

Vivi's speech

CSW – GQUAL

Good evening.

Thank you very much for joining us today to talk about gender parity in international justice.

As most of us here know, women are under-represented in international tribunals and bodies. This is, after all, another case among many being discussed here at CSW involving the lack of representation of women or their access to equal opportunities.

But I still want to start by presenting some of the numbers. And as I do so, I invite you to PICTURE these bodies that were created to impart justice. I invite you to that, because that is exactly what our campaign GQUAL is about, CHANGING THAT PICTURE.

Today, the International Court of Justice has only three women among its 15 judges. The International Criminal Court, despite having one of the more sophisticated selection procedures that takes gender into account, has a 33% of women judges in the bench.

United Nations human rights mechanisms present an upsetting picture. Take the UN Human Rights Committee, for instance, with only 5 women out of its 18 members; or the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, with 3 out of 18.

19 of the 52 UN Special Procedures have NEVER been led by a woman, including the Rapporteurships on torture, freedom of expression, racial discrimination, and health.

Regional human rights courts are even less representative: the Inter-American Court has only 1 woman judge out of 7 members, the African Court has 2 women out of 11 judges, the European Court has 17 women out of 45 judges, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights has 3 women out of 10 members.

With all of these PICTURES in mind, I now ask you to think about the magnitude, impact, and broad scope of decisions these bodies make without an equal representation of women (sometimes without any women at all). These bodies decide on conflicts between nations, trade agreements, environment protection, refugee situations, and human rights violations. Even more, because our world is so interconnected, decisions made at the international level affects us as individuals, as communities, as corporations, and as nations.

Moreover, when you analyze the historic composition of international bodies – like we did at GQUAL – you realize that the situation will not fix itself over time. If we want women from all walks of life to be equally represented in international bodies, we need to take action.

That is why GQUAL was born. I am honored to be speaking here on behalf of it, but our action plan and initiative is actually supported by more than 1000 people and organizations from all over the world, including Presidents, Vicepresidents, Foreign Ministers, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, and influential academics, human rights activists, lawyers, and judges.

There are **two main questions** that we hope GQUAL contributes to answers to, and that I also hope can guide our conversation today.

The first one is **why is it important that women are represented equally in international tribunals and bodies?**

There is a simple yet fundamental answer to this. Women have a human right not to be discriminated against, and States have an obligation to

remove all obstacles and put forward all measures necessary for women to have equal opportunities. But there are also other compelling reasons. One is that women's experiences matter and make a difference. In that sense, women from diverse backgrounds are able to contribute perspectives and insights that enrich the debate and improve the outcome of a decision. Furthermore, parity and diversity increase the legitimacy of international bodies, and therefore makes them more impactful.

It is also important to consider that SDG 5 acknowledges that gender equality is not only a right, but also a necessary condition to achieve all other sustainable goals. I believe that part of that goal needs to be making sure international justice is the best that it can be, and this won't happen unless women contribute equally to international decisions.

The second question, is how are we going to achieve and sustain gender parity?

We believe an important entry point for change is to introduce considerations on gender into the selection processes. GQUAL will do this through three main strategies:

The first one is to get Governments to pledge to nominate and to vote for international positions considering gender parity.

The second one is to work with international bodies and organizations to develop standards, guidelines, and mechanisms so that selections processes promote and enforce gender equality and diversity.

The third strategy is to generate more debate, like we are doing here today.

We trust that through that pathway and with a global and diverse support from civil society and academic organizations, activists and individuals concerned with equality, and governments we can CHANGE THE PICTURE.

I will finish by thanking all our speakers for joining us in this discussion and all the governments and institutions that joined us to sponsor this event. I look forward to changing the picture together.