}. Based on this, not only would productivity and economic empowerment increase, but at the same time, countries would be achieving the goals set out on the sustainable development agenda.

Nonetheless, the idea of a distinction between women and men’s capabilities persists. In other words, the traditional notion that women can only work in certain type of industries is still present in today’s society. As one can observe in the graph above, there is a minimum participation of women in the Infrastructure industry in the position of CEO and zero participation in the Energy sector. Furthermore, the gender wage gap in the Construction and Extraction, and the Business and Financial Operations sector is approximately 48 and 30 per cent respectively\textsuperscript{16}, showing unequal rights and opportunities for men and women.

Public Sector: Women in Politics and their Involvement in Local Governance

It is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that every individual has the right to participate in the government of their country. Nonetheless, women still lack equal representation in politics as men, which results on a wide array of negative consequences for the female population and the nation as a whole. This includes, as mentioned previously, lower wages than men for the same job - in most countries, women earn approximately 60 to 75 per cent of a male’s salary\textsuperscript{17} - and a disregard for their basic rights, above all in what concerns maternal health and gender violence. Without someone to advocate for their rights and push forward policies that favour their situation, women continue to stand at a disadvantageous position in comparison to men, in regards to economic, social and political opportunities.

History of the Issue

It could be argued that the breaking point for women in politics was the fight for universal female suffrage, which gained momentum in the mid-19th century. Even though the International Woman Suffrage Alliance was constituted in 1904, the notion of equal vote for men and women began rising as a consequence of the First World War. During this time, many women left their households to serve their country and fill the jobs of men who went to war; this included bus drivers and factory workers, giving them a higher involvement in their national economy. Before the Great War, only New Zealand and Australia had granted women the right to vote, in 1893 and 1902 respectively, with countries like Sweden, Britain and Finland granting them partial rights. However, after the War, more countries began adopting similar gender sensitive policies, giving women not only the right to vote, but also, to hold positions of power in local governance. In November 1918, the British Parliament adopted the Eligibility of Women Act, allowing women to be elected as parliamentarians. Similarly, in Denmark, Iceland, the USSR, the Netherlands, Canada, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland,


Sweden, Germany, Luxembourg and the USA, women were granted the right to vote by 1920. Other countries, including developing nations in other regions followed this example later that century: women’s suffrage was attained in Latin America between 1929 and 1946; in Africa, with the end of colonial rule; and in some Middle Eastern countries, after the Second World War. This paved the way for women to take a more active stance in politics, not only choosing their leaders but also, giving them the chance to be one. Since then, powerful women have lead the way for future generations to learn what they can do to inspire positive change at a local and international level. Indira Gandhi, the first woman Prime Minister of India, served for three consecutive periods from 1966 to 1977 and again in 1980, time during which she oversaw the implementation of two successful Five-Year Plans that achieved economic growth, shifted national agricultural production towards higher self-sufficiency and pushed for Constitutional changes that granted equal pay to men and women. Margaret Thatcher, who, after being the the youngest women to become a parliamentary, became the first one to assume the charge of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; through her radical economic policies, she managed to boost the economy, and additionally, improved relations with the USA. Like them, many women politicians through the decades have shaped not only their country’s history, but also, the international community, proving the vital role women can play in this area.

Importance and Advantages of Women in Political Positions

There are many advantages that come with a greater share of women assuming high positions of leadership in governance. First, and most fundamentally, is the fact that this constitutes a better representation of the population. Women account for 50 per cent of the population, and therefore, they should be granted this same share of power in governments. This is far away from the current reality, as only two countries exceed 50 per cent of women holding lower or single house seats - Rwanda with 61.3 per cent and Bolivia with 53.1 per cent - and only 7 surpass 40 per cent of seats in the upper house or senate. Increasing this share of power for women would inevitably lead to a more balanced and inclusive approach towards policy making that favours a greater percentage of the population.

Women are more sensitive and knowledgeable in regards problems specifically faced by the female population, which tend to be ignored by men. This is

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the case of inadequacy in access and/or quality of maternal health and benefits - such as maternal and sick parenting leave and parent-friendly facilities, like nurseries in workplaces and breastfeeding rooms in public spaces -, a general disregard of reproductive rights, and affordable child care, amongst others. The presence of women in governance could help bring forward these issues in political discussions, as they are often not considered priorities even though they have a big impact on citizens’ everyday lives, particularly for women nation-wide. A study carried out in Belgium shows that more women in government led to a higher adoption of female-friendly policies; these include policies that address female violence, the availability of resources for women, and the promotion of women’s rights and economic equality.

