



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

### Members of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs:

Armenia	Guinea	Pakistan
Azerbaijan	Haiti	Paraguay
Belarus	India	Republic of Korea
Belgium	Indonesia	Russian
Brazil	Iran, Islamic	Federation
Cambodia	Republic of	Rwanda
Cameroon	Iraq	Senegal
China	Israel	Spain
Colombia	Italy	Sweden
Cuba	Japan	Togo
Djibouti	Lesotho	Turkey
Dominican	Malaysia	United Arab
Republic	Mauritania	Emirates
Ecuador	Mexico	United States of
Eritrea	Namibia	America
Gabon	Nicaragua	Zambia
Germany	Niger	

This year, AMUN's simulation will include the Commission on Status of Women (CSW), one of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Participation on the Commission is open to two members from any country currently represented on the CSW (see list above). The CSW will meet all four days of the Conference, and will report to a combined ECOSOC plenary session on Tuesday afternoon.

### Purview of the Committee

The CSW was established in June 1946 to promote implementation of the principle that men and women shall have equal rights. The Commission has forty-five members elected by the Economic and Social Council to four-year terms with broad regional representation. It meets annually for a period of ten working days to prepare recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The CSW also makes recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.

**Website:** <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/index.html>

## THE EQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, INCLUDING CAREGIVING IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS

Though unremunerated and not measured in national economic accounts, domestic work and caregiving are crucial components to social and economic development in every society. Such "caring labor" is defined as the work of looking after the physical, psychological, emotional, and developmental needs of one or more people. Caring labor is not only informal, unpaid, and devalued by formal economic analyses; it is also highly gendered. In all regions of the world, most household and caregiving is performed by women, regardless of their employment and socio-economic status. On average, women spend twice as much time on caring labor as men; the value of such time has been estimated by some experts as equivalent to half of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and ultimately represents both a hidden subsidy to national economies and a "reproduction tax" on women's labor. The failure to quantify the value of unpaid work by women has the effect of undervaluing women's full contributions to economic and social development, and contributes to the unequal sharing of responsibilities.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has further exacerbated the gender inequalities surrounding unpaid work. In 2009, UNAIDS estimated that over 33 million people worldwide suffer from HIV/AIDS, with approximately three million receiving medical treatment. Millions of households have been affected by the epidemic, with the heaviest burden falling on women and girls; women provide approximately 90 percent of all caregiving to those afflicted with HIV/AIDS. This unequal sharing of caregiving responsibilities between men and women can deprive women of access to resources, including education, political power, property rights, and income generating activities. Girls may be required to leave school to care for ailing family members, while elderly women often assume the burden of caring

for ailing adult children or orphaned grandchildren. In addition to the caregiving burden, women are also encumbered by the need to procure income to support the surviving household. Consequently, the additional responsibilities shouldered by women carry significant implications for their health and well-being.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 as a landmark document for women's rights, specifically addressed the importance of gender-sensitive initiatives towards HIV/AIDS, emphasizing in particular the equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities. International human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also recognize the obligations that State parties have to promote the equal sharing of responsibility between women and men.

Since 1996, the Commission on the Status of Women has sought to address the issue of unequal sharing of responsibilities between men and women. The Commission's 2004 Agreed Conclusions focused on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, recognizing that institutionalized gender stereotypes also create discriminatory barriers for men and emphasize that both men and women must participate in promoting gender equality. Noting the negative effects of gender inequality on the whole society, the Commission also called for men and boys to use their full capacity to positively change societal norms, relationship dynamics, and women's access to resources and decision-making. In its 2007 resolution on "Women, the girl child, and HIV/AIDS," the CSW noted its concern that women and girls continued bear a disproportionate burden to provide care and support to those living with HIV/AIDS, and encouraged Member States to provide more resources to women who face the double burden of providing both caregiving and economic support.

