

Beijing+30 Action 4: Full and Equal Decision-Making Power



Accelerate the achievement of women's full and equal decision-making power in private and public domains, and at all levels of government, including by applying special measures.

I. Introduction

Women's equal voice in decision-making is a fundamental human right in all domains. The existing patriarchal model of governance is unable to deliver substantive equality for women and maintain peace and security. Decision-making remains in the hands of men the world over. Women serve as Heads of State or Government in only 25 countries, and 106 countries have never had a woman leader at the helm. Globally, women hold 23 per cent of ministerial positions, 27 per cent of national parliamentary seats and 35 per cent of local deliberative seats.

Building inclusive and resilient societies requires inclusive and violence-free participation and representation based on parity between women and men across all levels of decision-making. Women's participation in political processes improves them: more inclusive decisions are made, different voices are heard, and different solutions are created. Without deliberate and ambitious action, parity will not be reached in this generation. Greater efforts are required globally to reverse prevailing gender stereotypes, so that societies perceive women as equally legitimate political actors as men. Strengthening the contributions of women leaders is essential for addressing global crises and designing the future we want.

II. Actions

The key actions are aligned with the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 40 (2024), on equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems:

1 **50:50 gender parity as a universal norm** as the basis for supporting Member States to reach 50:50 in decision-making, including through legal and policy

reforms, implementation of special measures and national action plans

2

A systematic intersectional approach recognizing women in all their diversity will require sustainable investments in supporting diverse women leaders, candidates, office holders and executive officials through capacity-building and networking, and support the new generation of women leaders, ensuring the voice and leadership of adolescent girls and young women informs decision-making at all levels.

3

Structural transformation of gendered roles and responsibilities across the public and private spheres to promote social norms recognizing women as effective political leaders and role models to young people (including by engaging media, traditional leaders, and men and boys in communities)

4

Institutional strengthening to change internal policies, procedures and practices, including on gender-responsive financing, so that public institutions, women's machineries and mechanisms and political parties are more gender-sensitive and deliver adequately financed policies and outcomes in accordance with international and regional commitments to gender equality

5

Inclusive modes of decision-making that include women human rights defenders and civil society, including support for the efforts of Member States and key stakeholders to create a conducive environment for participation and prevent, monitor and respond to violence against women in politics and in public life, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence

III. Impact at Scale

The journey towards equal decision-making power began with a 30 per cent target set by a **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution in 1990**, with the goal of achieving equal representation between women and men by 2000. This target was elevated in the **Beijing Platform for Action** in 1995, which established the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, emphasizing the need for specific targets to substantially increase the number of women, with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/130 (2011) on women and political participation calls on States to encourage greater involvement by indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas, and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority in decision-making at all levels. **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.5** ensures women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, and target 16.7 includes the sex, age and disability of representatives to measure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making.

The commitment to parity between women and men was reaffirmed in the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65 Agreed Conclusions** in 2021, which urges governments to “encourage the implementation of measures and mechanisms, including appropriate mechanisms to track progress, to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender balance at all levels of elected positions”.

In October 2024 the CEDAW Committee adopted a new **General Recommendation No. 40 (GR 40)** on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. General Recommendation No. 40 provides a road map for achieving equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems in both the public and private sectors, emphasizing a new approach to governance based on parity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change. It recommends specific legislative, policy and other measures that States should take to achieve parity, and its pillars of action include 50:50 parity, youth engagement, intersectional inclusion and structural transformation as critical areas aligned with the Beijing+30 Political Engagement Strategy.

IV. Normative Roots

Although a few countries have reached parity, research indicates that increased women's leadership in political decision-making processes results in greater stability, stronger responsiveness to citizens' needs, more responsive equality policies, and increased cooperation across alliances and communities. In several countries, a higher proportion of women legislators is associated with lower defence spending, less military engagement and more family-friendly policies. For example, in Latin America, higher proportions of women legislators are associated with greater policy attention to women, children and families.

Gender quotas have transformed legislatures worldwide and, consequently, impacted policymaking. Cross nationally, quotas have increased the percentage of minority women in politics and helped diversify the professional background of both women and men office holders. Women's inclusion in political decision-making may also reduce citizens' bias against women over time by 'seeing' women in office, improve the career aspirations and educational attainment of young women and girls, and improve citizens' trust in political institutions.

V. Proof of concept

The proposed Action is grounded in UN Women's normative, operational and coordination mandates, which have proved over a decade that evidence-based programming, policy-oriented advocacy and greater system-wide accountability can effectively support governments' efforts worldwide in translating normative commitments into national and local legal and policy frameworks.

COUNTRY EXAMPLE: MEXICO

In the last decade, Mexico has taken significant steps towards gender equality. In 2024, it elected its first woman President and now ranks fourth in the global ranking on women's representation in parliament, reaching parity in the Federal Congress and in all 32 state congresses. This milestone resulted from the effective implementation of legal reforms promoted by national stakeholders and supported by UN Women and United Nations partner agencies for over a decade. The reforms started with a 30 per cent quota for legislative positions, which increased to parity in Congress, followed by a 2019 constitutional reform that expanded gender parity provisions to all levels of decision-making bodies in the State.

VI. Existing platforms and alliances to connect to and leverage

- The UN System, including relevant Interagency Mechanisms and Task Forces (such as the Secretary-General's Call to Action Task Team on Temporary Special Measures).
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the CEDAW Committee in supporting implementation of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40.
- The European Union's Women and Youth Democracy Engagement (WYDE): intergenerational advocacy and networking for young women and girls to engage in Beijing+30 implementation plans in partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, International IDEA, and United Cities and Local Governments.
- Non-governmental organizations, members of the Action Coalition on Feminist Leadership, experts and academia to ensure meaningful integration of civil society voices in national, regional and global implementation.

VII. Impact: What can we achieve by 2030?

With just six years remaining to achieve the 2030 SDGs, progress must be accelerated to achieve SDG target 5.5, to ensure that no one is left behind, and that the aspirations of our societies and future generations of women leaders are safeguarded. Key impact results expected are:

- Women's equal power within decision-making systems: a new approach to governance based on parity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change
- Closing the gender gap for women in decision-making to achieve 50:50 gender parity
- Structural transformation on intersectional equality and the inclusion of all women in decision-making systems, with a particular focus on leveraging the voices of adolescent girls and young women
- Strengthened institutions overseeing the implementation of state gender equality and gender mainstreaming policies
- Revitalized democratic systems that ensure civic spaces are protected, with civil society's inclusive and safe participation and access to information.

THE BEIJING+30 ACTION AGENDA

This Action is part of the [Beijing+30 Action Agenda](#): a voluntary, action-oriented platform to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda. Grounded in stronger financing for gender equality and better gender data, and centering adolescent girls and young women, the Action Agenda invites Member States to identify one or two national priority actions and announce these at the High-Level Meeting on Beijing+30 on 22 September 2025.