

UNW BACKGROUND GUIDE

AMSIMUN '26

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Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the United Nations Women Committee at this year's AMSIMUN! We are excited to see your debates and discussions unfold as you engage with pressing gender-related conflicts, and we are looking forward to making your experience at AMSIMUN both meaningful and memorable.

This conference is a space for discussion, critical thinking, and practical problem-solving. Within UNWomen, your role is to examine the real issues affecting women and girls globally, including access to education, economic participation, legal protection, and social inequality. Your task as delegates is to represent your assigned countries accurately, analyze existing policies, and work together to propose realistic and effective solutions. Throughout the sessions, you will be expected to participate actively in moderated and unmoderated debates, collaborate with other delegates, and contribute to drafting resolutions that reflect both your national stance and the goals of UNW. We encourage you to speak with confidence, negotiate respectfully, and remain open to compromise. We are actively awaiting the ideas that you will craft, the coalitions that you will forge, and the leadership you will embody.

If you need any assistance or guidance at any point, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to seeing your dedication, engagement, and commitment during the committee sessions.

With our warmest regards,

Karin Al Zaher & Fadwa Al Maktabi

Topic: Strengthening Women's Rights and Protections in International Law

Women's rights remain one of the central concerns of international human rights law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international treaties established a legal framework that protects equality; however, women and girls throughout the world continue to experience educational, employment, healthcare, political, and domestic discrimination. UN Women plays a central role in supporting member states through advocacy, technical assistance, legal reform initiatives, and global monitoring efforts.

International advocacy efforts have operated for several decades yet millions of women continue to suffer from domestic violence, unequal pay, restricted legal rights, limited political representation, human trafficking, and forced marriage; all of which stand as obstacles in the pursuit for justice. Multiple nations have established legal protections that are poorly enforced, often as a result of noncompliance with international standards.

The international community now faces a challenge that requires it to develop effective systems for safeguarding and enforcing women's rights, which it previously acknowledged. The way international organizations, national governments, and civil society organizations handle international law must adapt in order to address violence, discrimination, economic inequality, and longstanding systemic barriers that women face. Such international organizations, or frameworks, such as the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women's Peace and Security, all establish state obligations to defend equality and protect women's rights, highlighting the human rights obligations that must be fulfilled by all states.

To this day, domestic implementation of international commitments still suffers from major gaps. It is the UNW's aim to safeguard the livelihoods of women worldwide.

History

After World War II, the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 marked the beginning of the process of developing women's rights through international law. The UN Charter became one of the first international legal documents to affirm "equal rights of men and women" as a fundamental principle of international cooperation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established that all people must receive equal rights and freedoms such that they must not face any form of discrimination.

The United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946 to function as the main international organization which works to advance women's rights and achieve gender equality. The Commission examined multiple subjects which included the right to vote, work, learn, and the right to equal treatment.

Women's Rights movements began to spread throughout the world during the following decades. Countries started to create new voting rights which allowed women to participate in elections, secure jobs, acquire education, and hold governmental positions. This combatted existing discrimination and violence against women that existed in all legal and social frameworks.

The United Nations' Decade for Women, which ran from 1975 to 1985, helped raise awareness on women's issues. Mexico City, Copenhagen, and Nairobi conferences showed the world their main focus: poverty, literacy, health care access. One of the central issues addressed throughout the Decade for Women was also combatting discrimination against women in the workplace.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by United Nations member states in 1995, marked a major milestone in the advancement of women's rights globally. The document identified twelve critical areas requiring urgent attention, including violence against women, economic inequality between men and women, access to education and healthcare, and women's participation in political leadership. It called on governments to develop laws and policies that would protect women's rights and promote gender equality and empowerment.

Over the past several decades, the international community has continued working to strengthen the protection of women's rights. The United Nations and UN Women have addressed issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, workplace discrimination, maternal health, sexual violence during conflicts, and women's participation in peacebuilding and political decision-making. International campaigns and agreements have also encouraged countries to improve legal protections and expand opportunities for women and girls.

Despite significant legal and social progress, many challenges still remain. In many parts of the world, women continue to face limited access to education, employment, property ownership, healthcare, and political representation. Ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises, weak legal systems, and cultural discrimination often prevent women from fully exercising their rights. As a result, achieving true gender equality remains an ongoing global challenge that requires continued international cooperation and reform.

Analysis

1) Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights abuses in the world. Women and girls experience domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, forced marriage, honor-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and conflict-related sexual violence in countries across all regions and levels of development.

