



US Women's Caucus at the UN UN Commission on the Status of Women 65

The US Women's Caucus at the UN represents progressive US-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) recognized by the UN Council of Economic and Social Affairs (ECOSOC). Our member organizations actively support CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action for women's rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that women have borne the brunt of the crisis as frontline workers, wage earners, and primary caregivers at home. It has highlighted the need for women's unique perspective in making crucial decisions at the highest levels. The US Women's Caucus applauds the outstanding political leadership that female leaders in New Zealand, Taiwan, and other countries have demonstrated during the crisis. With too few women in decision-making positions across the globe, equity in representation in government, business, industry and civil society remains elusive. According to the World Economic Forum, it will take 95 years to close the gender gap in political representation globally. Female office holders are under violent threats and women's economic participation is deteriorating, not improving. Urgent action is required. **Gender must be mainstreamed** and commitments to **CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action must be at the forefront** to achieve equality and 2030 Sustainable Development Goal targets. **Women's leadership is predicated on securing women's human rights.**

The US Women's Caucus at the UN calls upon nations to

A. Remove the current legal, social, and economic barriers that prevent women from fully participating in public life as decision-makers.

1. **Repeal laws that inhibit women's participation**; enact laws that protect the health, safety, and human rights of women and girls, regardless of race, ethnic or national origin, ancestry, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, political beliefs, disability, socio-economic status, citizenship, or other personal characteristics.
2. **Adopt legal, economic and labor policies** that ensure women's active participation in their design, development, and implementation; promote parity at all levels of decision-making.
3. **Eliminate harmful gender norms** that prevent women from advancing; develop media advocacy communications strategies to counter them with positive messages to normalize women's participation and leadership at all levels of society; **work with community groups, religious and other civic organizations** to raise awareness and educate society on the importance of inclusion of women at all levels of leadership and in decision-making, encouraging full engagement of men and boys.
4. **Ratify CEDAW**; encourage the local adoption of anti-discrimination laws and policies, as modeled by **Cities for CEDAW**; encourage public and private sector boards to implement **CEDAW for Companies**.
5. **Enact and enforce equal pay laws**; promote full transparency and accountability for companies and government agencies; develop programs to incentivize companies and organizations to meet equity standards and promote women at all levels, including top management.
6. Legislate to **protect all caregivers**; ratify ILO Convention 189 that protects and provides living wages to domestic workers, the majority of whom are women. Caregivers provide vital domestic support necessary to retain and advance women in public, civic, and corporate leadership.
7. Lessen the care burdens faced by women by ensuring adequate sustainable funding for **social protection programs**, providing safe, affordable child and elder care, as well as paid family leave in the public and private sectors to support women's participation in the labor force.

B. Advance women's health by removing barriers that limit women's full participation in society, decision-making, and leadership.

1. **Provide universal health care** that guarantees full access for all women and girls and ensure major decisions related to women's health care delivery systems are designed for and by women.
2. Enact and enforce laws that **promote the safety and welfare** of women and girls in all spheres of life: at home, in school, at work, in public and online spaces.
3. Uphold and **advance sexual and reproductive health and rights** to enable women's full participation in decision-making in the labor force and in public and private life. Assure universal access to all sexual and reproductive services, as well as maternity leave and pre- and post-natal care

C. Combat violence and harassment inhibiting women at all levels of society, including cyber-bullying, domestic violence, violence against women leaders and those in public office.

1. **Criminalize** all harmful and discriminatory practices against women and girls, including physical, psychological, and online harassment, exploitation, child marriage, intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation, and sex and labor trafficking.
2. End impunity and adopt "**zero tolerance**" **standards** for sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying or other violence against women and girls; ratify ILO Convention 190 to protect women in the workplace; enforce laws to protect women activists, community leaders, officeholders, candidates, and poll workers.
3. Set strict standards defining harassment and violence against women in public life and **hold media and social media to account for violations** by removing such content.
4. Ensure women's equitable representation in law enforcement and the judiciary. Strengthen women's **access to justice and complaint mechanisms**, ensuring that policies, programs and services center survivors of gender- based violence in their design and delivery.

D. Support girls and women leaders by investing in education, capacity-building, and inclusion.

1. Invest in and strengthen commitments to **encourage girls** to fully and equally participate in all sports, internships, apprenticeships, and leadership skills programs to build their decision-making capabilities and increase their chances at economic empowerment.
2. Invest in infrastructure to ensure women and girls have **safe access** to schools, work places, transportation, sanitary facilities, and digital connectivity.
3. Adopt and enforce gender equity and diversity standards, set targets and timetables for government agencies, and encourage businesses, unions and other organizations to **adopt gender and diversity quotas** to ensure better representation of women at all levels.
4. Encourage public and private organizations to **revamp personnel policies** to identify, nurture and support female workers; provide the additional training, mentoring, and sponsorship programs needed to move them into positions of authority.
5. Invest in capacity-building programs and partnerships to **develop leadership pipelines** to strengthen women's participation in politics and public life by funding and leveraging the work of women's organizations, educational institutions, and grassroots civic organizations.
6. Promote women's influence and leadership in peacebuilding, diplomacy, and the military, supporting **mentorship and training programs**. Advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2493.
7. Invest in **gender budgeting** processes and disaggregate data collection to track and measure the progress and impact of gender equity and women's leadership.

"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made" Ruth Bader Ginsberg