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## CONCEPT NOTE— SIDE EVENT 70CSW

### FEMINIST INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE: PENDING CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Wednesday, March 11 - 1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

UN Space, Room CR9

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#### GENDER EQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY

The fight for equality between women and men began with the thinking of the first feminist philosophers, took shape as a social movement, and, after years of campaigning, managed to reach the institutions, largely thanks to the gradual approval of women's suffrage.

Modern democracies have understood that feminism is a fundamental part of the political machinery insofar as it is linked to the principles of democracy, freedom, and justice. However, we are now at a historic moment in which these values are increasingly being questioned, particularly those concerning women's rights. This leads to the very participation of women in institutions, both national and international, being questioned, placing them once again as second-class citizens.

It is an irrefutable fact that for centuries women have been seen as outsiders in the public sphere and have been relegated to the domestic and private sphere. Just as this barrier was beginning to be overcome, the current context seems to indicate that a reversal is not only possible, but in some places has already begun. Faced with this reality, we cannot remain impassive.

Placing equality policies at the highest institutional level is a requirement derived from international human rights law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) obliges States to take all necessary measures to ensure real and effective equality between women and men. For this mandate to be fully effective, equality policies must have political leadership, decision-making capacity, and adequate institutional coordination. These are transformative policies, aimed at correcting structural inequalities and redistributing power, which cannot and should not be confused with welfare-oriented public policies or social services, as their scope is cross-cutting and affects the entire democratic, economic, and social model.

There is broad international consensus that no sustainable development or democratic quality will be possible without equality for women, who make up more than half of the population. The Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations 2030 Agenda, through Sustainable Development Goal 5, underscore the need to mainstream gender equality in all public policies.

Likewise, both the European Union and the Council of Europe recognize equality between women and men as a fundamental value of their political and legal systems. When states adopt this principle at the highest institutional level, they signal their commitment to making women's equality a fundamental pillar for guaranteeing rights, correcting structural inequalities, and building more just and democratic societies.

In the times we live in, it is necessary to remember that women's equality is a condition for the possibility of democracies. Democracies cannot be sustained on discrimination, exploitation, and violence against half the population: women.

Defending women's equality is, in this sense, a direct way of defending democracy and its fundamental values.

## **PURPOSE OF THE EVENT**

The event, which will be held during the 70th session of the CSW, seeks to create a space for dialogue, learning, and the exchange of experiences with experts from different countries and institutions in order to take stock of the current situation, the challenges women face in institutional mechanisms, and the challenges that remain.

The aim is to draw up a feminist roadmap to combat the global reactionary drift. In the face of renewed doubts about women's capabilities and their place in the world, this event affirms the certainty that democracy cannot exist or develop without women.

For all these reasons, it is essential to reinforce equality as a cross-cutting state policy and protect the rights of half the population in order to build more resilient, inclusive democracies committed to human rights, where the regulatory framework and public structures that support democracy play a key role in preventing setbacks and continuing to advance towards democratic, egalitarian societies with a gender perspective.

## **PROGRAM**

**Duration: 1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Institutional welcome (1:15 p.m. – 1:20 p.m.)**

Ana Redondo, Minister of Equality of Spain

**Round table (1:20 p.m. - 2:20 p.m.)**

**Moderator: Ana Alonso**, Ambassador on Special Mission for Feminist Foreign Policy (Spain)

**Speakers:**

- **Ana Redondo**, Minister of Equality (Spain)
- **Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

- **Bibiana Aido**, Regional Director of UN Women for the Americas and the Caribbean.
- **Lina Gálvez**, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.
- **Lucila García Méndez**, Director General of *Closing the Gap*.

**Conclusions and closing remarks (2:20 p.m. – 2:25 p.m.)**

María Guijarro, Secretary of State for Equality and the Eradication of Violence against Women

**Group photo (2:25 p.m.)**