

*Annual Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the theme “What will it take to reach parity in political participation in a post-Covid-19 world?”*

*Date: 23 March 2021 (Second sitting)*

**Remarks of by United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results of UN Women, Åsa Regnér**

*[Check against Delivery]*

Mr. Secretary-General of the Interparliamentary Union,  
Ms. President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians,  
Honorable Members of Parliament, Excellencies, distinguished guests and participants, friends.

CSW 65 focuses on women’s participation and decision-making in public life for achieving gender equality – dear honorable MPs, that means that this is your CSW.

It is a challenging time for the world, and for achieving gender quality.

While women battle on the frontlines against COVID-19, they are rarely in equal positions in decision-making around pandemic response and recovery. We will soon publish new data on the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which UN Women runs with UNDP. It shows that out of a total of 225 task forces across 137 countries, women make up only 27% of task force members. Less than a quarter of task forces are led by women.

We are also tracking government social-economic measures. More governments are now passing and implementing measures to address violence against women. Yet, few countries are taking steps to address women’s income security and labour force participation, including growing unpaid care burdens.

Each CSW, we make the case that women’s full and effective participation in all areas of life drives progress for everyone. Yet, here we are, with women still vastly underrepresented in public life and decision-making, as revealed in the UN Secretary-General’s recent report:

- Women are Heads of State or Government in 23 countries.
- Only 25 per cent of national parliamentarians are women.
- At the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years.

In 2021, we are at a crossroads. Failure to accelerate women’s participation will make it impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

We will only achieve transformative change if more women and girls are represented in public life and decision-making in all their diversity and abilities, across all cultural, social, economic, and political situations, and at all levels of power.

I am pleased to see that this is a message that is being voiced loudly at this CSW. My hope is that the Member States, that are working on Agreed Conclusions as we speak, will agree to ambitious and actionable language to support women's participation and decision making in public life, and support the transformative change we all need.

Once CSW concludes on 26 March, we will turn to the Generation Equality Forum, which kicks off in Mexico City from March 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> and culminates in Paris, France from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 2<sup>nd</sup>. It will provide a critical space to accelerate the agenda for women's leadership and gender equality in critical fields including economics, technology, climate, sexual and reproductive health and rights and combatting violence against women. The Generation Equality Forum will showcase the work of the 6 Action Coalitions, including one specifically on Feminist Movements and Leadership.

Both the Forum and the Action Coalitions will help boost our common goals. But when it comes to equal power sharing, we need your support and action, honorable Members of Parliament, on many fronts:

- We need more ambitious and targeted measures and reforms, including gender quotas,
- We must end violence against women in public life,
- We must eradicate outdated ideas about women's capacity to lead,
- We must transform institutions to respond to needs and realities of women and girls, and
- We must increase access to financing for women's participation in public life.

We have before us a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve equality and a better world for this generation and the next. We are counting on you.

Thank you.