On the other hand, women have demonstrated political leadership and their ability to facilitate decision-making processes by working across political parties in women’s gatherings, despite apparent differences in ideologies. This is because, in general, women tend to seek similar objectives in regards to gender, serving as a useful tool to tackle gender inequality in many aspects, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, a more gender-equal government does not only favour women, but the population as a whole. Statistics show that overall, countries with a higher share of women ministers see a rise in public health spending, as well as a decrease in poverty. This trend can also be observed for child health policies. In India, studies show that water projects regarding access to drinking water was 62 per cent higher in councils led by women than by men; and in Norway, there is a prominent correlation between the participation of women in local municipalities and access to childcare. As a whole, an increased participation of women in the public sphere leads to a decrease in general inequality and contributes to a higher confidence in national governments.

**IV. CURRENT SITUATION**

In recent years, efforts have been directed to increase women’s influence in the public sphere, specifically in regards to them holding higher and more positions of leadership in local governance. In the last two decades, the percentage of women in parliament has almost doubled, and the number of countries with 30 per cent or more of female parliamentarians in single or lower houses has increased to 46 across all regions, with 14 in Sub-Saharan Africa and 11 in Latin America. However, there is a lot left to be done within the international community to achieve gender equality in politics. World-wide, there are still 38 States in which less than 10 per cent of lower or single house parliament seats are taken by women, with wide variations between regions. While in average, up to the first half of 2016, in Nordic countries their share of participation in single, lower and upper houses was of 41.1 per cent, in


Promotora Internacional de Debates (PRIDE Perú)
the Pacific region, it fell far behind at 13.5 per cent. This inequality is consistent in national policies across the globe, where in a 2013 survey, 13 countries declared in that ministries and programs dedicated to women empowerment received less than 0.4 per cent of their budget. Moreover, the number of women serving as Heads of State of Government dropped from 19 to 17 since 2015, demonstrating their fluctuating participation and representation in high positions of political leadership. Projections even show that, at this rate, it will take 50 years for both genders to be equality represented in parliament.

According to political scientist Christopher Karpowitz, while in decisions ruled by unanimous agreement, women, despite being outnumbered by men, participated in equal quantities as the opposite sex; in those made by majority rule, women contribute not only less than men, but also, less than the share of the group they represent. On the other hand, women who speak more tend to have more confidence and hence, inspire greater respect from their male colleagues, leading to greater female influence in decision-making processes. However, due to the prevalence of women’s underrepresentation in governance, it is harder for them to be perceived in this position, and only two presidential candidates were women, including Hillary Clinton, who was a target of constant harassment by the press and Republican elected president, Donald Trump, in many cases as a result of her gender. Following the same line, countries that rank higher in the Human Development Index Report, such as Norway, Australia, Switzerland, Germany and Denmark, do not demonstrate equal performance in achieving women’s representation in lower or single house seats, ranking 13, 50, 35, 23 and 22 respectively. This shows that there are more than developmental barriers that prevent women for climbing the power ladder in their national political scene and proves once more, the complex and far-reaching nature of the subject.

### World and regional averages of women in parliament

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>World average</th>
<th>Single house or lower house</th>
<th>Upper house or Senate</th>
<th>Both houses combined</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
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Regional averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Single house or lower house</th>
<th>Upper house or Senate</th>
<th>Both houses combined</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe (Nordic countries included)</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
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### References


positive way and for their ideas and vote to be heard. As a result, the amount of change that favours the female population, and the nation in general that could be achieved is diminished. Therefore, nations not only need to incorporate more women in their governments, but also, facilitate the platforms through which they can express their opinions and receive the respect they deserve.

V. PAST ACTIONS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS

As a response to the lack of women in positions of power, some countries have introduced quotas through their legislations to ensure they are more actively participant in local politics. This is the case of electoral quotas, which were adopted by 64 countries across all regions as of 2013, with a significant rise in the last two decades. Quotas can be introduced primarily in two forms: by reserving a predetermined number of seats for women, and by establishing a minimum number of female candidates in political party lists. The figures by region show that, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, 15 states have adopted candidate quotas in their legislation, only 1 has done so in South Asia, Indonesia. In total, 54 countries have adopted legislated candidate quotas in the lower or single house with an average of 24.9 per cent of women participation; the same number of countries home to political parties with voluntary gender quotas. Figures are slightly lower for countries with reserved seats for women - barely 23 - with an average percentage of women of 20.8 per cent.

