



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

9 June 2023

**Open letter from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Volker Türk**

Equal and meaningful participation of women in public and political life

Excellency,

Throughout its seventy-five year history, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has inspired the equal and meaningful participation of women, in all their diversity, in public and political life.

Realizing this participation in practice is not only a question of rights and justice for women. It is also a necessary condition effectively to respond to the most pressing crises confronting our world today, harnessing the full potential and collective contribution of all of humanity – from action to protect the planet to disarmament, conflict prevention and resolution.

We have made progress. In 2022, for the first time in history, not a single functioning parliament in the world was male-only and, indeed, one in four parliamentarians were women. Yet more remains to be done significantly to increase the representation of women in decision-making. Despite their overall increase in parliamentary roles in 2022, in some countries women make up less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians. At the current rate of change, it will take 155 years for women to close this gender gap. This struggle is even harder for historically marginalized women, whose representation lags behind.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023 is an opportunity to deliver on the promise of women's equal and meaningful participation as an essential condition for progress.

All Permanent Representatives of
Member States and Permanent Observers of
non-Member States to the United Nations Office at Geneva



In this context, I would urge States, parliamentarians, the media, the private sector and every single one of us to take actions as follows:

- To tackle the root causes of gender-based discrimination, including social norms, that limit participation of women and girls in public and political life, including through education and awareness-raising campaigns;
- To value, recognize and redistribute unpaid care work which disproportionately falls on women;
- To consider quotas, reserved seats and training opportunities to increase women's representation in legislative bodies, as well as other key institutions of political and public life;
- To commit to achieving gender parity in UN human rights treaty bodies;
- To establish codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms with a view towards zero tolerance for harassment and violence against women in politics, including online;
- To promote women role models and give greater visibility to their contributions.

My Office is ready to support your efforts to promote the equal participation of women and girls in public and political life. I hope we can use this anniversary year to achieve real and tangible progress in line with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'V. Türk', written in a cursive style.

Volker Türk