



**ARCMUN**

Aristotelio College Model United Nations

**UN WOMEN**  
**Strengthening Women's Political Participation**  
**Study Guide**

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## 1. Welcoming letter

Dear delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to ArcMUN 2019 and specifically to the UN Women Committee. This year, we're handling with a very important issue, which we also feel will be extremely interesting to discuss during our sessions; the political participation of women.

UN Women was founded in 2010 and since then has made monumental strides in the fight against the inequality of women, from investing in their economic empowerment to securing their peace and ensuring their equal access to education. One of the most vital issues the committee has handled with is the strengthening of their participation in politics, which has recently gained new proportions and has risen to the top of many countries' national agenda, as world leaders start to realise that female participation in leadership, governance and politics is an essential prerequisite for global progress and stability. That is why we believe that there is a lot to discuss regarding this issue and that there are many unique perspectives to approach it.

We expect each of you to contribute with innovative ideas, challenge each other in the spirit of true diplomacy and offer effective solutions. Our hope is that this study guide will help you gain a more profound insight into the topic and will serve as a compass for your preparation. Thorough research based on the outlines of the study guide and on your country's policy, solid knowledge of the Rules of Procedure, good negotiation skills and a fresh perspective are the tools that make for a great delegate.

As the Board of UN Women, it is our role to assist you and answer any of your questions, so therefore please do not hesitate to contact us. We can't wait to meet you all in person and live with you a highly constructive experience!

Kind regards,  
Maria Dalamitra, *Main Chair*  
Monica Pontikidou, *Co-Chair*

## 2. Introduction to the committee

UN Women -or United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women- was created in July 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly through the merge of four distinct UN bodies which were focusing on women's empowerment.<sup>1</sup> Its main purpose is divided in five prioritized areas which are: support women's leadership participation, combat violence against women, ensure the participation of women in all peace and security processes, empower women economically, and make sure the inclusion of gender equality to national agendas.<sup>2</sup> Generally, it functions in a parallel manner with other UN bodies and tries

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women. (n.d.). About UN Women. [online] Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2019].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

to ameliorate their actions in terms of gender equality. More specifically, UN Women assists inter-governmental bodies with their work, provides Member States with technical and financial support when they request it, and -lastly- give guidance to other UN bodies in order to sustain their accountability towards gender sensitive issues.<sup>3</sup> It consists of 41 Member States which are elected for a three-year term and the latter is distributed geographically. Current executive director is Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka from South Africa.

### 3. Introduction to the topic

Since the dawn of history equality among people was hardly evident. Physical and cultural differences were often the source of discrimination in every society around the globe. One of the oldest and most spread sources of inequality has been gender. Women in the majority of formed societies have always been facing obstacles regarding their personal development and their active participation in common affairs. Undoubtedly, progress has been made and women's position has been enhanced in comparison with the past. However, gender equality isn't fully achieved yet. Especially in the political sector women are still underrepresented and discriminated. Their full integration into political affairs is necessary in order for them to be emancipated and enjoy their fundamental human rights.

### 4. Definition of key terms

**Gender discrimination:** it describes any form (either a law (de jure) or a practice (de facto)) of distinction, exclusion or restriction related to one person's sex. Gender discrimination is opposed to the recognition and exercise of fundamental freedoms and human rights in political, economic, social and other fields.<sup>4</sup>

**Gender equality:** Gender equality (the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference) is one of the most fundamental human rights and simultaneously is considered as both a precondition for and an indicator of people-centered development. By gender equality, it is meant that both sexes have equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and participation in all spheres of both public and private life. Gender equality respects the right to be different and hence recognizes and values the diversity of different groups of females and males. The preferred terminology within the UN is gender equality, rather than gender equity.<sup>5</sup>

**Gender Equity:** According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, gender equity is the "provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> European Union for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017). *Gender discrimination* [Online] Available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1161>

<sup>5</sup> UN Women Training Centre (2017). *Gender Equality Glossary* [Online] Available at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=search&hook=gender+equality&sortkey=&sortorder=asc&fullsearch=1&page=1>

between women and men”.<sup>6</sup> Many confuse the terms “gender equality” and “gender equity”. Although the two terms are interrelated, they are not synonyms. “Gender equality” constitutes the desired result while “gender equity” consists of the means to achieve this goal.

