

Side Event during the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

Empowering Women in the Nuclear Field & Strengthening the Role of Men as Allies in Gender Equality

11 March 2026, at 10.00hrs to 11.15hrs

Conference Room 9, UNHQ

Concept Note

Background

Malta, in its capacity as Gender Focal Point for the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is organizing a side event on the margins of the 70th Commission of the Status of Women. This side-event is co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Austria, Costa Rica, Ireland, South Africa, Thailand and Kiribati.

Women have historically contributed to nuclear science and diplomacy, from pioneering research to leadership in disarmament negotiations. However, women remain severely underrepresented, comprising less than 25% of the workforce in nuclear-related fields globally and even fewer in senior decision-making roles. This imbalance persists despite international commitments under frameworks such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, which call for gender equality and the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes.

The prevailing narrative often frames women in nuclear contexts as victims of radiation exposure or as inherently peaceful actors. While these perspectives highlight important dimensions, they risk reinforcing stereotypes and limiting women's agency. This side event seeks to reframe the discourse towards a positive, empowering narrative—one that celebrates women as innovators, leaders, and agents of change in nuclear disarmament. By doing so, we aim to inspire future generations, dismantle barriers, and foster inclusive institutional cultures.

The effects of nuclear weapons and related activities disproportionately impact women and girls due to biological and social factors, yet their voices remain marginalised in decision-making. Gender equality is not only a matter of rights but also a prerequisite for sustainable peace, security, and innovation. Men can play a transformative role in dismantling structural barriers, challenging stereotypes, and fostering inclusive institutional cultures. Their engagement is essential to achieving the goals of CSW70 and advancing gender-sensitive approaches in nuclear disarmament.

Promoting a positive narrative is essential for attracting and retaining women in nuclear disarmament challenging gender stereotypes and ensuring diversity in decision-making. Gender equality is not only a human rights imperative but also a strategic advantage: diverse teams enhance innovation, effectiveness and credibility. Promoting men as allies is also important to be factored in.

This side event seeks to highlight pathways for women's leadership and participation in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, showcase best practices and commitments from gender champions advocating gender equality in traditionally male-dominated spaces and; and foster collaboration between Member States, civil society, and international organisations to implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

Discussion Questions:

- What policies and programmes have successfully increased women's participation and gender mainstreaming in nuclear disarmament?
- How can we amplify stories of women's achievements to challenge stereotypes?
- How can we engage more men as allies for gender equality?
- What lessons can be drawn from relevant studies to inform gender-sensitive disarmament strategies?
- What role can international treaties (TPNW, NPT) play in institutionalising gender equality?
- How can we ensure meaningful representation of women from diverse backgrounds in global nuclear dialogues?
- What are effective ways to deal with the pushback and the false dichotomy between merit and equality?

Format, Briefers and Participation

The following is the agenda:

Moderator: Ms Francesca Gatt, Senior Counsellor, Gender Focal Point of TPNW, WPS Senior Lead, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta

- **Opening remarks** by *HE Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations*
- **Key remarks** by *HE Maritza Chan, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, Chair of CSW70 and Chair of the First Committee at the 80th Session of the General Assembly*
- **Panel Discussion:** *Dr. Emma Belcher, President of Ploughshares and member of Women Transforming Global Security; International Gender Champion (TBC); Ms Fiona Simpson, Deputy Chief, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations Secretariat; Ray Acheson Director of Reaching Critical Will.*
- **Remarks and questions from the floor**
- **Concluding remarks** by the Moderator

The side event will be conducted in English, no interpretation is available.

Kindly register by Monday 9th March 2026 [here](#).

For more information please contact Ms Rachel Deguara (rachel.deguara.2@gov.mt) at the Permanent Mission of Malta.