

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Increasing women's participation in democratic governance and peace building

Student Officer: Alfred Alexopoulos

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Alfred Alexopoulos, I am an IB1 student at HAEF Psychico College, and I will be your co-chair in the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee. I will be serving as the expert chair on the topic of increasing women's participation in democratic governance and peace building. I hope this study guide provides you with the knowledge needed in order to create a good draft resolution. That being said I wish you the best of luck and trust that we will have constructive debates in the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me at: alexop.alfred@gmail.com if you have any questions concerning the study guide or the conference.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Progress on women's rights and opportunities to participate in the governance of a state has been significant for the past century or so. It is hard to imagine, but up to a hundred and twenty years ago women were not allowed to vote in any country in the world. It is important though to understand that there is still a significant gap between men and women as far as their participation in governments and leadership positions in peace building is concerned. There is a long way to go still, even in countries in Europe and North America. This is a matter of equal opportunities for all people regardless of sex. For significant progress to be made, cooperation is needed by all states in order to reach a viable solution. Besides the cooperation between states, help should be provided by INGOS and IGOs to assist in making sure new measures are being implemented and asses the progress being made in each state.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Democracy

Literally translates from Ancient Greek to "rule of the people", a system of government in which citizens exercise power either directly (like in Ancient Athens) or indirectly via electing representatives (like modern democracies).

Democratic Governance

"A System of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions." (OSCE, 2017)

Peacebuilding

"An action to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict." (UNPF, 2017)

Empowerment

Measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority.

Emancipation

“The process of giving people social or political freedom and rights, usually referring to minorities or other groups that have previously been discriminated against.” (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2017)

Women's suffrage

Women's suffrage refers to the right of women to vote, which was gained for women in Europe and North America in the early 20th century, but took much longer in the rest of the world.

INGOs

International non-governmental organizations are organizations that work out of the sphere of any government, are non-profit, and have as a primary goal to better the lives of a group/groups of people. Examples include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace.

IGOs

Intergovernmental organizations are organizations composed of three or more states that have as a primary purpose the extensive cooperation between states around the world economically, militarily, and socially. Examples include the UN, the World Bank, and the European Union.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Women's Rights Progress Through the Years

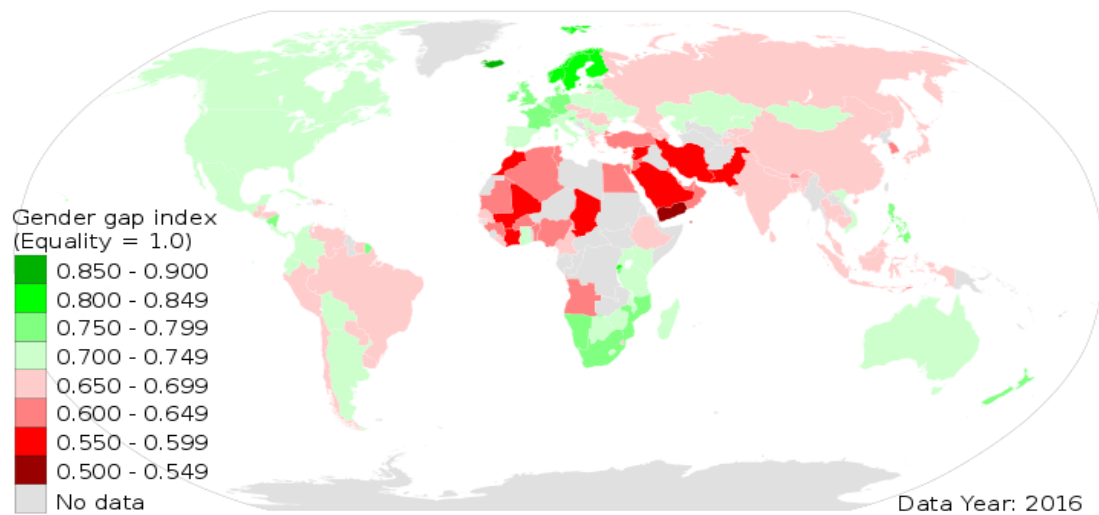
It is important to begin with woman's rights in general, as greater representation for women on the political front can only be achieved through progress in their rights.