**Glass ceiling:** According to UN Women Training Centre’s Glossary : ‘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 (coming up against the invisible “ceiling”).’ The result of this phenomenon is that the vast majority of women is usually prevented from obtaining the most powerful and highest-paying positions in the workforce.<sup>7</sup>

**Political Participation:** Participation in electoral processes includes much more than just voting. According to the United Nations, political participation consists of “the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government”.<sup>8</sup> The global standards confirm that men and women have right to participate equally and fully in all forms of political processes. However, it is often harder for women to enjoy this right.<sup>9</sup> Thus, a special care is required in order to ensure that their political rights are respected.

## 5. History of the topic

### 5.1. Early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

In 1893, for the first time in history, a country has allowed woman’s suffrage. New Zealand was the first country which allowed women to vote<sup>10</sup>. This was a milestone when considering the issue of strengthening women in politics because it shows the recognition of this issue from such a long time period.

The movement for the vote of women in the United Kingdom started in 1897 when Millicent Fawcett founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS)<sup>11</sup>. The Union, which consisted of “*suffragists*”, believed in moderate campaigns and peaceful actions through democratic and peaceful means.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> EIGE. (n.d.). Gender equity. [online] Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus/terms/1175> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2019].

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Un.org. (n.d.). Chapter 3. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm> [Accessed 16 Jan. 2019].

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> InfoPlease. (2015). *Women's Suffrage by Country*. [online] Available at: <https://www.infoplease.com/us/gender-sexuality/womens-suffrage> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies | British organization*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Union-of-Womens-Suffrage-Societies> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Yet, in the early 20th century, the history was marked by a militant organization which fought for women's suffrage but believed in direct action and civil disobedience, rather than the peaceful means of NUWSS. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)<sup>13</sup>, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst, was a movement whose members were only women, called "*suffragettes*". The movement attracted a lot of negative attention, as its members participated in massive marches and demonstrations, battled with the police and as a result they were attacked and sexually assaulted, provoked damages in public property and churches, as well as interrupted political meetings.<sup>14</sup> Even when imprisoned, the suffragettes went on hunger strike in order to promote their aims.

Although, their campaign was postponed during the World War I, in 1918 the *Representation of the People Act*<sup>15</sup>, gave to women over the age of 30, who met some qualifications, the right to vote to public elections, while in 1928 *the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act*<sup>16</sup> gave women at the age of 21 the right to vote, while gaining equal electoral rights with men.

In the same time, women had won the right to vote in national elections in Australia in 1902, in Finland in 1906 and in Norway in 1913, while in Sweden and the United States of America, women had voting rights in some local elections<sup>17</sup>.

## **5.2. 60s and 70s radical political demands and actions of activism**

Since the 1960s, in a number of countries, women's suffrage was granted. The Suffragettes helped win the vote for British women in 1918, but it wasn't until the 1960s that a new popular movement emerged. This movement, known as "second-wave" feminism<sup>18</sup> challenged ongoing societal restrictions that affected women's lives. Women stood up to inequality, starting in America and sweeping the Western world. The powerful influence of the social movements of the 1960s- civil rights, the women's movement- was evident on individual women's lives and inspired unprecedented changes in our society, changes with far-reaching economic, political, and cultural consequences.

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<sup>13</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Women's Social and Political Union / British organization*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Womens-Social-and-Political-Union> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> UK Parliament. (n.d.). *1918 Representation of the People Act*. [online] Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1918-representation-of-the-people-act/> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>16</sup> UK Parliament. (n.d.). *1928 Equal Franchise Act*. [online] Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1928-equal-franchise-act/> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2019].

<sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *woman suffrage / Definition, History, Leaders, & Facts*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/woman-suffrage> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>18</sup> Dailyhistory.org. (n.d.). *What was the Second Wave Feminist Movement? - DailyHistory.org*. [online] Available at: [https://dailyhistory.org/What\\_was\\_the\\_Second\\_Wave\\_Feminist\\_Movement%3F](https://dailyhistory.org/What_was_the_Second_Wave_Feminist_Movement%3F) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

In February 1970, Members of the National Organisation for Women (NOW)<sup>19</sup>, a feminist organisation founded in 1966, interrupted a U.S. Senate hearing about the proposed amendment to the Constitution to change the voting age to 18. The women stood and displayed posters they had brought, calling for the Senate's attention to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution designed to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex<sup>20</sup>. The Equal Rights Amendment passed the U.S. Senate and then the House of Representatives, on March 22, 1972<sup>21</sup>.

In the same time, the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>22</sup> in 1979, which strives to uphold women's right to participate in political and public life.

### 5.3 90s till today

During the 1990s countries like Western Samoa, Moldova and Kazakhstan, just to name a few, have made some steps to address the issue of strengthening women's role in politics. For example, it was for the first time in the post-independence period when African women began to pursue a position in political leadership at the national and local levels. Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai ran in the 1998 Kenyan presidential election<sup>23</sup>. Even though they were not elected, these women set an important precedent in their respective countries. The opening of political space that occurred allowed for the formation of independent women's associations as well.

On the other hand, at European level, the members of the European Parliament comprise 31% women and 69% men<sup>24</sup>. Certainly, there was progress towards gender equality since the 1999 elections. Yet, the gender gap in political representation remains large and persistent in both developed and developing countries.

In 2017, women comprised only 21% of the U.S. Senate, 19.3% of the U.S. House of Representatives (CAWP, 2017), 32% of the U.K. House of Commons, and 12% of India's National legislature<sup>25</sup>. The global average of women in national parliaments has nearly doubled,

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<sup>19</sup> Now.org. (n.d.). *National Action Program / National Organization for Women*. [online] Available at: <https://now.org/nap/> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>20</sup> Equal Rights Amendment. (n.d.). *Equal Rights Amendment*. [online] Available at: <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>21</sup> Equal Rights Amendment. (n.d.). *The Equal Rights Amendment — Equal Rights Amendment*. [online] Available at: <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org/the-equal-rights-amendment> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>22</sup> Un.org. (n.d.). *Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>23</sup> Citeseerx.ist.psu.edu. (n.d.). [online] Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.542.5398&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>24</sup> Ec.europa.eu. (2009). *Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission*. [online] Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=77&furtherPubs=yes> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>25</sup> Sites.tufts.edu. (2017). [online] Available at: [https://sites.tufts.edu/neudc2017/files/2017/10/paper\\_286.pdf](https://sites.tufts.edu/neudc2017/files/2017/10/paper_286.pdf) [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 22.1 per cent in 2018 (+10.8 points)<sup>26</sup>. More and more women are being elected as heads of state in countries like Germany, Lithuania, Estonia, Croatia, Norway and the United Kingdom.

## **6. Legal framework**

### **6.1. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women.<sup>27</sup> The Convention facilitates the fruition of equality between women and men through the insurance of women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election to all publicly elected bodies, to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations as well as to retain their nationality and the nationality of their children, even if they get married to an alien or their husband changes his nationality during wedding.<sup>28</sup> The acceptance of the Convention means that States commit themselves to take the necessary measures in order to end all forms of discrimination against women including to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women, establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination, and ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises<sup>29</sup>.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) cites many CEDAW success stories: Austria implemented CEDAW committee recommendations about protecting women from spousal violence, the High Court of Bangladesh prohibited sexual harassment, drawing on CEDAW's employment equality statements, while in Colombia, a court reversing a total ban on abortion cited CEDAW and acknowledged reproductive rights as human rights.<sup>30</sup> Last but not least, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have revised land ownership processes to ensure equal rights and meet the standards in the Convention<sup>31</sup>.

### **6.2. UN Resolution on Women and Political Participation (UN/RES/58/142)**

The 2003 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142) specifies that Member States should take steps to monitor progress in the

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<sup>26</sup> Archive.ipu.org. (2015). [online] Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wip20y-en.pdf> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>27</sup> UN Women. *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women-Text of the Convention*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Linda Napikoski (2017). *A Brief History of CEDAW*. [online] Available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/brief-history-of-cedaw-3529470> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>31</sup> Ibid



representation of women and ensure that measures that safeguard the balance between family and professional life apply equally to women and men.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it calls them to develop mechanisms and training programmes that encourage women to participate in the electoral process and improve women's capacity to cast votes in free and fair elections as well as promote the participation of young people, especially women, in civil society organisations and educate and train them in using the media and information technologies<sup>33</sup>.

