



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, in collaboration with UN Women, are pleased to invite you to a side event at the 61st Session on the Commission on the Status of Women:

Equality in politics: another 50 years to reach 50–50?

Thursday 16 March 2017, 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.
Conference Room A of the Conference Building¹, United Nations, New York

Gender equality in political decision-making is essential to democracy. While there has been a continuous and overall increase in women's political participation over the decades, progress has been very slow at all levels. At present, the worldwide average proportion of women in national parliaments is 23.3 per cent, up from 22.6 per cent a year ago. At this pace, it would take another 50 years to reach gender parity.

In the past twenty years, attention and efforts have intensified regarding the promotion of women to decision-making positions, particularly in politics. Despite this, the current situation begs the question – why have we not progressed further? Historical obstacles have not been overcome: gender stereotypes, a male-dominated political culture, closed political parties and expensive campaigns continue to limit women's access to elected positions. New barriers add to the challenge: the emergence of violence against women in politics, growing distrust in politics and the perceived disconnect between politicians and citizens make it all the more difficult for women to be attracted to participate in the first place.

Research shows that temporary special measures, like gender quotas, have been effective in delivering greater numbers of women in politics. In 2016, IPU data indicated that women won 25.6 per cent of seats in parliaments in countries that applied quotas compared to 16.1 per cent in countries that did not. However, results vary as the targets set and implementation mechanisms used are very diverse. Are quotas the only fast-track solution, and what supportive measures are needed to avoid quotas becoming a new glass ceiling?

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides new momentum for a constant progress review of women's political participation. SDG 5.5.1. establishes specific indicators on the representation of women in political life, including national parliaments (on which the IPU collects data) and local government (a new data collection method is being led by UN Women). The development of comparable global data on women's representation at the local level will complement the extensive data available on women in parliaments.

The event will focus on the following questions:

- How do we move from minimal numerical targets to gender balance in political decision-making bodies?
- Which measures have been most effective in strengthening women's participation? What lessons can be learned on how to maximize the impact of temporary special measures?
- What are the links between women's participation at national and local level? Are there pathways to power across sectors?
- How does data on women's political participation contribute to promoting progress? Are there any research gaps to be filled?

Chair/Moderator: **Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams**, Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

Remarks: **Ambassador Pennelope Beckles**, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, former Minister and former MP

IPU Representative
UN Women representative
MP (to be confirmed)

¹ Conference Room A does not have interpretation facilities and the side event will be held in English only.