Substantial progress for women's rights has been made in the past century or so, mostly in Western Europe and the United States of America. This progress began with the social movements of the early 1900s, where Europe and the USA witnessed the social emancipation of women. First of all, women finally started to be seen as a legitimate part of society. Women, before these social movements like women's suffrage, were seen as not only inferior to men but not even having much use outside the house. This to us may seem outrageous but it was a reality for the world just a century ago. With these social movements going into effect, women were able to vote, allowing them to get involved with politics for the first time. Moreover, a very important change after the early 1900s was the fact that women were now able

to work in any field, including positions in the government, which meant that a woman could run for president. This however, did not happen for another half a century for reasons that will be analyzed later on. It is important to mention that this progress came after the industrialization of Western Europe and the USA.

Unfortunately, this immense progress that was seen in the Western World in the early 20th century did not appear in Asia or in Africa. The countries in these continents had enormous challenges to overcome before dealing with social inequality issues. Firstly, most of these countries were under colonial rule, which obviously completely restrained them from progressing on social issues. Secondly, any countries that had not fallen under the rule of a European empire, like China and Japan, had not even reached the point of having a functioning and effective democracy, so it was very difficult for them to focus on the preservation and development of human rights. Both China and Japan had authoritative governments in power that cared little about advancing their countries as far as human rights are concerned. Even when most of the countries had gained independence by the 1980s, their progress on this front was very limited because they had not yet industrialized and a majority of their populations were still very poor; in other words, their priorities were elsewhere.

Also, as mentioned before, it is important to understand that progress on social issues is extremely difficult to take place under a non-democratic government because it is usually in the government's interests to deprive their population from having increased rights. Most nations in the African and Asian world have had a non-democratic government starting from their inception, either in the form of dictatorships like in Zimbabwe, Angola, Libya, and Rwanda, or monarchies like in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. This has led them to mostly neglecting human rights and especially woman's rights. There are many indicators of this lack of empowerment of women in the aforementioned continents; two of the most important are the Gender Inequality Index and the Global Gender Gap Index. The former is an equality index that measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development: reproductive health, empowerment, which is the aspect that matters the most for our topic and will be analyzed later on, and economic status. It is important to keep in mind though, that this index puts a lot of value on reproductive health of women, which includes adolescent fertility rate. Adolescent fertility rate is illegal in many Middle Eastern countries, so these countries have very low rates, making their Gender Inequality Index seem much higher than what it actually is. Therefore, I would recommend focusing on the latter index, the Global Gender Gap Index, which does not include this often misleading aspect of gender inequality. This index focuses on economic participation, educational attainment, and political empowerment. The map that follows shows each country and where it falls on the index.



#1: Gender Gap Index, depicting where each country falls on the scale (1 is total equality), countries in the Middle East, West Africa, and Asia are falling behind compared to the Western World

As you can see from the figure, with a few exceptions in South Africa and Oceania, we can observe that North and Central Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of Asia are well behind on equality, especially when compared to Europe, North America, and South America. Let us support this index with some pretty clear examples. In Saudi Arabia for instance, women were not allowed to vote up to 2012, they still cannot drive alone, and up to 2008 were not allowed to participate in the Olympic Games. Furthermore in Egypt, a mere 23% of the labor force is comprised of women. In Yemen, that percentage is 7.5%.

It should be mentioned however, that even though these numbers may frighten most people, they are a vast improvement from just a couple of decades ago. Most LEDCs have slowly been making progress during the past two decades, as their priorities are starting to change from economic to social. Median income for women, participation in the labor force, and percent with a form of secondary education have all been increasing in most countries in these regions, with the exception of war-torn countries like Yemen, and Syria.

Has there been any progress on the political front?

Moving on to the political front for women, it includes their basic political right to vote, women's participation in parliament and other government institutions, and, of course, women in leadership positions like President and Prime Minister of countries, or Secretary General for the United Nations. On this front, both the Western world and the rest of the world need progress. For example, now that women are allowed to vote in Saudi Arabia, the only remaining country that has not enacted woman's suffrage is the Vatican. Only cardinals, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, are allowed to vote when electing a new Pope, but cardinals cannot be women, so women are literally unable to vote in the Vatican. According to the Global Gender Gap Index mentioned before, a mere 18% of Saudi Arabia's

parliament is comprised of women even though women make up about 44% of the population. The Western world does not trail far behind these frightening statistics. 18% of the Greek parliament is comprised of women when they make up the majority of the population in Greece. 80% of the United States Congress is comprised of men. Unfortunately, for leadership positions, the statistics are even worse. The US has never (in its almost 240 year history) had a woman president. The same is true for countries like Spain, Sweden, Italy, and Russia. Also, the UN has not been a leader of change in this issue either. For example, no woman has ever served as a Secretary General of the United Nations. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is comprised of 17 men and 1 woman and the United Nations Peace building Fund, which is essential to our topic as will be mentioned further on, has a women/men ratio in its executive board of $\frac{1}{4}$. Finally, only 28% of the General Assembly is comprised of women.