The issue of equal sharing was targeted as the CSW's priority theme for its 53rd session. In March 2009, the Commission called upon Member States to acknowledge the significant responsibilities faced

by women and girls during home-based care in the context of HIV/AIDS and to find strategies to strengthen the role of men in providing support. The body noted that past policy responses have also often been linked to other issues, and have not explicitly targeted the reduction of unequal division of labor between men and women directly. While calling for more explicitly targeted policy responses, the body also noted that increasing the equitable sharing of responsibilities was necessary, but in itself not sufficient to fully address the growing challenges facing women and girls who provide unpaid caring labor. In addition to drawing attention to the need for greater support services for women and girls, the CSW noted the problematic implications of leaving unpaid labor out of national accounts and called for greater valuation of care work, suggesting an increase in the employment of time-use surveys and other measurement instruments to document the value of such work.

In order to further encourage the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS, Member States will need to expand economic opportunities for young women and social services that support caregiving and health, as well as adopt policies that encourage more equitable participation rates of men and women in both the formal workforce and in informal caring labor. Institutional and systemic change will be necessary if the full value of women's labor is to be measured, and Member States will need to design and implement cross-sectoral policies which recognize and account for the value of care work. The elimination of institutionalized gender stereotypes is crucial, and both men and women will need to play an active part.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective include the following:

- What inequalities exist globally between men and women in relation to unpaid work, including caregiving? How are both sexes affected by HIV/AIDS?
- What concrete steps, if any, have Member States taken to quantify the value of unpaid, caring labor?
- What actions have Member States taken to encourage a more equal sharing of domestic and caregiving responsibilities between men and women in the context of HIV/AIDS?
- Are there any barriers to men's participation in care work? What role should Member States play in encouraging a shift in societal norms?

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 E/CN.6/2009/6  
 E/CN.6/2009/2  
 E/CN.6/2009/4  
 E/CN.6/2009/NGO/34  
 E/CN.6/2009/CRP.4  
 E/CN.6/1996/5  
 EGM/ESOR/2008/BP.2  
 E/2009/L.23  
 E/2008/27  
 E/2007/27  
 E/2004/11  
 Millennium Declaration  
 Beijing Platform for Action  
 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination  
 Against Women

## Additional Web Resources

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) – International Labour Organization  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/53sesspriorityhtm.htm/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/53sesspriorityhtm.htm/) -  
 Commission on the Status of Women

## WOMEN'S EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND IN POST-CONFLICT PEACE-BUILDING

International and intranational conflicts affect all members of the societies involved. Women, who may not enjoy full participation in or protection from conflict, are just as affected as men, although in different ways. Men may more frequently bear the burden and trauma of combat and soldiering, but women's physical safety may also be threatened if conflict zones are not clearly delineated from civilian areas. And both women and men must deal with the financial, social, and psychological tolls of war and societal instability caused by conflict. Furthermore, women are only occasionally involved in the formal mechanisms that control conflict prevention, management, and resolution, evidence of wider inequalities that exclude women



from the traditionally male dominated domains of politics, war, and economics more generally. Some experts have argued that increasing the force of the feminine voice within such arenas may lead to more peaceful outcomes, suggesting that women may offer a unique perspective on conflict prevention, management, and resolution. The dearth of women's involvement in processes related to conflict also means that issues of particular importance to women are often ignored or downplayed in relation to conflict and its causes, conduct, and consequences.

Since 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has been reviewing and addressing the areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, and is working to highlight new areas of concern. Many key points of the Platform dealt directly with the role of women in conflict prevention, management, and peacebuilding, giving the CSW the unique opportunity to take further action on these issues. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals, officially established by the UN in 2000, emphasize the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a goal that the CSW has worked to address over the last ten years.