According to United Nations research, many women face barriers that prevent them from reporting abuse. These barriers include fear, social stigma, economic dependence, and a lack of trust in legal institutions. In conflict zones, women are often deliberately targeted, and sexual violence is sometimes used as a weapon of war by armed groups and military forces.

Although many countries have adopted laws to combat violence against women, enforcement often remains weak due to corruption, limited resources, and discriminatory social attitudes. As a result, many victims continue to lack adequate protection and access to justice.

2) Legal Inequality and Access to Justice

In many countries, women continue to face discrimination in areas such as family law, inheritance rights, divorce procedures, child custody, and nationality laws. Legal systems may fail to properly investigate crimes against women or may create obstacles that make it difficult for victims to obtain justice.

Women living in rural areas, conflict zones, and impoverished communities often face additional challenges, including limited access to legal assistance, financial dependence on others, and difficulty reaching courts or police stations.

Achieving stronger legal protection for women requires not only improved laws, but also effective legal systems that can fairly enforce those laws and provide equal access to justice.

3) Political Participation

Women remain underrepresented in national governments, parliaments, peace negotiations, and international leadership positions. Although women make up nearly half of the global population, they still hold far fewer political positions than men in many countries.

Limited political participation reduces women's ability to influence policies and slows progress on issues affecting women and girls. Some countries have introduced gender quotas or temporary special measures to increase female representation, while others oppose such policies on political or cultural grounds.

The international community continues to debate how to increase women's participation in governance while respecting national political systems and cultural differences.

4) Economic Rights and Workplace Equality

Economic inequality remains one of the most significant challenges facing women worldwide. Women often experience wage gaps, workplace discrimination, inadequate maternity protections, limited property ownership rights, and restricted access to financial services and economic opportunities.

In many societies, women also carry the majority of unpaid domestic responsibilities, including childcare and household management. This unpaid labor can reduce their ability to pursue education, employment, or career advancement.

Organizations such as UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO) continue to promote equal pay, workplace protections, paid maternity leave, and greater economic empowerment for women.

5) Education and Healthcare

Women and girls in many parts of the world still face barriers to equal access to education and healthcare. In some regions, poverty, armed conflict, child marriage, and cultural restrictions prevent girls from attending school or completing their education.

Women also face challenges in accessing reproductive healthcare and maternal health services. Maternal mortality rates remain especially high in low-income and conflict-affected countries, where healthcare systems are often weak or inaccessible.

Improving access to education and healthcare is essential for protecting women's rights and promoting long-term social and economic development.

6) Enforcement Gaps in International Law

One of the greatest challenges in protecting women's rights is the weak enforcement of international law. Although many countries have ratified international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), some states fail to fully implement these protections within their domestic legal systems.

International law relies heavily on state cooperation, which limits the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms. Monitoring bodies can issue recommendations and reports, but they often lack the authority to directly compel governments to comply.

Many scholars and policymakers argue that stronger accountability systems, improved monitoring mechanisms, and greater international cooperation are necessary to ensure the effective protection of women's rights worldwide.

Questions to be Answered:

- How can international law better enforce women's rights protections under treaties such as CEDAW?
- What actions should governments undertake to stop violence against women and girls while handling incidents of such violence?
- How can the United Nations assist nations to change their laws which discriminate against family rights and employment rights and educational access rights and political participation rights?
- What methods can enhance women's ability to seek justice in developing countries and conflict areas?
- How can states maintain both cultural or religious legal systems while fulfilling their duty to protect women's rights according to international standards?
- What role should international monitoring bodies play in holding states accountable for violations of women's rights?

Starter Resources

- 1) CEDAW Official Treaty Page
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>
- 2) UN Women Global Database on Violence Against Women
<https://data.unwomen.org/global-database-violence-against-women>
- 3) OHCHR Women's Rights Page
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/women>
- 4) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>
- 5) UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>
- 6) World Bank Gender Data Portal
<https://genderdata.worldbank.org/>
- 7) UN Women Reports and Publications
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications>

Country Matrix

United States of America (USA) - Canada - United Kingdom - Sweden - Germany -
Netherlands - France - Norway - Australia - New Zealand - Mexico - South Africa - Brazil -
Japan - India - Saudi Arabia - Iran - Pakistan - Afghanistan (Taliban-controlled) - Egypt -
Russia - China - Turkey - Nigeria - Kenya - North Korea - Somalia

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UN Women Data Hub,
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- “Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (Security Council Resolution 1325).” *United Nations*, www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/.
- *World Health Organization. (n.d.). Gender and health. World Health Organization,*
https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1