What is extremely important to mention here is the fact that most laws used to limit women's abilities to participate in politics have been eliminated. A large part of these limitations are now caused by social norms that have developed for women from the beginning of history and we continue to enhance them into the following generations because of the lack of effective change in most of the world. These norms come from many political analysts point Hillary Clinton's defeat partly due to stereotypes that exist against women in politics. Fortunately, Nordic countries have taken the lead in this front and are fighting the norms that exist in our societies. In Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland for example, political parties have implemented a quota that 40% of their members have to be women. This, in turn, has created a substantial change in the political scheme in these countries. In all 4 of these nations, the percentage of women in parliament is over 40%, much higher than almost all other countries in the world.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Nordic Council

The Nordic Council is a geopolitical forum for cooperation between the Nordic Countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland). These countries have been leaders in social progress since the end of the World Wars. In this case, it is no different. As discussed in the background information section, through specific measures they have integrated women into the democratic governance more than ever before. Therefore, it is important for them to act as role models for other countries to follow their lead.

USA

As unarguably the most powerful country on earth, it is crucial for the USA to further progress to increase women participation, as it has fallen way behind other Western countries previously mentioned. The United States has a massive global sphere of influence, as is evident by the term American exceptionalism that refers to the US as unique among all nations in positive or negative connotations, so it is crucial for it to advance on this front.

Russia

The Russian Federation also trails behind in this front, as indicated from the Global Gender Gap Index, where it ranks below many LEDCs like Kenya, Malawi, and Ghana. Russia is unarguably the second or third most powerful nation, so it yields a lot of influence in the global stage, but more importantly it yields a significant amount of influence on its neighbors, including Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, as seen in the previous section, is known to restrict women's rights and opportunities, especially in the political front and is ranked third to last in the Global Gender gap Index. As the leader of the Arab world that yields the most influence in the Middle East along with Iran, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council (Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait), its approach to this issue has to change if we are to expect significant change in the coming years in this area of the world.

Iran

Iran, as seen clearly indicated from the Gender Gap Index, has several issue as far as women's participation in the democratic governance and peacebuilding, not only because it is partly democratic but more importantly because it exercises strict Sharia Law that limits women's opportunities to participate in politics. This is the case for many Middle Eastern countries as well.

Iran, along with Saudi Arabia, is the most powerful nation in the region and exercises a substantial amount of influence on fellow Shiite majority countries like Iraq, but also other nearby countries like Lebanon and Syria.

Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW or UNCSW) is a commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The commission is the main UN organ promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Thus,

as a part of unarguably the most important intergovernmental organization in the world, its actions are crucial to finding solutions to the issue at hand.

United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPF)

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPF) is a fund program launched in 2006 to support activities, actions, programs and organizations that seek to build a lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. Because of the fact that it is leading movement for peacebuilding in the world, it should make sure to have an equal representation of women in its members and its executive board.

BLOCKS EXPECTED

There are many different blocks that could be formed, so there is no need to follow what will be suggested below. However, a typical block may look something like the following. On the one hand, you would have the United States of America, the Nordic Countries previously described, the rest of the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Uganda, and possibly parts of South America (Argentina, Uruguay mostly) which could be considered the more progressive countries on the issue with more democratic governments that have shown to be willing to work on empowering women politically. This, though, may be considered controversial as many political analysts see the USA as falling behind most of Europe and does not seem to have women's empowerment as a top priority.

The second block would be the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the rest of Asia, the rest of Africa, and the rest of South America. These countries are considered less democratic, and less progressive on social issues, focusing on other aspects of their country such as the economy and the military.