### **6.3. UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation (UN/RES/66/130)**

The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130) stresses its critical importance in all contexts.<sup>34</sup> It calls on UN Member States to take a variety of measures such as to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly tend to discriminate against the participation of women, to enhance their capacity to analyse affairs from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making processes.<sup>35</sup> It also urges Member States to promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process at the community, local, national and international levels, to investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, take all appropriate measures to prosecute those responsible and to encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, such as indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels<sup>36</sup>.

### **6.4. Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

The Strategic Plan 2018–2021 summarizes UN Women's strategic direction, objectives and approaches to reinforce efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.<sup>37</sup> With a cross-cutting emphasis on responding to countries' requests and leaving no woman or girl behind, it outlines five strategic priorities for UN Women in the following years: a) a comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women is strengthened and implemented, b) women lead, participate in, and benefit equally from governance systems, c) they have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy, d) all women and girls live a life free from all forms of

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<sup>32</sup> UN Women. *Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/global-norms-and-standards> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Un.org. (2012). A/RES/66/130. [online] Available at: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/130](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/130) [Accessed 8 Jan. 2019].

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> UN Women. *UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/8/un-women-strategic-plan-2018-2021> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

violence, and e) women and girls benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters, conflicts and humanitarian action<sup>38</sup>.

### **6.5. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security**

The Security Council adopted the resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security on 31 October 2000.<sup>39</sup> The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the significance of their equal participation and full engagement in the preservation and promotion of peace and security.<sup>40</sup> Resolution 1325 encourages all actors to reinforce the participation of women and integrate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also urges all parties to take special measures to ensure the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict<sup>41</sup>.

### **6.6. Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

Although the world has made great progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals, the issue of gender inequality continues to raise concerns in every part of the world.

Gender equality, being a fundamental human right, constitutes a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world. Unfortunately, nowadays, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period and, at the same time, there are 49 countries that have no laws to protect them from domestic violence.<sup>42</sup>

Equal access for all to education, health care, decent work, and political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and advance societies and humanity at large. The implementation of new legal frameworks in terms of equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is necessary to end the gender-based discrimination in many countries around the world<sup>43</sup>.

### **6.7. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA)**

The Platform for Action imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realise all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to have a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> UN.org. *Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security*. [online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#L> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> UN.org. *Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. [online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

decent education, to participate in decision-making processes and to earn equal pay for equal work.<sup>44</sup>

The Beijing process revealed remarkable political will and worldwide visibility. It enhanced and created a network of the activism of women's movements on a global scale. Since then, the Platform for Action's promises have been translated by governments, civil society and the public into solid changes in individual countries.<sup>45</sup> These have brought enormous improvements in women's lives; more women and girls than at any previous point in time serve in political offices, are protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions safeguarding gender equality<sup>46</sup>.

## 7. Discussion of the Topic

### 7.1. The importance of women's political participation today

In a world that is facing serious challenges on multiple fronts, it is becoming increasingly evident that women's empowerment and political participation should be one of the main goals of our age. Today's political scene is characterized by extreme disunity and polarity, but it has been proven that women's participation in leadership positions strengthens cooperation across party and ethnic lines<sup>47</sup> and that female politicians and legislators are particularly involved in many contemporary issues that concern women, families and marginalised social groups. Former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan has stated that "there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce child and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation"<sup>48</sup>. Ensuring that women participate on equal terms in the political sector, will also encourage other women to get involved in public life, offering a unique perspective on numerous issues and helping overcome negative stereotyping and gender norms<sup>49</sup>. Lastly, as recognized in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, female political participation is a crucial prerequisite for international peace, stability and welfare.

