

CEDAW general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems

A parity and paradigm shift

*Parity: from a cause to a norm
From leaving no one behind to bringing everyone along*

The CEDAW Committee considers that the long-term and structural absence of women globally from decision-making systems not only constitutes a serious human rights violation but also deprives the world of the potential of half its population.

The Committee, within its mandate, is elaborating a new General Recommendation (GR 40) to provide guidance to States parties on reaching equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems – in both the public and private sectors.

The Committee considers that the achievement of parity as a fundamental human right requires systemic action. The increasing number of crises and disruptive changes affecting the world, such as pandemics, climate change, protracted conflicts, and economic crises demonstrate that globally governance has failed to deliver on its core task of ensuring peace and security, and that it is high time to rethink the classic patriarchal model of governance.

The Committee also takes into consideration the rapid changes in a world that is becoming increasingly digitalized with the development of new technologies such as AI, which will have a critical impact on decision-making and needs to be shaped in a way that promotes substantive equality of women and men.

The Committee's GR 40 aims at a new approach to governance based on parity and inclusivity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change. The Committee also considers this crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The Committee is undertaking this work in close collaboration with [UN Women](#) and the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) and in consultation with States parties, regional organizations, NHRIs, NGOs and academic institutions to ensure a participatory approach.

The Committee aims to adopt GR 40 at its 89th session in October 2024.

1. The right time and context for an innovative approach

- The post-pandemic world as an opportunity not only to build back better but to build differently based on parity
- A multitude of contemporary challenges, as mentioned above, require gender-responsive and -inclusive forms of governance
- As of May 2023, none of the 18 SDG 5 indicators have been met or nearly met and only one is close to target, according to the special edition SG report on “Progress

towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet”¹

- The 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023, the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration in 2025, and the 20th anniversary of the Maputo Protocol in 2023 are critical and symbolic moments to strategize jointly toward a better future for women’s human rights
- The SDG Summit in 2023 and the Summit of the Future in 2024 as fora to recognize the paramount importance of parity to “move towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to positively impact people’s lives”²

2. Slow, contrasted and paradoxical evolution of parity

- Despite efforts, increased commitment of States and certain successes, only 25% of members of parliaments today are women. The evolution is slow, random, not institutionalized and hence susceptible to backlashes. Women are largely absent from the highest levels of decision-making, peace negotiations and international meetings.
- Recent crises have clearly demonstrated that women's rights are not sufficiently consolidated and institutionalized to withstand abrupt changes, despite the fact that equality is a fundamental condition for the achievement of the SDGs and a key driver of peace and conflict prevention.
- A significant push is needed to bring about the necessary global paradigm shift based on parity.
- Only parity in governance structures can ensure the effective and durable advancement of women’s rights and resilient, inclusive and sustainable development for all.

3. Definition and content of the recommendation

- A general recommendation is an authoritative interpretation of the Convention by the Committee that provides States parties with guidance on the implementation of their obligations under the Convention.
- Scope of the general recommendation: equal and inclusive representation of women in all systems where decisions are taken, including in economic life.
- Identification of good practices by States parties (including at regional and local levels and in the private sector); examination of the potential of AI for achieving parity; consultations with experts in these fields.
- Objective: sustainability of parity, parity as an element of a new value chain

4. Road map

- Adoption of a concept note, November 2022
- Half-day of general discussion on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, February 2023
- Topics for discussion at the planned Expert Group Meetings (in-person, virtual, hybrid July 2023 – January 2024):
 - New forms of feminist governance
 - Equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making on AI

¹ [SDG Progress Report Special Edition 1.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

² [Summit of the Future | United Nations](#)

- Feminist economy
- Deconstruction of patriarchal decision-making systems and construction of decision-making systems that are based on parity
- Feminist foreign policy and women peace and security processes
- Posting of draft GR online for comments by all interested stakeholders, February 2024
- Regional Meetings, February – April 2024
- Adoption, October 2024

5. Opportunities for States parties to the Convention, United Nations entities and specialized agencies and civil society organizations

- Increasing the visibility of the upcoming GR and conveying the importance of its core messages in international and regional fora as well as by taking specific initiatives such as the organization of meetings and events on the topic of the GR with the participation of CEDAW experts (virtually or in-person)
- Making a submission in response to the online call for contributions to the draft GR in early 2024
- Ad-hoc sharing of good practices
- Involvement in regional meetings on the draft GR
- Funding the elaboration of the draft GR

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