This method has proven to increase the number of women that end up being elected and thus, participating in local politics; statistics show that countries with electoral quotas have approximately 25 per cent of parliament seats taken by women, 6 per cent above those that do not. More women working together in political groups or organizations can lessen the stress and burden that would be otherwise experienced in the case of less female participants, and thus, they are more prone to execute their tasks effectively and with more confidence than in a more male dominant environment. Furthermore, in the long term, this encourages more women to voluntarily run for elections and at the same time, it inspires younger generations of girls to aim higher in regards to their educational prospects and careers.

In a similar manner, other constitutional reforms have been introduced to decrease gender disparity in the political scene. International obligations expressly point out States’ responsibilities to include gender equality in their national legislations, as well as removing any trace of discrimination on the basis of gender, as has been done in countries like El Salvador, Malawi, Montenegro, the Philippines and Sweden. Comparable shifts have been introduced as political finance reforms, through which 117 countries have expanded options for female candidates to

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finance their campaigns by allowing direct public financing to cover costs related to propaganda, training, activities and institutional consolidation.

**Gender Stereotypes**

Many prejudices that prevent women from having a more active participation in businesses and politics arise from gender stereotypes and traits that are traditionally attributed to women. For instance, in the USA, people are more inclined to think of men as confident and capable of assuming positions of high responsibility, and women as caring individuals, preferring the former over the later when choosing their leaders. Under these circumstances is that women seeking positions in corporate and electoral governance find themselves in an unfavourable situation. On the one hand, they are forced to demonstrate those characteristics attributed to men; while when doing so, they are commonly perceived as coming off “too strong”. This leads to a common misconception that women do not fit a leader’s profile, when compared to men.

Furthermore, these stereotypes and prejudices are spread by the media, which continues to have an increasing influence in people’s everyday lives. Media spreads, when analyzing - or simply covering - female political candidates, tend to focus on superficial aspects. This is the case of their physical attributes, criticizing their clothes or style, family relations and gossip, rather than focusing on their experience and capabilities. Similarly, women face drawbacks imposed by members of the opposite gender, as is the case of physical violence, ridicule and bullying.

**VI. CURRENT PROBLEMS: MOST PROMINENT BARRIERS IN WOMEN’S STRUGGLE FOR POWER**

**Social and Cultural Factors**


Women are too often judged by the role they are supposed to play in society nowadays, with people still believing that they should dedicate themselves to their families and carry out household duties, instead of contributing to family finance and possibly even worse, to how the country is run. The Pew Research Center’s Social and Demographic Trends even show that 36 per cent of people surveyed believe that women that wish to reach top managerial positions in corporations should aim to have children early on their careers, with as much as 22 per cent saying they should not have children at all⁴³; demonstrating how something as natural to women as being a mother can affect their development in their professional lives.

These preconceptions are aligned with the still-persistent notion of a patriarchal society where men have a dominant role in household, economic and political affairs. As a result, women’s achievements, roles and participation in society are often disregarded and short-lived, fueling the ideology of them being subordinate and considered the inferior sex⁴⁴. Therefore it is essential to break this thought pattern before any substantial changes can be made to aid women broaden their possibilities of becoming leaders in both the public and private sectors.

Religion

Further, the deep influence religion persists to have in some cultures poses an important cultural barrier for women who wish to assume positions of leadership. This can be particularly observed in Muslim countries, where women experience significant drawbacks to their participation in national affairs. In Saudi Arabia, even though women have been recently granted the vote and the right to run in local elections, and they can even take part in the Consultative Assembly, they do not have the power to pass or enforce any law⁴⁵, limiting their involvement in governance.

Moreover, according to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report of 2016 - which measures gender equality in the basis of economic participation and opportunity, level of education, political empowerment and health-related issues -, out of the 20 lowest scoring countries, 11 were Islamic States, with a greater percentage being Arab countries⁴⁶. Even though the Quran specifically states that “Men shall have a benefit from what they earn, and women shall have a benefit from what they earn (4:32)”, there are often misconceptions of how actively should women participate in economic and political activities. This can be identified as a direct consequence of political instability in some Muslim countries, and at the same time, overly conservative perceptions of women⁴⁷.

