

UN WOMEN

United Nations Entity for Gender
Equality and the Empowerment of
Women

TOPIC:

**Promoting and
Protecting Freedom
of Expression for
Women**

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I- Committee Description:

A. Definition:



The United Nations organization is dedicated to changing laws, institutions, social norms, and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. The United Nations General Assembly created UN Women on July 2, 2010, to strengthen and coordinate the UN's work on gender equality. The organization combined the responsibilities of four previously separate UN bodies, such as the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

B. Prominent Accomplishments:

UN Women acts on two fronts. It supports international political negotiations to formulate globally agreed standards for gender equality. Additionally, it helps UN Member States to implement those standards by providing expertise and financial support. UN Women also helps other parts of the UN system in their efforts to advance gender equality across a broad range of issues related to human rights and human development. Its duties include supporting international negotiations that establish global standards for gender equality, providing governments with technical expertise, research, training, and financial assistance, supporting women's organizations and civil-society movements, and collecting and publishing information about women's rights and political participation. In 2012, UN Women also helped introduce the United Nations System-wide Action

Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, known as UN-SWAP, which was the first plan for measuring how effectively different UN segments include gender equality in their work. Furthermore, between 2022 and 2025, UN Women reported that 3.1 billion women and girls in 110 countries gained stronger legal rights. It also supported 100 countries in improving services for women and girls and helped 78 countries adopt gender-equality plans covering approximately 2.9 billion women and girls.

II- Introduction to Topic:

A. Significance/Importance:

Promoting and protecting freedom of expression for women means making sure that women and girls can communicate opinions without discrimination or violence. This right applies both online and offline and includes participation in journalism, activism, public debate, and political affairs. Freedom of expression is closely connected to women's political rights. Women must be able to discuss government policies, criticize political leaders, join political organizations, campaign for candidates, and communicate their own political views. Women's freedom of expression is essential because a political system cannot fully represent its population when women's voices are excluded. Women's participation allows political organizations to consider a bigger range of experiences and priorities, which includes education, health care, employment, family policy, peace, security, and protection from discrimination. However, women remain underrepresented in politics. As of 1 January 2026, women held approximately 27.5 percent of parliamentary seats and

22.4 percent of cabinet positions worldwide, while only 28 countries were led by a woman as head of state or government.

B. Main Events:

- 10 December 1948, Approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



The United Nations General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10, 1948. Article 19 of this declaration protects

the right to freedom of opinion and expression while Article 21 recognizes every person's right to participate in government, directly or through representatives. Add to that, Article 2 says that these rights must be exercised without discrimination, including discrimination based on gender.

- 20 December 1952, Approval of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women

The United Nations General Assembly approved the Convention on the Political Rights of Women on December 20, 1952. It was the first international legal convention created to protect women's political rights worldwide. It established that women must be allowed to vote, stand for election, and hold public office without discrimination.

- 18 December 1979, Approval of CEDAW

The United Nations General Assembly approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, commonly known as CEDAW, on December 18, 1979. Article 7 requires State Parties to eliminate discrimination against



women in political and public life, guaranteeing their rights to vote, stand for election, participate in government policy, hold public office, and join political organizations.

- September 1995, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In September 1995, representatives of 189 countries passed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during the Fourth World Conference on Women. The declaration says that women should be in power, and this is one of the declaration's 12 critical areas of concern. This declaration called for women's equal access to leadership positions and political institutions.

- 3 May 2022, Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice

International and regional freedom-of-expression experts approved the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice on May 3, 2022. The Declaration said that gender equality and freedom of expression are interconnected and called for action against discriminatory laws, misogyny, gender-based violence, online harassment, gendered hate speech, and disinformation used to silence women.

C. Link to the Sustainable Development Goals:

This topic addresses two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the fifth SDG (Gender Equality) and the sixteenth SDG (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

SDG 5 focuses on achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and girls. In relation to this topic, it encourages ending discrimination against women plus promoting their equal involvement in leadership



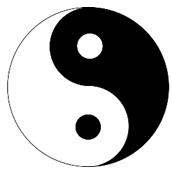
roles. Protecting women's freedom of expression supports this goal because women must be able to freely speak about their opinions and influence decisions that affect their daily lives.



