

December 22, 2017

Excellencies

Mr. Israhyananda DHALLADOO (Mauritius)

Mr. Amran Mohamed ZIN (Malaysia)

Ms. Vesna BATISTIĆ KOS (Croatia)

Mr. Giampaolo Carmelo RIZZO ALVARADO (Honduras)

Mr. Hans BRATTSKAR (Norway)

cc. OHCHR

Dear members of the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council,

On behalf of the [GQUAL Campaign](#), we are writing to you, in your capacity as current members of the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council, to encourage you to take gender parity into account in the upcoming elections of mandate-holders that will take place during the 37th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

Additionally, we want to respectfully reiterate our request to adopt “Guidelines on Gender Parity” for the selection process of special mandate holders expressed in a [letter](#) sent to you on April 27, 2017 along with other organizations and renowned activists and academics.

As indicated there, this would not be the first time that members of a Consultative Group adopt these measures. In June 2015, the Human Rights Council’s Consultative Group (CG) adopted “Guidelines on Gender Parity”, to address the gender disparity in the special mandate holder selection process. The Guidelines recommended the establishment of gender targets that the CG would take into account for the approval of the short lists of candidates that would be interviewed and presented to the President of the HRC, they included practical suggestions such as the extension of terms for the presentation of a minimum threshold of candidates, etc.

GQUAL is a global campaign seeking to achieve gender parity in international tribunals and monitoring bodies. The underrepresentation of women in the Special Procedures is a matter of concern and the CG has a fundamental role and opportunity to change this.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of October 2017, women represented 44 percent of mandate holders. This figure changes significantly, however, if we exclude some mandates that are related to women’s rights and are historically assigned to women, such as the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice, or the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Meanwhile, there are still several mandates that have never been occupied by women, including torture, freedom of expression, health, and racial discrimination, and several working groups where women are underrepresented. According to data compiled by GQUAL, there are 18 mandates, out of a total of 57, that have never been occupied by a woman, some of them dating back twenty years.

Without appropriate actions, the representation of women across these bodies will not necessarily increase in a linear or sustainable way. The impact of the Guidelines approved by the CG in 2015 is well documented. The reports of the CG from the 29th, 30th, and 31st sessions of the HRC each made explicit mention of the Guidelines when outlining the selection process for special

mandate holders. In those sessions, the CG considered applications for 11 special procedure mandate holder positions, plus two positions to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People (EMRIP), a subsidiary body of the HRC. The 29th, 30th, and 31st sessions resulted in about 45% female appointees to special procedure mandates, and two more women were proposed by the CG and appointed by the HRC to the EMRIP. Overall, these sessions produced 56% female appointees.

Experience shows that advances in gender parity do not preclude the possibility of regression. Thus, to sustain existing gains, it is of utmost importance that the membership of the CG adopts the same, or a similar, gender policy with gender quotas to guide its work, and recommend following memberships to maintain it. Eventually, these guidelines should be included in a resolution of the HRC that could complement Resolution 5/1, by incorporating gender parity as official protocol for the special procedure selection process.

Finally, a perusal of the candidates for special procedure positions shows that in some sessions there are not enough women candidates. This is true for the upcoming selections that will take place during the 37th session of the Human Rights Council. According to the information in the [website](#) of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, only 13 out of the 53 candidates are women. A notable one is the position for Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, where all 8 candidates are male, and the current mandate holder is a man. This particular situation makes it more evident and urgent that the CG approve Gender Parity Guidelines, and takes practical steps to ensure the consideration and selection of women for the upcoming elections.

The Guidelines adopted by the CG in 2015 addressed the concern of insufficient women candidates with specific requests to the OHCHR Secretariat, including extending the deadline when not enough eligible women applied. These requests presented to the OHCHR must also be given due consideration to ensure successful attainment of true gender parity in special mandate holder selection.

We therefore encourage the current Consultative Group to consider the need to adopt measures to increase the number of women in the Special Procedures, by taking steps in the upcoming elections to take gender balance into account, call on States and the OHCHR Secretariat to address the insufficient number of women candidates, and to adopt Gender Parity Guidelines that can also help future Consultative Groups to follow this path. We hope this CG can end its term by building upon the experience and good practices of previous members, and continue working towards achieving gender parity among the Special Procedures.

Sincerely,

The GQUAL Secretariat

Viviana Krsticevic

Maria Noel Leoni

Claudia Martin

Alexandra McAnarney

Alejandra Vicente