

WORKSHOP 2

HOW TO ACHIEVE GENDER PARITY IN THE UN TREATY BODIES¹ CONCLUSIONS & RECOMENDATIONS



In the workshop 'How to achieve gender parity at the UN treaty bodies', the participants looked at the causes and obstacles to achieving gender parity on the treaty bodies and identified a number of contributing factors, among others but not limited to, the:

- lack of transparency in the selection and nomination processes at the national level;
- lack of engagement with women's groups at the national level;
- an overrepresentation of jurists and diplomats (current or former) among candidates, who are, in many countries, predominantly male;
- necessity for experts to be in political agreement with home State for support for nomination and the obstacles that may pose in practise (eg. LGBTIQ activists or women's rights activists);
- treaty body candidacies as positions of reward;
- lack of support for female candidates and members, including staffing and job flexibility make it more attractive to women;
- availability requirements and non-paid nature of treaty body membership narrows the pool of available candidates.

The participants were asked to propose recommendations and solutions to the causes/obstacles and to identify the key stakeholders. Among the many recommendations proposed, a prioritization exercise identified the following:

1. Adopting and enforcing best practices for 'recruitment' to ensure integrity, professionalism and transparency

Transparency in treaty body elections is a key part but not enough in itself. Integrity and professionalism is key. Processes needs to be improved and more transparent at the international and national level. These should include, for example, national selection processes and agreement on limitations of the number of terms an individual can serve on a treaty body (where the treaties do not already stipulate such a limit).

Key stakeholders:

- States parties should endorse term limitations by showing political commitment (to avoid treaty change) and set up open, transparent and participatory national

¹ The workshop was co-organized by Amnesty International and GQUAL. The documents were prepared by Anna-Karin Holmlund, Senior Advocate at Amnesty International



selection processes to improve the pool of candidates.

- OHCHR could be urged to better advertise information about upcoming elections and existing membership, including concerning gender, geographical composition and expertise.
- NGOs could help disseminate and create awareness about upcoming elections, existing composition of a treaty body and distribute a call for nominations, including for states to nominate female candidates.

2. Adoption of guidelines for treaty body membership

The Guidelines on the independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies (“the Addis Ababa guidelines”), provide guidance on some of the key elements for treaty body membership. It would be key to develop further the criteria for membership, including gender diversity. A step forward could be the adoption of guidelines for treaty body membership, following a process where all relevant stakeholders can put candidates forward.

Key stakeholders:

- Treaty body chairs and members should be the driving force speaking from experience.
- CSOs could highlight the need for criteria and contribute in a consultation process.
- OHCHR Secretariat could provide support to the treaty body chairs and members and disseminate the information.

3. Informal vetting processes

The nomination and election processes of the UN treaty bodies could learn from the informal vetting processes for the election of commissioners and judges in the Inter-American system and election of judges to the ICC. The Coalition for the ICC and their initiative of holding live panel discussions with the candidates, and the formal process of the Advisory Committee on nominations of judges of the International Criminal Court, could be studied in order to see if some could also be applied at the UN level. Such a procedure would allow treaty body candidates to be scrutinized by other States and civil society on an open panel.

Key stakeholders:

- The nominating states parties should assist candidate to attend vetting processes.
- OHCHR should provide support for informal vetting processes, including through dissemination of events and webcasts.
- CSOs could, if resources were provided, organize these events pending any formal vetting procedure led by the OHCHR.

4. Other recommendations:

- CSOs, states and OHCHR should work to include provisions for gender equality in the 2018 Secretary General progress report on implementation of resolution 68/268 on treaty body strengthening. Another recommendation voiced by some participants relevant for the progress report touched on the need for states and the UN General Assembly to review the system of



non-paid work and how it maintains an elitist system, including the 'revolving doors' phenomenon.

- States and UN General Assembly could establish minimum requirements for the nomination process, in order to create incentives among states to adopt a policy that the members of a treaty body should, i.e be at the minimum one-third women.
- CSOs could assist States keen to improve their record when nominating new suitable candidates, including women, to the treaty bodies.
- Some participants proposed that there should be a minimum requirement for the nomination process, i.e. one third of the candidates should be women.
- OHCHR should adopt and apply flexible working arrangements for treaty body members during sessions and missions.



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