Again, it is important to understand that this is just a proposal that definitely does not need to be followed.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1893	New Zealand becomes the first proper territory to enact women's suffrage
1904	The International Woman Suffrage Alliance is founded
1918	Great Britain enacts the women's suffrage
1920	USA follows enacts the women's suffrage

1946	The Commission on the Status of Women is created
1948	The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is signed
1967	The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is signed
1975	The First World Conference on Women in Mexico City takes place
1995	The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (in Beijing) takes place
1990s	Quotas are introduced in many countries around the world for a minimum percentage of women in government positions
1998	The first female Deputy Secretary General is elected:: Louise Fréchette
2005	Angela Merkel elected as the first female chancellor of Germany

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948¹

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)²

The convention was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly .

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the United Nations system – Report of the Secretary-General (E/2017/57)³

The report detects the main causes of the lack of participation of women in political affairs as well as proposing an action plan that would potentially help resolve the issue.

¹ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *UN.org*, United Nations.

² "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)." *UN.org*, UN Women, 18 Dec. 1979.

³ "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system - Report of the Secretary-General." *UN.org*, United Nations-Economic and Social Council, 13 July 2017.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs in the United Nations system (E/RES/2017/9*)⁴

The resolution considers potential advancements that women could make in achieving gender equality.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

This is an issue that is constantly evolving and is being slowly but surely solved. Therefore, it is not proper to use the word “attempts” because that gives the impression that people have tried to solve the problem but have failed, which is not the case. Intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, governments, and civil society have all taken steps to make progress on increasing women’s participation in democratic governance and peacebuilding. For example, the UN, through the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and through organizing several conferences on women like the World Conferences on Women in Mexico City, in Beijing, Copenhagen, and Nairobi, has in fact helped make progress on the issue at hand. Also, many INGOs like the World Economic Forum and the Human Rights Watch, through creating and publishing the Global Gender Gap Index and through reporting on the actual situation in different countries as far as women’s rights are concerned respectively, help to reach a solution. Finally, Nordic countries have helped by being a role model on how to change this lack of opportunities and lack of equality for women.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As suggested in the previous section, a solution cannot just be reached by one actor. This is an issue that needs time to be solved and needs the support and action of all actors: IGOs, governments, civil society, and INGOs. Each of these actors should with the best of their abilities commit to solving this issue in whatever way they can. Of course, cooperation between these actors is definitely needed.

IGOs should be responsible for promoting cooperation between states in order to progress on the issue. Also, they should provide yearly reports on how the issue is evolving in the world, focusing both on the achievements of nations that are progressing on the issue at hand but also on the lack of progress of others. INGOs should be the ones raising awareness on the lack of opportunities for women in government through means such as but not limited to campaigns, ads, and

⁴ “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.” *UN.org*, United Nations-Economic and Social Council, 7 June 2017.

interviews on cable channels. Governments should either strongly encourage or enforce political parties to have quotas on their members' sex, in order to promote equal opportunity for women. Finally, civil society, with the help of IGOs like the UN and other large INGOs like the Human Rights Watch, should organize meetings and conferences in which well-known and successful female leaders like heads of state, heads of IGOs and INGOs, and other major female influencers will speak in favor of women's participation on the democratic governance and peacebuilding process around the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Democratic Governance." OSCE: OSCE, 2017, www.osce.org/odihr/democratic-governance.

"What Is Peacebuilding?" United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, UNPF, 2017, www.unpbf.org/application-guidelines/what-is-peacebuilding/.

"Global Gender Gap Report." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 3 Dec. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Gender_Gap_Report.

"Representation of Women in the United Nations System." United Nations, United Nations, 18 Oct. 2010, www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fplegbasis.html.

"Economic and Social Council." Unwomen, UN Women, 2017, www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/major-resolutions/economic-and-social-council.

"American Exceptionalism." American Exceptionalism - New World Encyclopedia, New World Encyclopedia, 2016, www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/American_exceptionalism.

"Measuring the Global Gender Gap." Global Gender Gap Report 2016, World Economic Forum, 2016, reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/measuring-the-global-gender-gap/.

"Rankings." Global Gender Gap Report 2016, World Economic Forum, 2016, reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/.

Williams, Daniel. "Saudi Arabia vs. Iran: The Long War Continues." The Huffington Post, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 5 Jan. 2016, www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-williams2/saudi-arabia-vs-iran-the_b_8916488.html.

"What We Do: Leadership and Political Participation." UN Women, UN Women, 2016, www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation.

“Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” United Nations, United Nations, 2016, www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

“Timeline of Women's Suffrage.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Dec. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage.

“World Assembly for Women: WAW! 2017.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017, www.mofa.go.jp/fp/hr_ha/page23e_000483.html.