On the other hand, Islam is not the only religion that poses certain barriers on women. Even though not commonly addresses, it is important to point out that

in the Vatican City, women are not allowed to vote for the Pope, given that there are no female cardinals. This gains greater importance if one considers that Catholics, in 2010, accounted for 16 per cent of the population - showing a constant trend in comparison to 1990 -\(^{48}\), and that in 2016, 74.2 million around the globe people proclaimed belonging to this religion\(^{49}\).

**Political Factors**

a. Legal Frameworks

Despite international efforts and initiatives to incorporate women in positions of leadership across different areas, national legislations and constitutions still provide legal restrictions for the whole gender. Studies show that, out of 143 nations, 90 per cent have at least one legal difference between genders that hampers women’s economic opportunities, with 79 specifically restricting certain types of jobs for women\(^{50}\). Likewise, despite the recognition of freedom of movement as a fundamental human right in the UDHR, there are still gaps in many States that prevent women from enjoying the same mobility as men, above all in fields like education and work, requiring consent from their husbands or guardians to acquire proper travel documentation and/or leave the country.

This can be further observed in laws and social and political institutions that do not restrict discriminatory behaviours based on gender. For example, in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), there is not a single country that has established an “Independent Permanent Gender Equality Commission” by law, and only Yemen, Lebanon, Bahrain and Kuwait have parliamentary committees that oversee gender issues and women empowerment. These figures seem relatively low when compared to other regions; in OECD countries, gender analysis practices, specifically in what concerns primary legislation, are often as high as 50 per cent, while in the MENA region, the corresponding figure is 22 per cent. However, amendments to these must not only focus on eradicating prejudicial notions against women, but they shall also include access to equal rights and basic needs, such as “services and resources, economic opportunities and political voice”\(^{51}\).

b. Political Participation

Likewise, political barriers that prevent women’s involvement in leadership are still present in today’s society. States with particular governmental structures - such as the sultanate in Brunei - and those in situations of political instability, many times related to internal conflicts and wars, pose restrictions for both men and women. Ironically, it is under these circumstances that women tend to be even more prone to be victims of cyclical violence and abuses, and thus would need a more active role in local governance.

On other parts of the world however, women’s political participation is also curtailed due to a series of different factors. First of all, there is a lack of


\(^{51}\) OECD. (n.d.). Women in Public Life: Gender, law and policy in the Middle East and North Africa.
political incentives for women to run for public office. This, combined with the lack of funds women have available to finance political campaigns makes it even harder for them to immerse themselves in the public sphere. Female political candidates have a harder time raising funds for political means in comparison to men, as they have limited access to financial mechanisms - like credit -, less time and confidence to carry out the job by themselves, and sometimes, it may be even linked to the fear that these costs may have adverse effects in their family’s budget.

Likewise, the institutional structure itself of political parties poses a threat to women’s leadership in governance. In the words of Mlambo-Ngcuka, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, “Political parties are male dominated. When there isn’t a specific measure in place, women fall off the ground. Men tend to choose those who are made in their own image.” The process through which candidates are selected for certain positions of power tend to be biased in favour of men, in many cases because women have comparatively less connections, social and financial capital, and even less experience. Again, this can be linked to women’s traditional roles, specifically relating to household duties, such as maternal responsibilities.

VII. UN PAST ACTIONS AND INTERVENTION

Past Resolutions

In 1990, a UN Economic and Social Council Resolution suggested Member States to set targets of women’s participation in leadership. These increased progressively, with initial targets for 1995 set out at 30 per cent, and strived to achieve complete gender parity by 2000, with 50 per cent of female involvement by that year.

Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Platform for Action was the first global policy framework for gender equality, empowerment of women and the realisation of human rights for women. It was adopted in 1995 in the Fourth World Conference on Women based on the commitments made in the previous World Conferences. Five years later, all Member States agreed to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2000 and on further actions to achieve gender equality. In 2005, the Commission on Status of Women carried out a 10 and 15 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Finally, in 2010, the Economic and Social Council called upon Member States, in the Resolution 2013/18, to make reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered during the implementation of the Platform for Action. It was also decided that the Commission on the Status of Women would make a review of the implementation of the Platform of Action in previous years about the challenges and the opportunities to strengthen gender equality and women’s
empowerment towards a post-2015 agenda.