SDG 16 aims to build peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring access to justice and creating accountable institutions. In this context, increasing women's participation in politics helps create more representative and inclusive governments. When women are able to express their political opinions freely and participate in decision-making, institutions are more likely to represent the needs and interests of the entire population instead of just the male half.

D. Link to Theme:

Women's opinions should not be silenced. Yin and Yang represent balance between two different but equally important sides, in the same way that balance comes from listening to both women and men. When everyone can speak freely, there is more fairness and respect for the other.



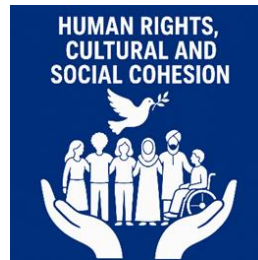
E. Link to the Pillars of Good Governance:

Fair Elections, Representation, and Participation: This pillar promotes equal opportunities for everyone to participate in political and public life, regardless of gender or background. It relates

to the topic since women should have equal opportunities to vote, run for office, join political parties, and express their political opinions without discrimination or violence.



Human Rights, Cultural and Social Cohesion: This pillar protects human rights and encourages the inclusion of all members of society, especially groups that have traditionally faced discrimination, including women. Protecting women’s freedom of expression ensures that women can share their opinions and contribute to political decisions. Including women’s voices also helps create greater respect and harmony within a community.



III- Subtopics:

A. Women in Political Affairs:

In political spaces, women’s voices are still not represented as equally as men. Women should be able to participate in voting, join political parties, run for president or office, and influence laws and policies. Women’s political participation is seen as an international human right. For example, Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) states that women must have equal rights to vote, run for election, participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, and hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, etc. Although women’s representation has improved, they remain far from having equal power, with only 22.4% of cabinet posts and 27.5% of parliamentary seats on average worldwide; only 28 countries were led by women, while 101 never had a woman national leader. Across the world, women remain vastly underrepresented in political leadership, with the most powerful decisions still made by men. The IPU Global Conference of Women

Parliamentarians highlighted the ongoing stereotypes and negative social norms that restrict a



woman's participation in public office, with the double standards, sexism, harassment, and gender-based violence that women in politics still face. Governments must ensure that women can safely have equal access to leadership roles and protection from any sort of harassment.

B. Online Harassment Against Women:

The internet has created many opportunities for women to freely express their opinions. However, online spaces have also become a huge place where women face discrimination and harassment over what they say. Studies across the world show that 16 to 58 percent of women and girls have been targeted online. Women are targeted with violence online, such as trolling, stalking, cyberbullying, image-based abuse, etc. Moreover, women who are in leadership roles may face much more harassment than the average person simply because their opinions reach a larger audience. This type of harassment online can affect women's freedom of expression as a whole, where some women might even refrain from making social media accounts or discussing certain topics just so they won't be subjected to this harassment. The UN special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression has warned that gender-based violence and hate speech are used both online and offline to limit a woman's voice. According to a UNESCO global survey, around 73% of the women journalists that filled the survey have experienced online harassment while doing their work, which includes but is not limited to threats of physical violence and attacks against

their security. To protect a woman's freedom of expression and speech, online spaces should allow women to express their opinions and use digital platforms without having to fear for their life or mental health.

IV- Main Actors:

1-Afghanistan

After the dismantling of the first Taliban, the 2004 Afghan Constitution recognized gender



equality and reserved 27% of parliamentary seats for women. However, this progress changed after the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Afghanistan's National Assembly was removed, removing the parliamentary system that allowed women to participate. UN Women currently reports that no women hold positions in the Taliban's de facto Cabinet or even normal local offices; this way women have no role in making laws or government policy. Furthermore, female journalists have a strict dress code and require a male guardian for long-distance travel. Plus, in some areas, women's voices have been prohibited from radio broadcasts. Nearly 80 percent of young Afghan women are not in education or employment. Internationally, some UN experts urge people to pay attention to the human rights violations happening in Afghanistan: "We must pay particular attention to calls from Afghans across all walks of life for accountability and justice, for

concrete and effective challenges to the impunity pervasive in the country, and for correcting the mistakes of the past to prevent their recurrence in the future."