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<sup>44</sup> UN Women. *The Beijing Platform for Action: inspiration then and now*. [online] Available at: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Pepera, S. (2018). *Why Women in Politics? – Women Deliver*. [online] Women Deliver. Available at: <https://womendeliver.org/2018/why-women-in-politics/>

<sup>48</sup> UN News. (2005). Empowering women the most effective development tool, Annan says. [online] Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2005/02/130132-empowering-women-most-effective-development-tool-annan-says> [Accessed 13 Jan. 2019].

<sup>49</sup> Broderick, E. (2018). *Why women's participation is important for achieving gender justice | Australian Human Rights Commission*. [online] Humanrights.gov.au. Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/why-women-s-participation-important-achieving-gender-justice>

## 7.2. Socio-economic Obstacles

More often than not, women are unwilling or unable to actively participate in politics due to socio-economic factors that obstruct them. According to research, “women average lower levels of education, income, occupational prestige, civic skills, and ties with mobilizing groups such as trade unions”<sup>50</sup>. This means that on average, female politicians receive fewer private donations than their male counterparts.<sup>51</sup> Another prominent obstacle is the traditional perception of women’s societal roles, based on outdated values and patterns of financial activities, which regard women as less interested in politics and less qualified to pursue a career in this sector.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, women have reported feeling under-represented and undervalued by political parties, which they feel don’t prioritise issues and demands that especially concern them, something that often results in an apathetic and/or sceptical approach towards parties and political players in general. In the male-dominated political sphere, women are met with a “glass ceiling” that restricts their prospects and opportunities and fuels their disappointment and disinterest in politics.<sup>53</sup> Finally, women often express resentment about the challenge they’re met with while trying to strike a balance between their personal and professional commitments when pursuing a political career, a challenge they receive little to no support for from the state and its institutions.<sup>54</sup>

## 7.3. Recent developments

As it has already been discussed, women’s participation in politics is impeded with a plethora of obstacles all around the world, ranging from the lack of education to gender stereotyping and discriminatory legislation. However, there have been some positive developments recently in this field. Most importantly, the percentage of female parliamentarians worldwide has increased significantly. Specifically, the Prime Minister of Japan has expressed his commitment to reaching the 30% benchmark of leadership positions filled by women by 2020, while 2015 marked the first year when women in Saudi Arabia were allowed to vote in the elections. Rwanda recently established a worldwide record by having the highest percentage of women in parliament (63%)<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, countries like Kenya, Timor-Leste and Zimbabwe have managed in recent years to raise the percentage of women in parliament by up to 30%<sup>56</sup>. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the United States of America ranks 98<sup>th</sup> in the world for percentage of women in the legislature, down from 59<sup>th</sup> in 1998<sup>57</sup>. The most recent development in the international framework is the Security Council’s Resolution 2122

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<sup>50</sup> Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Archive.ipu.org. (2018). *Women in Parliaments: World Classification*. [online] Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<sup>56</sup> UN Women. (2018). *Elections - Women’s leadership and political participation*. [online] Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/elections>

<sup>57</sup> Women in the States. (2018). *State Data - Women in the States*. [online] Available at: <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/state-data/united-states/>

that was adopted in 2013, aiming to strengthen women's role in international peace and security.

## 8. Conclusion

It is becoming increasingly evident that the strengthening of women's political participation is a universal issue of the utmost importance and one that affects millions of women worldwide. In today's day and age, it is confounding at the very least for women to be granted opportunities unequal to those of men and for governments and governmental bodies to take little action against it. The possible solutions for the issue at hand are numerous and diverse, but there are also many more parameters to examine and discuss in order to gain a complete perspective. We hope that this Study Guide will serve as an incentive for further research and will encourage you to form interesting opinions that will lead to a fruitful debate during the committee sessions.

## 9. Questions to be addressed

- What are the factors that prevent women from engaging more actively in politics?
- What are the main policies that should be implemented in order to encourage the political participation of women?
- How can the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors restraining women be addressed?
- What is the role of tradition in the issue of women's political participation? What should be the role of government regarding circumstances of gender inequality due to traditional perceptions?
- Should gender quotas be enforced worldwide/be made mandatory and why?
- What are some institutional barriers that restrict women's political participation and how can they be addressed?
- In which ways can education help strengthen women's political engagement?
- What is the role of the media in empowering women's inclusion in society and political affairs?

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