In the past two years, the UN has seen an increasing amount of discussion and action on the subject of women's roles in peace-building. In the fall of 2009, the Security Council prepared the way for the 54th Session of the CSW by approving two resolutions. S/RES/1888 and S/RES/1889 address increased efforts to prevent sexual violence as a tactic in war and the need to create greater roles for women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Also in 2009, the General Assembly adopted A/RES/63/311, urging system-wide coherence—specifically in the increase of institutional support for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Furthering its efforts to promote coherent and effective strategies across UN agencies, in July 2010 the General Assembly voted unanimously to create UN Women, a composite entity which will encompass four UN agencies currently addressing issues affecting women. UN Women will be led by an Under-Secretary-General and report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. UN Women will play a key role in prioritizing the promotion of women's full and equal participation in the post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. The Secretary-General's proposal for the creation of UN Women also targeted applied research, knowledge management, and capacity-building as key priorities for ensuring formal, world-wide participation of women in formal and informal post-conflict peace-building processes. Though this development will not directly affect the Commission on the Status of Women and its reporting relationship to the Economic and Social Council, it promises to affect the broader dialogue and work of the United Nations in addressing women's issues.

In March 2010, the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women worked to review and reflect on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly titled "Gender equality, development, and peace for the twenty-first century." The Chair also challenged the commission to reassess its actions in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, noting that gender equality is both a goal, and a means of achieving other goals. Discussions centered on strengthening institutional arrangements of the UN for support of gender equality and empowerment, while again calling for the complete implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Although important steps have been made toward incorporating women at all stages, there is still much that must be done to reach the goal of equal participation. The UN itself has few women serving in lead mediation roles in UN-sponsored peace talks, and as of February 2010, only 9 of 27 United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and peace-building support offices were led by women. Women's participation in national level efforts has been even rarer, with women representing on average less than 10 percent of official negotiating delegations in peace talks in the past 20 years. There are also very few women trained and involved as mediators or ceasefire monitors. These statistics demonstrate two interrelated challenges for the international community: one is ensuring that women have access to education and training regimes to provide them with appropriate credentials for such activities, and the second is taking conscious steps to place qualified women in such positions.

In the context of responses to conflict, the UN, along with other international agencies, must make a conscious effort to actively include and support women in the peace-building process. At the national level, Member States must take steps to engage women in police, military, and justice systems so that they can participate equally in conflict prevention, management and resolution. While an increasing number of states are formulating national strategies regarding women, peace, and security, as of June 2010 only 24 Member States have enacted such policies.

Future actions by the Commission on the Status of Women must focus on addressing the Millennium Development Goals - both through current UN actions and through new measures taken by the committee. The Commission must also consider sexual violence, including rape, human trafficking and genital mutilation, as tactics of war. Sexual violence against women must be officially condemned and punished, and the rights of women to participation in post-conflict processes affirmed through active education, training, and engagement with relevant stakeholders. As reflected in past UN resolutions, coherence among all actions is extremely important in addressing issues of gender quality and women's empowerment and involvement in the peace-building process. The full inclusion of women in peace processes will require that future peace agreements account for security issues from a gender perspective, with peace agreement provisions which address the gendered dimensions of demobilization, disarmament, reintegration, and rehabilitation. Other priorities for the CSW to address include the need to continue support for capacity-building, particularly in civil society for women's organizations, as well as the need to further strengthen the gender advisory capacity and gender sensitive training programs for UN staff in missions related to armed conflicts.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective include the following:

- What issues prevent women from equally and fully participating in post-conflict peace-building process, and how can Member States effectively address them?
- What additional measures are needed to fully mainstream gender perspectives into security and peace processes?
- How can the CSW encourage greater capacity-building support for civil society organizations in post-conflict environments?

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S/RES/1989 (2009)  
S/RES/1988 (2009)  
S/RES/1820 (2008)  
S/RES/1325 (2000)  
PBC/2/BDI/10  
Beijing Platform for Action  
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

## Additional Web Resources

- [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/) - Commission on the Status of Women  
[www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/) - UN Women  
[www.womenwarpeace.org/](http://www.womenwarpeace.org/) - Women, War, and Peace