2- Iran

Iran is a complicated situation because women are legally able to vote and participate in some areas in

the government, but their political representation is still low, and women who publicly criticize government policies have faced serious restrictions. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women currently hold only 14 of 285 occupied seats in Iran's parliament, or approximately 4.9%, and Iran has no electoral quota for women. The UN has acknowledged that Iran has made some advances in areas like women's education, but it also stated that women continued to face discrimination when it comes to representation during the 2024 parliamentary elections. The "Woman, Life, Freedom" Movement, which started after the death of Jina Mahsa Aminin in September 2022 while in the custody of Iran's morality police, became one of the most internationally recognized women-led protest movements in recent Iranian history. Plus, in 2024 and 2025,



enforcement of mandatory hijab was through the Noor Plan, and women activists and human rights defenders continued to face criminal sanctions whenever this issue was brought up. Iran has also not recognized CEDAW, the main international convention protecting women against discrimination.

3- Syria

Syria is undergoing a major transition following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in



December 2024. Syria's new People's Assembly currently has 22 women among 206 sitting members, approximately 10.7%, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Only 7 of the 137 elected members are women. However, when the president assigned another 70

members in July 2026, 15 of those went to women, raising the total female representation to 22. Syrian women have participated in discussions concerning reconstruction, with the First National Forum on Advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Syria being held in December 2025. Even with many improvements, problems remain. UN Women reported that in April 2026 only 1 of the 22 members of the Cabinet formed in March 2025 was a woman, Hind Kabawat, plus none of Syria's fourteen governors at that time were women. The post-Bashar al-Assad government transition gives women activists and journalists greater opportunities to speak about the system, but UN Women stated that in June 2026 women still remain excluded from political processes.

4- Rwanda

Rwanda's 2003 Constitution published a minimum 30% quota for women in political institutions, which creates a legal system designed to prevent women from being excluded from leadership roles. Women currently hold 51 of the 80 seats in Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies (63.8%), which makes Rwanda the country with the highest percentage of women in parliament. The Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies

(Gertrude Kazarwa) is also a woman. However, Human Rights Watch reported in its 2026 assessment that few journalists in Rwanda criticize the government, and also Amnesty International (an international non-governmental organization focused on human



rights) has reported many restrictions on freedom of expression. However, the country's "Gender Monitoring Office Strategic Plan 2024–2029" aims to reinforce gender accountability across government, the private sector, civil society, and faith-based organizations. UN Women's Rwanda Strategic Note 2026–2029 also aims for a government that is transparent and inclusive by 2029. Rwanda is a leader in women's political representation, but it still faces an important challenge, which is ensuring that female representation goes hand in hand with the freedom of expression to oppose or criticize.

5- The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The United Arab Emirates has made incredible progress in female representation within the Federal National Council (FNC). Women obtained the right to participate in FNC elections in 2005, and the first woman entered the Council in 2006. As of 2019, 20 of FNC's 40 members are women, which gives the UAE exactly 50% female representation and places it among the highest-ranking countries in the world for women's parliamentary representation. However, Human Rights



Watch reported that in 2026 the UAE's Penal Code and Cybercrime Law have been used to restrict criticism and political disagreements. At the same time, the UAE's National Policy for Empowerment of Emirati Women 2023–2031 aims for women's participation in different sectors. The UAE

Gender Balance Council Strategy 2026 also wants to reduce gender gaps and increase gender balance in leadership positions. Also in June 2026, the UAE Gender Balance Council began making a new Gender Balance Strategy for 2027–2031, holding a national discussion with more than 100 representatives from the government. This strategy focuses on women's leadership, workplace culture, economic participation, education, and future opportunities.