According to the Economic and Social Council, the post-2015 agenda must merge the three main pillars of the Beijing Platform for Action and the three dimension of sustainable development - social, economic and environment. It also must seek to create peaceful societies by changing the culture of violence, masculinity, among others. Further, it should include the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to accelerate the adoption of the Platform. It must also focus on reducing the gap and achieve equality for women. Finally, based on the previous assessments, this new plan shall address five priorities areas to accelerate the process towards higher gender parity in the global society, as is the case of increasing investment in gender equality, transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development, among others. Therefore, future resolutions or documents that provide women empowerment in all spectrums must follow these principles as the main observations previous mentioned.

**Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN has constantly tried to address gender equality in its agenda, particularly through its resolutions and plans of actions. One of the biggest initiatives to consolidate and spread this mentality was the establishment of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2002, more specifically Goal 3, to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”. Targets set out under this agenda tackled, in particular, gender disparity in primary and secondary education, with developing countries achieving this objective. Likewise, Goal 5, “Improve Maternal Health”, also recognised the persistence of women’s lack of access to basic health services, pointing out the many aspects that need to be taken into consideration to improve women’s position in society and their opportunities.

Despite this incentive - and promising advances in women’s situation overall - women’s role in decision-making processes still suffer significant gaps when compared to men, as well as poverty, labour market and wages. For this reason, after the expiration of the MDGs in 2015, the UN set out new targets in the form of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which continued with some of the projects first proposed by their predecessors. This is the case of Goal 5, Gender Equality, which seeks to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. This goal established that, for countries to successfully achieve sustainable development, they must include women in the private and public spheres in an equal manner as men, in regards to educational, social, political and economic opportunities. Goal 5.5 especially mentions women in positions of power - “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”, in what concerns the percentage of seats taken by women in national parliaments and local

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governments, as well as in managerial positions.  

VIII. QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMAs)

1. ¿To what extent should - and can - the international community intervene to ensure women are better represented in positions of power, both in the public and private sectors?
2. ¿Should all governments establish gender quotas to ensure women hold more positions of leadership in corporations and local governments? If so, ¿should this percentage be fixed around the globe or should it be individual for each State? ¿How should it be established? This should include discussions on calculations and other legal and procedural implications.
3. ¿What should be the role of governments, the international community and the private sector to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace? ¿To what extent do governments have to protect women from discrimination, stereotypes and any other restriction? ¿Should they have a different treatment than men in the workplace?
4. ¿How can UN Women provide assistance to countries to defeat the different barriers for women who seek high positions of leadership and what should be their role? ¿Should it assume new responsibilities or try a different approach in their programs?

IX. GETTING PREPARED

Research

The success of your experience in VMMUN will depend heavily on how much preparation you put in before the conference actually begins. Although research may not seem like the most fun or exciting activity leading up to a conference, if you put in the necessary effort, it will definitely pay off during the conference. You will be more knowledgeable, more prepared, and more confident to deal with whatever comes your way.

As you do your research, you may want to keep a page of notes on key facts, figures, policies and other important information. Bring a copy of your notes to the conference in order to use them as a reference (bear in mind that electronic devices are not allowed during committee sessions).

Position Papers

A Position Paper is a policy statement in which delegates clarify the committee topics, state their representative’s position, and suggest solutions that fall in line with their national stance. Each delegation is responsible for submitting a Position Paper to unwomen.vmmun@prideperu.org by August 18th.

The general format of Position Papers is one page long, single-spaced, with size 11 Arial font. Please make sure to cite every source that you use in your Position Paper. Position Papers should always begin with a header stating the country that the delegation is representing, the committee, the topic area being discussed, and the delegate’s names and school.

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Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure will guide the delegate’s participation throughout the debate. They contain the rules governing the debate, speeches, points and documents, as well as the rules governing the vote. The Rules of Procedure may be found on our webpage: http://www.vmmun.org/substantive-material2.html. Nevertheless, delegates shall bear in mind that the Secretariat and the Committee Directors may provide variations to these rules.

Writing Resolutions

The purpose of the debate, as stated in our philosophy, is to encourage you to develop comprehensive and pragmatic solutions to the topic being discussed. These solutions should be embodied in a document called a resolution.

The process of drafting a resolution consists of two main written stages: the Working Paper and the Draft Resolution. Working Papers are a point of reference for discussion in committee that contain concrete ideas on the topic under discussion. They do not require a specific format. In contrast, draft resolutions are a formal document in which the committee determines the actions to be taken in order to solve the problems under discussion. They have a specific format and must include a specific number of signatories.

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY


XI. DISCLAIMER

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