



## HIGH LEVEL SIDE EVENT

### 70<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*“Harnessing the CEDAW Convention as a Roadmap to Eliminate Discriminatory Laws, Policies, Practices and Other Structural Barriers in International Representation”*

**Wednesday, 11th March 2026**

Time: 4:45pm - 6:00pm Conference Room 8

Conference Building, New York

### **Background**

The elimination of discriminatory legislation, social norms and practices is key to promoting gender equality. The CEDAW Convention (1979) serves as a transformative legal framework that obliges Member States to move beyond formal equality and achieve substantive equality by dismantling structural barriers. A critical yet often overlooked lever in this effort is Article 8 of the Convention, which obliges States to ensure women have the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and participate in the work of international organizations on equal terms with men.

By providing a clear obligation for gender parity in global decision-making, Article 8 acts as a lever to eliminate discriminatory policies, practices and "glass ceilings" that have historically barred women from advancing to the highest levels of diplomatic representation and meaningful participation in multilateral fora. While the CEDAW Committee has clarified State obligations under Article 8 and provided guidance through its general recommendations and jurisprudence, persistent obstacles continue to hinder the full implementation of Article 8. General Recommendation 40 -on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems- highlights the centrality of Article 8 as “the legal basis for States to ensure equal representation of women in international decision-making, including in diplomatic appointments, the composition of delegations, and the development of foreign policies guided by a gender criterion that makes the empowerment of women and girls a central focus of government policy abroad.”

An important focus of UN Women’s work on legal reform and social norm transformation, including within institutions, entails supporting national partners to integrate gender equality principles, and supporting governments in collaboration with civil society to repeal discriminatory laws, introduce new protections, and embed gender equality in national constitutions, policies and institutions. In every region of the world, UN Women uses the CEDAW Convention as a roadmap for its work, and in turn reinforces the implementation of the Convention, including through monitoring



the situation of women and girls on the ground, and integrating the CEDAW Committee's recommendations in all its programming.

With CEDAW as one of the key anchors, UN Women operationalizes its support to Member States to advance Gender Responsive Foreign Policies through a 3-pillar programming model:

- i. A strengthened evidence- based gender responsive foreign policies;
- ii. An enabling environment for equal representation of women in diplomacy; and
- iii. Gender mainstreaming in all domains of foreign policy.

In line with the three pillars, UN Women will publish a policy paper titled: *Women in the Diplomatic Corps: Assessing Normative Frameworks, Structural Barriers and Policy Recommendation*. The paper contributes to increased research on gender responsive foreign policies with a focus on representation and participation of women in the diplomatic corps, the normative frameworks that influence their roles and the structural barriers they confront on the path to parity. It identifies promising practices for gender mainstreaming in foreign policy and provides recommendations to various actors in the ecosystem of diplomacy.

Occurring on the 45th anniversary of the entry into force of the CEDAW Convention, CSW 70 presents an opportunity for UN Women and Partners to: convene and disseminate findings from the paper; share strategies for moving from formal to substantive equality including through policy and institutional reforms for parity in international representation; and consolidate efforts to dismantle barriers that limit the full implementation of Article 8 of CEDAW.

## Objectives:

The panel discussion aims to:

- i. Amplify the intersection of women, diplomacy and human rights and the role of Article 8 and CEDAW General Recommendation 40 on equal and inclusive representation of women in decision making systems;
- ii. Disseminate key findings from UN Women's policy paper on *Women in the Diplomatic Corps: Assessing Normative Frameworks, Structural Barriers and Policy Recommendations*
- iii. Share promising practices across geographical regions of how legal and institutional reforms can be transformative for women's international representation and participation in the affairs of international organizations.



- iv. Promote the elimination of discriminatory laws in four major areas as an enabler for women’s equal participation in diplomacy including 1) overarching legal frameworks and public life; 2) violence against women; 3) employment and economic benefits; and 4) marriage and family, as outlined in SDG Indicator 5.1.1, which measures Government efforts to put in place legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality

**Organizers and Co-Sponsors:**

This high-level panel discussion is co-organized by UN Women, the CEDAW Committee, OHCHR, GQUAL and IDLO. It is co-sponsored by: Liberia and Colombia

**Logistical information:**

Interpretation will be provided during this event.

**Agenda:**

Please see page 4.

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker
4:40-4:45 pm	<b>Arrival and settling in</b>	<b>All</b>
4:45-4:50pm	<b>Group photo</b>	<b>Speakers and Co-organizers</b>
4:50-5:05 pm	<b>Opening Segment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ms. Nahla Haidar</b>- Chair, CEDAW Committee</li> <li><b>H.E Gbeme Horace-Kollie</b>- Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Liberia (tbc)</li> <li><b>Representative of Colombia</b></li> <li><b>Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda</b>- Assistant Secretary General/Deputy Executive Director, Normative Support, UN System Coordination &amp; Programme Results, UN Women</li> </ol>
5:05-5:45 pm	<b>Moderated Panel Discussions:</b>  Moderated by: <b>Maria Noel Leoni</b> - Director, GQUAL Campaign	<p><b>Segment 1 : Dismantling structural barriers in international representation: the role of multilateral action (3 mins each)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>H.E Ms. Naima Ben Yahia</b>- Minister of solidarity, social insertion and the family, Morocco</li> <li><b>Representative of Spain</b></li> <li><b>Representative of France (tbc)</b></li> <li><b>Ambassador Laura Dupuy</b>- Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations in New York</li> <li><b>Ms. Jan Beagle</b>- Director General, International Development Law Organization</li> <li><b>Ms. Susana Malcorra</b>- President and Co-Founder, GWL Voices</li> </ol> <p><b>Segment 2: Making Article 8 of CEDAW operational: promising practices (3 mins each)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>H.E Ms. Nadine Umutoni Gatsinzi</b>- Chief Gender Monitor (Vice-Minister), Office of the Prime Minister, Rwanda</li> <li><b>Representative of Nepal</b></li> <li><b>Representative of Mexico</b></li> <li><b>Representative of Slovenia</b></li> <li><b>Representative of the UAE (tbc)</b></li> <li><b>Ms. Esther Mwaura-Muiru</b>- Global Advocacy Director, Stand for Her Land Campaign</li> </ol>
5:45-5:55 pm	<b>Reflections from the audience (2 minutes statement)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ms. Spogmay Ahmed</b>- Senior Policy Advisor, Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative</li> <li><b>Ms. Nene Goita</b>- Program Coordinator, SRHR &amp; EVAWG, The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET)</li> <li>+ Others [<i>up to a maximum of 10 minutes</i>]</li> </ol>
5:55-6:00 pm	<b>Closing remarks and Photo Op</b>	Speakers, Co-organizers and All participants