

# THE GQUAL DECLARATION

**We**, the undersigned, are united by the deep conviction that equality and non-discrimination are neither aspirations nor privileges; they are rights.

International law supports this conviction. It prohibits discrimination and requires states to guarantee gender equality. Regrettably, there are many dimensions in which this mandate goes unfulfilled. **GQUAL** aims to call the attention of the international community to one of these dimensions: the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in international bodies.

Women are underrepresented in virtually all international bodies responsible for monitoring and developing international law, human rights, and international relations, both in the United Nations and in regional organizations in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

As of September 2015, women occupied only 17% of all positions within the main international and regional tribunals. For example, only 3 out of 15 judges on the International Court of Justice are women; the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea has 21 judges and only one is a woman; the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has 17 members and only 2 women; and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has no female judge among its seven members.

Additionally, women comprise no more than 30% of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Committee against Torture. The United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances counts with the participation of only 2 women among its 10 constituents; while the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has five members, only one of them female. In fact, 11 of the United Nations Special Procedures that have been occupied by more than one mandate-holder have never been led by a woman. Some of these positions have been in existence for decades.

In most cases, member states are responsible for nominating and electing candidates for these positions. These same states are responsible for respecting the principle of non-discrimination. In practice, however, states usually do not have transparent guidelines or procedures that respect gender parity and equality to guide candidate nominations and voting processes.

Furthermore, the majority of these international bodies and tribunals also lack specific criteria, rules or mechanisms to correct these gender disparities.

Article 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) guarantees women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations. Our current reality demonstrates a failure to comply with this obligation by member states.

We firmly believe that in order to promote equality, the institutions created to protect human rights must reflect this principle in their composition and actions. Women, as a diverse group, are affected by a wide variety of experiences, conditions, and forms of discrimination. With an inclusive spirit, we promote this declaration with the hope that our demand and call for reflection changes structural inequalities that impact access to international spaces.

**Therefore, we call for:**

**The establishment of guidelines, measures, and mechanisms on a national and international level that guarantee gender parity in positions involving international responsibility, including international tribunals and bodies, human rights bodies, Special Procedures, and regional and international organizations.**

**That in every country, the Executive branch and Foreign Ministry publicly pledge to guarantee parity when presenting and voting for candidates for international tribunals and bodies, human rights bodies, Special Procedures, and diplomatic or other positions in regional and international organizations.**

**That those who feel compelled by our call for gender equality and parity support and promote the commitment presented in this declaration.**

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