V-Suggested Solutions:

- Implement “gender quotas” in governments to set targets to increase women’s representation and presence in politics
- Introducing an "anonymous candidate application” where political parties could evaluate potential political candidates without a name or gender being shown to reduce gender bias during the first stage of selection.
- Creating an emergency digital service where women facing severe doxing or severe threats could receive temporary assistance changing phone numbers or relocating themselves and their families when necessary.

VI- Questions to Consider, Tips, and Suggested Sites:

A. Questions to Consider:

- How does your country protect women’s freedom in its laws?
- To what extent can women vote and have a leadership position in your country?
- Does your country not have any women in the government? If so, how does your country plan to resolve this issue?
- Can your country truly achieve gender equality if women cannot freely express their opinions?
- What actions has your country taken against online harassment against women and girls?

B. Tips:

- Avoid using Wikipedia, and you are highly encouraged to use sites ending with the following: .org, .gov, .edu.
- Limit your use of AI to gather information.

- Prepare brief resolutions beforehand and refine them during the conference.
- Be familiar with the flow of the conference and the rules of procedure.
- Enjoy your experience and focus on making a change rather than winning; every voice matters, so be proud of every little achievement.
- Stay updated about all current news and your nation's official position regarding the subject matter.
- Focus on other delegation speeches while taking notes about important details that could be discussed.
- Don't be afraid to speak in front of the quorum; this is a learning opportunity for every delegate involved.
- And lastly, have fun!

C. Suggested Sites:

- IPU Parline: <https://data.ipu.org>
- United Nations Digital Library System: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/>
- Gender and Inclusion | International IDEA: <https://www.idea.int/theme/gender-and-inclusion>
- Civicus Monitor: <https://monitor.civicus.org/>
- UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do>

VII- Represented Countries:

Africa	South Sudan
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	Central African Republic
	Democratic Republic of Congo
	Somalia
	Mali
	Nigeria
	Sudan
	Kenya
	South Africa
	Libya

Asia	Myanmar
	Egypt
	Syria
	Yemen
	Iraq

	Lebanon
	Pakistan
	India
	Saudi Arabia
	Qatar
	China
	South Korea

Europe	Russia
	Ukraine
	Turkey
	United Kingdom
	France
	Germany
	Switzerland

	Poland
	Denmark
	Portugal

Americas	Colombia
	Mexico
	United States
	Brazil
	Canada

VIII- Contact Info:

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- Chair: Ezzedine Skafi: Skafiezzdine@gmail.com

IX- President's Note:

Dear delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 15th HHHSMUN. Throughout this conference, you will be discussing the topic of promoting and protecting freedom of expression for women, with a particular focus on women in political affairs, plus cyberbullying and online harassment against women expressing their opinions.

As your president, Natalie, I hope this committee gives you the opportunity to challenge yourselves and improve your diplomatic and debating skills. I am writing this to hopefully be remembered as your friend and not a "strict president." Remember to prepare well for the conference, and most importantly, enjoy these 2 days to the fullest!

X- SGs' Note:

Dear Delegates,

As your Secretary-Generals, we hope this background guide gives you a strong foundation for the discussions ahead and helps you approach your committee with confidence. Beyond preparation, this conference is an opportunity to challenge yourself, step into new perspectives, and take part in conversations that demand thought and initiative.

This year's theme, "Yin and Yang: The Harmony in Opposites", reflects the idea that opposing sides can exist in balance, whether between conflict and cooperation or speaking and listening. It reminds us that meaningful progress often begins when we learn to understand perspectives different from our own.

As Leo Buscaglia said, "Change is the end result of all true learning," and we hope this experience leaves you with a stronger sense of the value your voice can carry. We cannot wait to meet you and see what you bring to this conference.

Warm regards,

The 15th HHHSMUN Secretary Generals,
Mia, Hani and Omar

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United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Representative on Freedom of the Media, Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, & African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. (2022, May 3). *Joint declaration on freedom of expression and gender justice*. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Gender-Joint-Declaration-Freedex.pdf>

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