**53rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women**

**Panel 1: Gender-based violence against women and girls in public and political life**

*Concept note (as of 30 June 2023)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Friday, 30 June 2023, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, and online platform (Zoom)** *(will be broadcast live and archived on* [*https://media.un.org/en/webtv*](https://media.un.org/en/webtv)*)* |
| **Objectives:** | To discuss promising examples of measures to address gender-based violence against women and girls in public and political life in line with States’ human rights obligations to prevent, investigate and punish such violence and promote women’s participation. |
| **Chair:** | H.E. Mr. Václav Bálek, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening**  **statements:** | **Mr. Volker Türk**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  **Ms. Reem Alsalem**, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences |
| **Panellists:** | * **Ms. Nicole Ameline**, Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women *(video message)* * **Ms. Cristina Solano Díaz**, Representative of the National Political Assembly of Indigenous Women of Mexico * **Ms. Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo**,Member of the Swiss Parliament and President of the European Minority Parliamentarians Caucus * **Ms. Houda Slim**, President of the Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality “Ra’edat” *(video message)* |
| **Outcome:** | A summary report on the discussion will be prepared by OHCHR. |
| **Mandate:** | In its [resolution 6/30](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_6_30.pdf), the Human Rights Council reaffirmed the principle of gender equality and the need for the full implementation of the human rights of women and decided to hold an annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women. The first panel of the 2023 annual discussion will address gender-based violence in public and political life in accordance with Human Rights Council [resolution 47/15](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/47/15). |
| **Format:** | The total duration of the annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women will be four hours, divided into two panels of two hours each. In this panel, the opening statements and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by a two-part interactive discussion and conclusions from the panellists. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, which will cover the opening statements, panellists’ presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from the floor, with each segment consisting of interventions from 12 States or observers, 1 national human rights institution and 2 non-governmental organizations. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions.  The list of speakers for the discussion will be established through the online inscription system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet. |
| **Accessibility:** | In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, the panel will be webcast and made accessible. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided. During the event itself, participants can access live English captioning on the StreamText web page (<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG>). Hearing loops are available for collection from the Secretariat desk. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in *The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities* (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/accessibility>). |
| **Background:** | The equal participation of women in public life and their access to positions of political leadership and decision-making at all levels are fundamental to achieving gender equality. Women’s right to equal participation in public and political life is enshrined in major human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, one of the most comprehensive plans for the advancement of women’s rights and empowerment reaffirmed that “without the active participation of women and the incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making and their access to power, the goals of equality, development and peace are impossible to achieve”.  Although, the degree of women’s participation in public life globally has improved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration in 1995, women remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of decision-making. Only 26.5 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women and just 17 countries have a woman Head of State and 19 countries have a woman Head of Government (Data from UN Women and IPU, Women in Politics: 2023). Among others, structural discrimination, including the disproportionate share of unpaid care work, stereotypes and gender-based violence are key obstacles to women’s and girls’ particiation in political and public life.  Both women and men can experience violence in political and public life, however gender-based violence targets women because of their gender, takes gender-based forms, such as sexist threats or sexual harassment and violence and can be more severe and more frequent than other forms of political violence. Such violence targets women human rights defenders and women who run for or hold public office and political decision-making positions as they are seen as challenging traditional notions of family and gender roles. The aim is to discourage women from political actvism, preserve traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintain structural and gender based inequalities.  Women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – based on age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity – and those associated with human rights activism face even greater obstacles to public and political participation and are more often targets of such attacks.  This type of violence can be perpetrated offline and online, both publicly and privately by other politicians, constituents, family members, voters, traditional or religious leaders, political opponents and members of political parties, the media and journalists, or State actors, among other communities and actors and online by the same people and anonymously.  In recognition of the need to address the structural barriers to women’s political participation, in 2018 the General Assembly in its resolution 73/148 expressed its grave concern about violence against women and girls involved in political and public life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers and human rights defenders. It called specifically upon national legislative authorities and political parties to adopt zero tolerance codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or to revise existing ones.  Human rights norms and principles provide a comprehensive framework to promote and protect women’s rights to participate in political and public office and live a life free from violence. The panel aims at highlighting current trends in gender-based violence against women and girls in public and political life and how such violence represents a form of discrimination and a structural barrier to women’s participation. Moreover, the panel discussion will identify promising examples of legislative, policy, judicial, and institutional measures adopted by States to address gender-based violence in political and public life in line with their human rights obligations to prevent, investigate and punish such violence and promote women’s political participation. |
| **Background documents:** | * [Human Rights Council resolution 6/30](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/6/30) of 14 December 2007 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system * [Human Rights Council resolution 47/15](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/15) of 13 July 2021 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities * [UN Women and IPU, Women in Politics: 2023](https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2023-03/women-in-politics-2023) * Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics ([A/73/301](https://undocs.org/A/73/301)), 2018 * [General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992)](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/231/54/PDF/N1723154.pdf?OpenElement) * [Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Girls’ and young women’s activism, A/HRC/50/25, May 2022](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/338/13/PDF/G2233813.pdf?OpenElement) * [Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Thematic analysis: eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life with a focus on political transition, A/HRC/23/50, April 2013](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/132/51/PDF/G1313251.pdf?OpenElement) * [General Assembly resolution 73/148](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/148) of 17 December 2018 on intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment |