

# Harvard Model United Nations 2023



## A Background Guide for World Conference on Women

Written By: Bella Nesti

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# HARVARD MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023

## A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to your first step of preparation for Harvard Model United Nations 2023! The background guide you are about to read is the product of months of research and writing. Your director began this process last February and has been looking forward to seeing this topic debated ever since. In addition to the background guide, you will find sections at the end of this document directing you to other resources you may find helpful for further research. Background guides give you an introduction to your topic and serve as the best resource for gaining general knowledge of a committee topic, but delegates will be expected to individually conduct further research on their country, their country's position, and potential solutions to the problems posed by the committee topic.

As the culmination of your research, you are asked to compose a position paper for your country. These position papers will then be shared with your director for review. Instructions for writing position papers will also be found in this guide. I hope delegates will enjoy using the position papers as a chance to share their perspectives, reflect, and otherwise enhance their committee experience leading up to the conference.

Students who attend HMUN have always debated issues pertinent to past, present, and future crises on a global scale. Each year they have demonstrated an unparalleled capacity to collaborate and negotiate with fellow delegates on some of the most divisive issues. The skills delegates will learn at HMUN—effective negotiating, public speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork—are intended to inform their understanding of how to tactically approach small- and large-scale issues both as students and future leaders. The topics we address in committees are intended to prepare delegates for the challenges the world is facing and will face in the coming decades including wars, pandemics, climate change, and challenges of governance. Perhaps the greatest educational opportunity at HMUN lies in the lessons the delegates learn from their diverse group of peers coming from radically different backgrounds, from all around the world.

This year, we want to impart the message that by working together, especially through what many perceive as divided times, delegates can find common ground and make our world a better place. Please know we understand that delegates make sacrifices to fully participate in HMUN, often placing important assignments, social engagements, family commitments, and much more on hold for four days. We want to take the time to understand the varying backgrounds we are all coming from and bridge these divides through collaboration and understanding. As your Secretary-General, I am here as a resource for you should you have any questions. Please feel free to reach out to me directly at [sg@harvardmun.org](mailto:sg@harvardmun.org).

Sincerely,

*Ruhi Nayak*

**Ruhi Nayak**  
Secretary-General  
*Harvard Model United Nations 2023*

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# HARVARD MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023

## A LETTER FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the General Assembly of Harvard Model United Nations 2023! Thank you for choosing to attend HMUN, and I cannot wait to hear you discuss and debate topics of international importance throughout the weekend in January.

The General Assembly prides itself on most accurately simulating the actual United Nations, in which all member states are represented and have equal power, voice, and representation in debating the most pressing issues of global concern. You as delegates have enormous potential to instigate change and drive momentum, whether it be through learning about new issues, meeting fellow delegates from around the world, or engaging with your committees to create feasible yet innovative solutions.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the unique circumstances in which we find ourselves entering this year's iteration of HMUN. The challenges faced by leaders across the world today are indeed a vindication of the importance of empowering each other to lead by example, and to tackle the problems facing our generation with determination and integrity. Certainly, the topics that we will be discussing in this year's General Assembly will challenge you to confront these issues head-on. I encourage you to use your Directors, Moderators and Assistant Directors as support in your efforts to come up with solutions to these issues. They care deeply about the topics you will be debating and would love to engage with you as collaborators and partners.

I would like to briefly discuss the Background Guide. This guide is the result of months of work by your Directors. The guides are meant to familiarize you with the issues that will be discussed over the weekend and to offer you a framework to refer to when conducting research. These guides are not intended to be exhaustive resources to the topics discussed, or be a reflection of what we personally believe about these issues. What matters most is that you confidently are able to represent your country's position on a subject of debate.

My passion for the General Assembly came from my first year at college during HMUN 2021 when I was myself an Assistant Director. Being part of that conference and working alongside my amazing Director to guide and mentor the delegates was an eye-opening experience. I truly believe that the environment of the GA is uniquely educational. So, I urge you take advantage of this weekend to engage in debate, take risks, and develop meaningful relationships. I promise you will that this conference will be a transformative experience.

Sincerely,

*Aaron Eudaimon*

**Aaron Eudaimon**

Under-Secretary-General for the  
General Assembly

*Harvard Model United Nations 2023*

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# HARVARD MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the World Conference on Women at HMUN 2023! My name is Bella Nesti, and I am beyond elated to be your director for this January's conference.

While I am currently studying at Harvard as a rising junior, I am originally from Honolulu, HI, where I have lived for most of my life. Growing up in Hawai'i, I developed a passion for nature and conservation, which in part led me to concentrating in Environmental Engineering at Harvard. By far, what I love most about Environmental Engineering is that it allows me to combine my interests in the natural sciences, physics, and the outdoors in order to solve problems concerning issues that genuinely matter to me. At Harvard, I volunteer with Harvard's main community service organization, PBHA. Specifically, I work with high school students weekly to help them through the college application and admissions process; I understand how hard and stressful it can be!

Outside of school, I enjoy a wide variety of different activities. I am an artist, so you will always be able to find comics or illustrations drawn in the margins of my notes. I love creating 2D animations and small sculptures, as well as any other art form I can get my hands on. A fun fact about me is that I also enjoy glassblowing and have made some pretty great bowls and other vessels. Other things that I enjoy doing in my spare time are running by the Charles River, reading, hanging out with my friends at Harvard and listening to all sorts of music on Spotify!

I was first introduced to Model United Nations in middle school, where I was one of two 8th graders to participate in a high school level MUN conference for the very first time. While frightening at first, I found the Model United Nations community to be incredibly welcoming and supportive, and I quickly fell in love with conferences and the energy of being in a committee. I participated in MUN through my sophomore year of high school, when I took a little break from MUN. I know how it feels to be brand new to MUN, or even rusty at the process, so I will be doing my very best to make sure every one of you feels as welcome as I did in my first conference as a 13-year-old. I am positive that we can all learn from each other and gain new skills while also having a great time at HMUN.

My dearest hope is that through this conference, you all can find diplomatic solutions to complex and relevant issues. Creating even a theoretical plan that respects the developmental needs of all countries while actively promoting the representation of women in government allows us to move one step closer to implementing these ideas in the real global community.

I am so excited to meet and work with each and every one of you! I would like to welcome you once again to the WCW at HMUN 2023. Please do not hesitate to reach out, whether it be questions about HMUN or song recommendations (that would be greatly appreciated). I am happy to talk and answer any questions you may have. Best of luck in your research, and I will see you all soon!

Mahalo Nui Loa,

*Bella Nesti*

**Bella Nesti**

Director for the World Conference  
on Women

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## INTRODUCTION

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The 2022 session of the World Conference on Women at HMUN will be discussing the Representation of Women in Government. There is a considerable degree of controversy regarding this topic, and the relevance of this issue to nations throughout the world is undeniable.

The pressing issue affecting the international community is the stark contrast between the representation of women and the representation of men in government. In fact, in August 2022, merely 26 percent of all national parliamentarians were female. Although this percentage rose from 15.3 percent in 1995, it undoubtedly highlights the lack of gender equality within governmental institutions.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the extent to which women are represented in government differs from one region to another. Indeed, there are cases in which the representation of women exceeds that of men; for example, in Rwanda, women account for 61 percent of seats in the lower house. Throughout the world, various measures have been proposed and/or enacted with mixed results. One controversial measure that is often heavily discussed is the establishment of a quota system, which involves setting a minimum percentage or number for the representation of women in government. As these measures are discussed, it is essential to consider which measures can efficiently address the underrepresentation of women in government and whether or not these measures are in violation of governmental principles.

## HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

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### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly was officially established in 1945 as a result of the ratification of the Charter of the United Nations (UN).<sup>2</sup> Comprised of all 193 member-states of the UN, the General Assembly is the largest of the six principal organs of the UN. In fact, it is structured in such a way that it consists of six main committees.<sup>3</sup> Within the General Assembly, there are also seven commissions, including the International Law Commission; councils and panels, such as the Human Rights Council; and multiple other committees and working groups that address a vast range of topics. As the primary deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the UN, the General Assembly has a great deal of powers and vital responsibilities. For example, it discusses

and makes recommendations on questions regarding international peace and security, considers and approves the budget of the UN, considers reports from the Security Council and other organs of the UN, elects the non-permanent members of the Security Council and members of other UN councils and organs, and appoints the Secretary-General of the UN.

An essential aspect of the General Assembly is that it is the sole organ of the UN in which all member-states have equal representation. That is, each of the 193 member-states has one vote in the General Assembly. The fact that each member-state has equal voting rights ensures that all member-states have equal status. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required in order for recommendations to pass that pertain to peace and security; the election of members to organs; the admission, suspension, and expulsion of members; and budgetary matters. However, recommendations on other matters merely require a simple majority. Although the resolutions that the General Assembly passes are not binding on member-states, they can have a lasting and powerful impact on global issues.

## WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The United Nations has organized four world conferences on women in the past. All four conferences have played a vital role in heightening awareness of women's issues, placing emphasis upon the importance of gender equality, and encouraging nations throughout the world to take effective action in allowing for the advancement of women.<sup>4</sup>

The First World Conference on Women took place in Mexico City and coincided with the International Women's Year, the name given to the year 1975 by the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> The conference, which involved the participation of 133 governments, defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year.<sup>6</sup> This document offered guidelines for the advancement of women and prompted the international community to recognize the continuing issue of discrimination against women.

The Second World Conference on Women convened in Copenhagen in 1980, midway through the UN Decade for Women, which took place from 1976 to 1985. For this conference, 145 member-states gathered to review the 1975 World Plan of Action and to discuss the progress that had been made in implementing the objectives set out by the previous conference. It resulted in a Programme of Action,

which sought to establish national measures in order to guarantee women's ownership and control of property.

The Third World Conference on Women took place in Nairobi in 1985, marking the end of the UN Decade for Women.<sup>7</sup> The conference, which involved the participation of 1,900 delegates from 157 member-states, was intended to assess the achievements of the UN Decade for Women. The participating governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which was intended to aid in the struggle to achieve gender equality and to encourage the participation of women in peace and development efforts.<sup>8</sup>

The Fourth World Conference on Women convened in Beijing in 1995. At the conference, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action was adopted unanimously by representatives from 189 countries. It is an agenda for women's empowerment that outlines specific goals and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern, including women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, and violence against women. The conference was followed by a series of five-year reviews, and it allowed for significant progress to be made in the international effort to achieve the goals of equality, development, and peace for women.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Throughout the world, governmental bodies at the local, state, and national levels are often considered to be essential to the development and prosperity of society. Thus, it is crucial that governmental bodies consist of individuals who can effectively improve conditions for all groups in society and who are qualified to serve successfully in office. In order for the perspectives of various sectors of society to be considered in governmental bodies, there must be individuals serving in office who take it upon themselves to represent those sectors of society. However, the representation of women in government is currently lacking throughout a number of regions in the world. It was primarily in the last century that women truly began to become involved in the political institutions of their nations. Yet, there continues to exist an imbalance in the proportion of governmental positions held by women and by men.

Many nations in the world have chosen to establish gender quotas in order to address the underrepresentation of women in government. There are different types of gender quotas, primarily varying depending on how extensively they apply to different political bodies. Although gender quotas can come in various forms, the degree to which a single type of gender quota can successfully increase the participation of women in government is not uniform throughout different regions. If the establishment of a gender quota system is to be considered as an effective means of addressing the political issue, it is critical to consider which type of gender quota is most effective for a particular region of the world.

On the other hand, due to the varying levels of success of gender quotas, nations may determine that there are more impactful measures that can be taken to address the underrepresentation of women in government. The implementation of gender quotas can be perceived as a controversial practice, often leading to debate regarding whether or not governmental bodies should actively dictate gender demographics of political institutions. Furthermore, in the past century, multiple women have achieved political prominence throughout the world. A few matters to consider are how the political conditions of their nations allowed for these women to rise in political power, how the public has responded to these women, and the extent to which the time these women have spent in office has either reflected or impacted the representation of women in government at the local, state, and national levels.

Various nations advocate the notion that the representation of women in government is crucial. Such nations tend to claim that the greater inclusion of women in government can allow for a diversity in leadership and thus a stronger understanding of diverse views in society. They often argue that the inclusion of women's experiences in political affairs can not only have the effect of providing varied perspectives but also developing innovative approaches to resolving issues and improving societal conditions. In addition, nations favoring an increase in female political participation often highlight the importance of fairness and equality in the governmental system. That being, such claims are not universally accepted facts. It should be noted that multiple nations that do not share the belief that the representation of women in government is pivotal or that it is necessary to take action to address the lack of female representation. It should also be acknowledged that while many countries have legalized women's suffrage, women continue to face challenges in the voting process.



The campaign for women's suffrage in the United States of America was among the many women's suffrage movements to emerge in the 20th century—<https://variety.com/2020/film/features/hollywood-womens-suffrage-movement-right-to-vote-centennial-1234738874/>

## HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

### THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND STAND FOR ELECTION

Achieving suffrage, the right to vote in political elections, was essential to paving the way for the political participation of women and to eventually increasing the representation of women in government. In September of 1893, Governor Lord Glasgow of New Zealand signed the Electoral Bill, which bestowed the right to vote upon women in the nation.<sup>9</sup> The signing of the bill into law ultimately made New Zealand the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote.<sup>10</sup> Years of suffragette meetings, lectures, speeches, resolutions, and petition signings in various areas throughout the nation preceded the signing of the Electoral Bill; by November of 1893, New Zealand women were finally able to go to the polls and vote for the first time in the national elections.<sup>11</sup> As women exercised this right and their political involvement expanded, the right to vote eventually allowed for legislation to be passed in 1919 permitting women to hold a position in the Parliament of New Zealand.<sup>12</sup>

In the United States of America, women were among the first to be legally entitled to stand for

election due to the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788.<sup>13</sup> Although the Constitution did not explicitly grant women the right to stand for election to Congress, it recognized the right of all persons to do so. Even so, women continued to lack true influence in the government. Led by activists and reformers, a campaign later emerged for women's suffrage in the first half of the 19th century to expand the political power of American women; the campaign lasted nearly a century before success was achieved.<sup>14</sup> It was not until the 20th century that women were officially granted the right to vote, a historical moment made possible by the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution in August of 1920.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the movement for women's suffrage primarily emerged in the middle of the 20th century; the process truly began in 1945 when women in Senegal and Togo were granted the right to vote and the right to stand for election. Within Africa, access to these rights expanded as they were granted to women in Cameroon and Liberia in 1946, Niger and Seychelles in 1948, Côte d'Ivoire in 1952, Ghana in 1954, Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1955, and many more.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the right to vote and the right to stand for election spread throughout more and more nations, one of the last



nations being Namibia in November of 1989. The country of South Africa deviated slightly from the trend as women's suffrage was granted to women according to race; white women were given access to electoral rights in 1930, colored and Indian women in 1984, and black women in 1994.<sup>16</sup>

Similar to sub-Saharan Africa, the access of women to electoral rights in the Arab countries began around the middle of the 20th century. Women were granted the right to vote in Djibouti in 1946, but they did not gain the right to stand for election until 1986. Following Djibouti, more and more Arab countries joined in granting women the right to vote and the right to stand for election. Nations like Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia legally granted these rights in the 1950s; nations like Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and South Yemen continued the trend in the 1960s. In the 1970s, North Yemen and Jordan joined; in 1980, women in Iraq also gained these rights. Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates were among the last countries to grant women the right to vote and the right to stand for election, with Kuwait doing so in 2005 and the United Arab Emirates following in 2006.<sup>17</sup> It was in December of 2015 that women in Saudi Arabia voted and ran for public office for the first time. About 130,000 women registered to vote, and a total of 978 women registered as candidates.<sup>18</sup>

In the latter half of the 20th century, the movement for the right of women to vote and to stand for election truly spread throughout the Pacific.<sup>19</sup> As previously stated, New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote in 1893. In 1902, Australia became the second country to do so; however, it should be noted that there were restrictions as suffrage was limited specifically to women of European descent. Although New Zealand and Australia led the world in the movement for women's electoral rights, the vast majority of countries in the Pacific did not give women access to the right to vote and the right to stand for election until the 1960s. Samoa was the last in the Pacific to join the movement; it was in 1990 that an amendment to the nation's constitution introduced universal suffrage.

Women in Asia began to gain the right to vote and stand for election in the first half of the 20th century. Mongolia provided women with access to electoral rights in 1924, making the women of Mongolia the first in Asia to achieve suffrage.<sup>20</sup> The push for women's rights continued in the 1930s as women gained electoral rights in various areas such as Ceylon - now Sri Lanka - in 1931, Thailand and the Maldives in 1932, and Burma - now Myanmar - in 1935. The rights of women to vote and to stand for election were

expanded to most of the other countries in Asia after the Second World War.<sup>21</sup> For example, women were given access to electoral rights in Indonesia and Japan in 1945, China in 1949, India in 1950, Cambodia in 1955, Iran in 1963, and Afghanistan in 1965.<sup>22</sup>

The process of women gaining the right to vote in Latin America and the Caribbean began in the first half of the 20th century when women in Santa Lucia achieved the right to vote in 1924, followed a few years later by the women of Ecuador in 1929. In the following decades, more nations in the region began to give women access to electoral rights. This was especially the case in the 1930s, women in Chile were granted rights in 1931, women in Uruguay in 1932, women in Brazil and Cuba in 1934, women in Bolivia in 1938, and women in El Salvador in 1939. The list of nations in Latin America and the Caribbean ensuring voting rights to women expanded in the following years, and it was in 1961 that electoral rights were at last bestowed upon women in Paraguay and the Bahamas.

## ACTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The Commission on the Status of Women is a commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the primary global intergovernmental body that is committed to empowering women and furthering the progress of gender equality.<sup>23</sup> After being established in June of 1946, the Commission on the Status of Women set out to heighten awareness of women's issues and first convened in February of 1947 at Lake Success, New York.<sup>24</sup> In order to promote women's rights, the Commission on the Status of Women drafted the early international conventions on women's rights, one of which was the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. This convention was considered to be the first international law instrument to formally acknowledge and safeguard the political rights of women. The United Nations sought to heighten the participation of women in government and strengthen their rights in the political sphere. Consequently, the Seventh Session of the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women on December 20, 1952.<sup>25</sup> The intention was to establish an international standard for the political rights of women.

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women emphasizes the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stating that all people have the right

to participate in the government of their country and the right to access public services in their country. The first three articles are the most significant in committing member states to ensuring the political rights of women. Article I states that all women have the right to vote in all elections.<sup>26</sup> Article II outlines the right of women to be eligible for election to all governmental positions that are publicly elected. Article III declares that all women have the right to hold public office. All three articles specify that these rights of women should be granted on equal terms with men and without any discrimination. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was officially put into effect on July 7, 1954.<sup>27</sup>

Research conducted in the 1960s and early 1970s revealed that women in most developing countries formed less than one-third of the labor force.<sup>28</sup> At the time, the proportion of the labor force formed by women in other countries ranged from one-third to one-half. Studies found that the proportion of women within government, both at the national and local levels, was even smaller than the proportion of the work force formed by women. Women in the second half of the twentieth century that held national office tended to be highly educated, single, or a member of an upper class family with a history of political participation. The unequal access of women to education served as a potential barrier to entry. In fact, a survey conducted by the United Nations of member governments during the years 1975 to 1978 revealed the stark differences in education between men and women, especially in developing countries. According to the survey, there was an increased enrollment of women in educational institutions during the specified time period; however, at an international level, women continued to be in the minority at the first, second, and third levels of education. Literacy was a pressing area of concern for the majority of the female population, particularly in Africa, Asia, and the Arab states.

Further action by the United Nations was evident when the World Plan of Action defined at the World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975 highlighted the significance of expanding the role of women in government. The World Plan of Action underscores the concern that women lack the necessary opportunities to participate meaningfully in government and to be influential in governmental decisions that can remarkably impact their lives. The conference encouraged governments throughout the world to evaluate their policies towards women and deemed the level of women's involvement in the political realm to be a critical area of concern. The reason for this concern was that the active political

participation of women was viewed as essential to establishing equality for women in all areas; the member states at the conference considered political participation to range from gaining the right to vote and exercising that right to taking part in grassroots organizations to achieving candidacy and ultimately being elected to political offices within various political parties and at all levels of government.

## PROMINENT WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The 20th century saw a rise in the number of women holding distinguished and notable roles in governments throughout the world. It was during the second half of the century that women truly began to claim premier positions and make history as influential politicians. Women who played a prominent role in government in the 20th century include, but are not limited to, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi of India, Golda Meir of Israel, Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan.

Born in April of 1916 in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Sirimavo Bandaranaike was a Sri Lankan politician who married Solomon Bandaranaike in 1940.<sup>29</sup> In 1959, she became a widow when her husband, who had formed the nationalist Sri Lanka Freedom Party and was the Prime Minister of Ceylon at the time, was assassinated.<sup>30</sup> After his assassination, she assumed leadership of his political party and was then elected to the role of Prime Minister in July of 1960.<sup>31</sup> The election thus made her the first woman in the world to bear the title of Prime Minister.<sup>32</sup> After her first time as Prime Minister ended in the 1960s, she served a second term in the 1970s, during which she declared the country a republic and changed the name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka, and then a third and final term in the 1990s.<sup>33</sup>

Indira Gandhi was born in India in November of 1917, and she was exposed to the field of politics at an early age due to the political involvement of her parents in the movement for India to gain independence from Great Britain.<sup>34</sup> She was the sole child of Kamala and Jawaharlal Nehru, who was elected as the nation's first prime minister in 1947 after India officially achieved independence from Great Britain.<sup>35</sup> In 1955, Gandhi was elected to the working committee of the Congress Party consisting of 21 members. Later, in 1959, she was elected as the president of the Congress Party, and she became increasingly influential in the political affairs of the nation as her father became ill.<sup>36</sup> Although she did not immediately succeed her

father following his death in 1964, she was eventually appointed to be the third Prime Minister of India by the Congress Party in 1966.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, this made her the first female Prime Minister of the nation and the only female Prime Minister of the nation to date. In 1980, she was elected to a fourth term, but her time in office concluded when she was assassinated in 1984.

Born in Russia in May of 1898, Golda Meir was an Israeli politician who assumed multiple roles within the Israeli government from the 1940s through the 1960s.<sup>38</sup> Throughout this time, her political rank rose as she increasingly became involved in the Labor party.<sup>39</sup> When Israel declared its independence in 1948, Meir was one of the individuals who signed Israel's official declaration, and eventually she was elected to the Israeli Parliament.<sup>40</sup> She is considered to be the only woman among the founding fathers of the independent Israeli state.<sup>41</sup> Meir served as the Minister of Labor until she was appointed as Foreign Minister in 1956.<sup>42</sup> She was then appointed as the fourth Prime Minister of Israel in 1969 and served until 1974, thus making her the first female Prime Minister of Israel and the third woman in the world to hold the title of Prime Minister.

Margaret Thatcher, born in England in November of 1925, first entered the realm of politics when she ran for parliament in 1959 and succeeded in achieving election.<sup>43</sup> In 1961, she was appointed as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, and she continued to rise in the political ranks in the coming years. Ultimately, she was elected as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1979 and served in office until 1990. She became the longest serving British prime minister of the 20th century and the first woman to hold the position, thus making her one of the most powerful women in the world during her time in office. Thatcher achieved this high position in government at a time when there were merely 27 of the 650 Members of Parliament were women.<sup>44</sup> She was successfully elected to a third term in 1987, and she officially resigned from office three years later.<sup>45</sup> By the time her term as prime minister concluded in November of 1990, there were a total of 43 female Members of Parliament.<sup>46</sup>

Born in June of 1953 in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto was the eldest daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1971 to 1977.<sup>47</sup> In 1982, she became the chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and she was later elected as the Prime Minister of the nation in 1988. Her rise to power did not merely make her the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan but



Indira Gandhi, one of the most influential women of the 20th century, served as Prime Minister of India for four terms until her assassination in 1984-<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Indira-Gandhi>

also the first woman to ever be elected as the Prime Minister of an Islamic State.<sup>48</sup> Her first term in office concluded in 1990 and was followed by a second term beginning in 1993 and ending in 1996.<sup>49</sup> Considered to be a popular leader and viewed by many as being essential to establishing a democratic Pakistan, she was assassinated in a suicide bomb attack at a Pakistan People's Party rally in December of 2007.<sup>50</sup>

## CURRENT SITUATION

### DATA ON THE LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

According to UN Women, the United Nations organization committed to achieving gender equality and ensuring the empowerment of women, women made up merely 26 percent of all national parliamentarians as of August 2022, indicating a lack of equity in the representation of men and women in national governments.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, improvement has been made in establishing a more equitable level of political participation considering the fact that the 26 percent had risen from 15.3 percent in 1995. In



addition, as of August of 2022, research has shown that 13 countries have a women Head of State while 15 countries have a woman serving as the Head of Government. According to UN Women, as of August of 2022, there are 24 states in which the percentage of female parliamentarians in single or lower houses is less than 10. Furthermore, as of August 2022, women account for merely 21 percent of government ministers throughout the world, and in most cases, female government ministers are responsible for social sectors such as issues concerning family and education.

It should be noted that the percentage of women participating in national governments varies considerably among different nations. According to the International Women's Democracy Center, an organization established to strengthen women's global leadership, the regional averages of the percentage of women in parliament as of June of 2008 were found to be the following: 41.4 percent in the Nordic countries, 21.8 percent in the Americas, 19.1 percent in Europe (excluding the Nordic countries), 17.4 percent in Asia, 17.2 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 13.4 percent in the Pacific, and 9.6 percent in the Arab states.<sup>52</sup> According to UN Women, the percentage of female parliamentarians has risen, to a certain extent, in most of these global regions. In fact, as of August of 2022, the regional averages of the percentage of women in parliament were as follows: 41 percent in Central and Southern Asia, 36 percent in Europe and Northern America, 32 percent in Oceania, 28 percent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 25 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 25 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 18 percent in the Western Asia and Northern Africa.<sup>53</sup> The general trend has been an increase in the percentage of women achieving seats in parliament; nonetheless, the percentages evidently reveal that there continues to be a lack of equitable representation of men and women in national governments throughout the world.

## POLITICAL GENDER QUOTAS

A method that has been frequently discussed and recently used in various nations throughout the world to address the lack of women's political representation is the quota system. A gender quota system ensures that women must account for a certain number or percentage of the members of a body in relation to the government of the nation; examples of such a body include a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, and so on.<sup>54</sup> The primary intention of quotas is to enlarge the representation of

women in publicly elected or appointed institutions like governments, parliaments, and local councils. Considered to be an effective mechanism for heightening the political involvement of women in government, electoral gender quotas have achieved recognition at an international scale; however, the success of electoral gender quotas has often been dependent on factors such as the type of electoral or voting system of the nation, societal attitude towards women and the part they should play in government, and the type of quota system that the nation chooses to put into practice.<sup>55</sup>

There are several types of electoral gender quotas, two of which are candidate quotas and reserved seats.<sup>56</sup> Candidate quotas clearly identify a minimum percentage of candidates for an election that must be female, and they can range from being legal candidate quotas to voluntary party quotas. What differentiates a legal candidate quota from a voluntary party quota is that a legal candidate quota is explicitly included in the nation's constitution, in electoral laws, or in the laws of a political party; once authorized by legislation, legal candidate quotas apply to all political parties, requiring that all actively find female candidates for election until women make up at least a certain percentage of the candidates for all political parties.

Also referred to as statutory candidate quotas, legal candidate quotas have been included in the constitutions of areas like Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines, and Uganda; they have been featured in the electoral law of many areas within Latin America as well as Belgium, France, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>57</sup> As indicated by the name, voluntary party quotas are voluntarily adopted by political parties; the voluntary party quota system specifies that requirements are established within a political party so that a minimum number or percentage of the people nominated as political candidates for the party are women. The electoral gender quota system known as reserved seats means that a certain number of seats among representatives in a legislature must be reserved, or set aside, for women; this number is specifically outlined by the nation's constitution or by legislation.<sup>58</sup> The system of reserved seats has been put into effect in various countries; for example, women in Uganda are entitled to at least 56 seats in the legislature, while women in Tanzania are entitled to 20 percent of the seats.

Regardless of the type of quota system, quota systems exist to increase the representation of women in government; considering that fact women form more than 50 percent of the population in most countries yet less than 50 percent of parliamentary



seats throughout the world are held by women, this is evidently an area of concern. The effort to implement gender quota systems worldwide truly began in the latter half of the 20th century; international organizations especially made an effort to introduce gender quotas following the First World Conference on Women in 1975, which played a crucial role in bringing attention to the issue of the low representation of women in government.<sup>59</sup> Years later, the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 thoroughly underscored this issue and encouraged governments throughout the world to adopt policies that would actively work to increase the political power and presence of women in government, ultimately leading various nations to legally establish gender quotas for political party lists.<sup>60</sup> Although some political parties began using gender quotas in the 1970s, primarily in the Nordic countries, it was not until 1991 that Argentina became the first democratic state to adopt legislation that created a gender quota system that applied to all political parties, as opposed to one political party implementing a gender quota system that solely applied to itself.<sup>61</sup> The Argentine law creating a national gender quota system mandated that women must account for 30% of each political party's candidates to the Chamber of Deputies.

After Argentina paved the way for national gender quotas, many other nations adopted similar legislation ensuring that at least 30 percent of electoral seats belonged to women. For example, according to the 74th constitutional amendment of India, women are entitled to 33 percent of the seats in local elected bodies in the towns and in the countryside.<sup>62</sup> In June of 2008, it was determined that there were nearly one million women serving as elected leaders at the village level in India; it was also found that the heightened political participation of women had contributed to a decrease in corruption and increase in transparency.<sup>63</sup> Despite the fact that many nations have selected legislation as a method for addressing the underrepresentation of women in government, gender quotas have been more effective for some and less effective for others. The Argentine gender quota law appeared to be effective as women merely won 5% of the electoral seats in the 1991 election prior to the gender quota law; once the law was formed, more women gained access to the Chamber of Deputies, as indicated by the fact that 14.4% of the seats were won by women in the 1993 election.<sup>64</sup> Similar success was observed in Finland, where the law specifies that each sex must constitute at least 40% of the membership of various governmental and municipal bodies. Such a law allowed for the percentage of seats in the bodies

held by women to rise from 25% in 1980 to 48% in 1996.<sup>65</sup> However, other nations have not experienced success to the same extent. For instance, in Brazil, there has been little rise in the percentage of women in office after a quota system was enacted in 1997.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, gender quota laws in Armenia have not proven to be significantly effective. Even though a quota was established in 1999, the average percentage of electoral seats held by women in the Armenian legislature was merely 5.6% as of February of 2009. A bright spot to notice is the situation in Bolivia, where the country introduced a national quota in 1997 when just nine percent of women were serving in the national parliament. As of August 2022, women comprise 56 percent of the Bolivia upper legislative chamber.

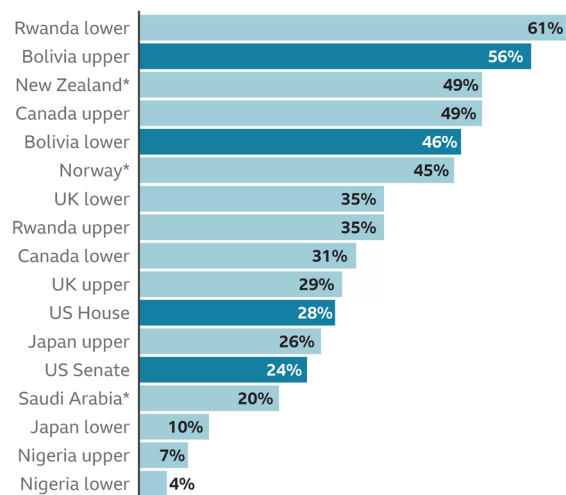
## CASE STUDY: RWANDA

Multiple nations throughout Africa have taken significant actions to heighten the level of political participation of women in government, and one nation that has attracted a great deal of attention in regards to female representation is the small central African nation of Rwanda. In 1994, the country was devastated by the Rwandan Genocide, a tragic genocidal civil war of ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis that resulted in the deaths of more than 800,000 people in a matter of merely 100 days.<sup>67</sup> The majority of those killed as a result of the violence were men. This, in addition to the fact that a great deal of male perpetrators fled to neighboring nations after the war ensured, ultimately led the population of Rwanda after the genocide to be 70 percent female.<sup>68</sup> This gender imbalance in the population encouraged women to assume greater responsibility in an effort to restore the nation, such as by caring for orphaned children, reconstructing building, farming, and starting businesses. One of the greatest indicators that women were seeking to establish stability after the bloodshed was their greater involvement in government.

Ever since the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the ruling political party in Rwanda, took power in 1994, multiple initiatives have been taken to increase the degree to which women participate in the political affairs, including the creation of a Ministry of Gender; the organization of women's councils at the cell, sector, district, and provincial levels of government; and the implementation of an electoral system with gender quotas for the national parliament to ensure that electoral seats are reserved for women.<sup>69</sup> The new government after the Rwandan Genocide put ambitious policies into effect to aid women both

### How the US and Bolivia compare

Proportion of women MPs by chamber in selected countries



\*These countries only have one legislative chamber

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union

BBC

Percentages of women as lawmakers in lower chambers of legislatures in 2022-<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63290865>

economically and politically. For example, a new constitution in 2003 established a quota system that made it mandatory for at least 30 percent of all parliamentary and cabinet seats to be held by women.<sup>70</sup> The commission of twelve people that was assigned the task of drafting this new constitution, which was approved by a referendum, included three women.<sup>71</sup> In addition, Aloisea Inyumba, a Rwandan politician who was essential to the process of reconstructing Rwanda and a pioneer in the advancement of women, was appointed as Rwanda's **Minister for Gender and Family Promotion** in July of 1994 after the genocide emerged.<sup>72</sup> One of her many accomplishments was the establishment of a new five-tiered system of local to national women's councils that attended to crucial issues ranging from health to education to security.<sup>73</sup> In September of 2003, a total of 39 women joined the Chamber of Deputies, which consisted of 80 members, after being elected by the Rwandan population through the tiered electoral system.<sup>74</sup> Thus, in October of 2003, Rwanda became the country closest to achieving representational equality in government between men and women of any national legislature.<sup>75</sup> In fact, as a result of the 2003 election, Rwanda replaced Sweden as the nation with the highest percentage of women holding seats in its national legislature.<sup>76</sup>

In June of 2008, women held 48.8 percent of the seats in the lower house and 34.6 percent of the seats in the upper house of the Rwandan government.<sup>77</sup>

Then, as a result of the Rwandan parliamentary elections held in September of 2008, Rwanda became the first nation in the world to elect a legislature with a female majority.<sup>78</sup> Although the post-genocide constitution established a 30 percent minimum, the actual representation of women in the Rwandan government after the 2008 elections exceeded the minimum, achieving a rate of 55 percent. Specifically, the 2008 elections produced a national government in which 44 out of the 80 seats in parliament were held by women. In November of 2011, it was determined that 56.3 percent of the seats in the national legislature were held by women, a rise from the percentage following the 2008 elections. Women in Rwanda have continued to rise in their level of political participation; in fact, in August of 2015, the percentage of women holding seats in the lower house rose to 63.8 percent, making Rwanda the nation with the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world at that time.<sup>79</sup> In 2021, the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament slumped down to 61.25 percent. Even with the decrease in the number of women as legislators, Rwanda continues to hold the title for the most women serving in a national parliament out of all the countries across the world. The Rwandan case study serves as an example for all countries seeking to increase the representation of women.

### PROMINENT FEMALE POLITICIANS IN VARIOUS NATIONS

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was born in October of 1938 in Monrovia, Liberia, a country in which she developed her noteworthy political career.<sup>80</sup> Her political career officially began in 1972 when she served as the Assistant Minister of Finance under President William Tolbert. After Tolbert was overthrown in 1980, she fled the country, but then in 1985, she returned to Liberia, where she ended up serving a partial sentence in prison after speaking out against the military regime of President Samuel Doe. After an uprising emerged against Doe in 1990, a presidential election was held in 1997; Johnson Sirleaf unsuccessfully ran against Charles Taylor.<sup>81</sup> However, when a presidential election was held again in 2005, she ran and was successfully elected to the Liberian presidency. In January of 2006, she was officially inaugurated as the President of Liberia, making her not merely the first female president of the nation but also the first female head of state in the entire continent of Africa.<sup>82</sup> As the President of Liberia, Johnson Sirleaf made history once again in June of 2016 when she was the first woman to be elected as

Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States.<sup>83</sup> However, she served as President until 2018 when she was expelled from the Unity Party for supporting the Presidential candidate for the opposition party. Nevertheless, she made history by becoming the first woman in Africa to be elected President of her country.

Born in February of 1953 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner eventually rose to political prominence as a woman in Latin America.<sup>84</sup> Her political career truly commenced at the end of the 1980s when she was elected to the provincial legislature of the southern Argentine province of Santa Cruz. Kirchner was later elected to be the representative of Santa Cruz in the Argentine Senate in 1995.<sup>85</sup> In 1997, she was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Argentine National Congress and then returned to the Senate after being elected again in 2001. In the following years, Kirchner made history by becoming the first woman to be elected and re-elected as the President of Argentina.<sup>86</sup> It was in December of 2007 that she won the presidency, making her the second female president but the first to be elected in Argentina; she achieved re-election in October of 2011, with her second term ending in 2015.<sup>87</sup>

Born in July of 1954 in Hamburg, West Germany, Angela Merkel eventually became an influential stateswoman in the political affairs of Germany.<sup>88</sup> At the age of 36, Merkel first entered the field of politics after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 by becoming involved in the growing democracy movement.<sup>89</sup> In 1990, she joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) political party); within three months, she was appointed to Helmut Kohl's cabinet as the Minister for Women and Youth, and she continued to strengthen her involvement in the government by becoming the Minister for the Environment and Nuclear Safety in 1994. After Kohl was defeated in the 1998 general election, Merkel was appointed as the Secretary General of the CDU.<sup>90</sup> She was eventually chosen to lead the party as the chair of the CDU in 2000, and a few years later, she was elected as the first female chancellor of Germany in 2005.<sup>91</sup> Her rise to leadership was followed by a second term, to which she was elected in 2009 and then a third term, to which she was elected in 2013 served until 2021 when she announced that she would be stepping down as chancellor.<sup>92</sup>

Theresa May was born in October of 1956 in Eastbourne, England.<sup>93</sup> She established her career as a prominent female politician when she entered Parliament in 1997 as the Member of Parliament



Angela Merkel, the former Chancellor of Germany, is the of the women of the 21st century who were in powerful positions of government-<https://www.hdg.de/lemo/biografie/>

for Maidenhead, the English town in Berkshire.<sup>94</sup> In 1999, May joined the Shadow Cabinet under William Hague as the Shadow Education and Employment Secretary, and then in 2002, she became the first female chairman of the Conservative Party under Iain Duncan Smith.<sup>95</sup> From 1999 to 2010, she held a variety of Shadow Cabinet posts, including Shadow Secretary of State for Transport; Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport; Shadow Leader of the House of Commons; and Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.<sup>96</sup> She was then promoted to Home Secretary, a position within the British Cabinet to which she was appointed in May of 2010, ultimately allowing her to become the second longest serving Home Secretary in the past 100 years.<sup>97</sup> Following the resignation of former Prime Minister David Cameron in July of 2016, May became the new Leader of the Conservative Party and the second female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.<sup>98</sup> On 24 July, 2019, Theresa May resigned from office citing her failure to proceed with Brexit. After her successor, Boris Johnson, resigned on 6 September, 2022, Liz Truss assumed leadership of the Conservative Party. However, she later resigned on 25 October, 2022, after serving in office for only 45 days. Although Liz Truss was the shortest-serving Prime Minister in UK history, she was the third woman to hold the position.



In June of 1967 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Yingluck Shinawatra was born into a family actively involved in the fields of business and politics.<sup>99</sup> Her father was once a member of parliament, one of her sisters served as the mayor of Chiang Mai, and her eldest brother held office as the Prime Minister of Thailand from 2001 to 2006. Although she spent a great deal of her life working successfully as a businesswoman and was involved in helping to run the family business, she eventually made the transition from business to politics by becoming politically involved in the Pheu Thai party. In July of 2011, Shinawatra led the Pheu Thai Party to victory by winning the general election.<sup>100</sup> Elected by members of the country's newly formed parliament, she became the first woman to be appointed as the Prime Minister of Thailand.<sup>101</sup> Prior to the election, she had never before run for office or held a government post.<sup>102</sup> Stepping down in early May of 2014 due to political controversy, Shinawatra served in office for nearly three years.

## RELEVANT UN ACTION

As previously mentioned, the four World Conferences on Women held by the United Nations have been vital to highlighting various issues affecting women throughout the world, one of which has been the underrepresentation of women in government. After the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, confirming the right of all women to participate in public life, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 clearly brought the issue of political participation to attention.<sup>103</sup> The conference famously resulted in the creation of the **Beijing Platform for Action**, which calls for various actions to be taken to improve the quality of life for women, including a call for removing barriers to equal participation in public life.

“Women in Power and Decision-making” is one of the twelve critical areas of concern outlined by the document; in regards to this area of concern, the **Beijing Platform for Action** identifies the strategic objective to “take measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making” and to, “increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.”<sup>104</sup>

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the significant statement made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that every person has the right to participate in the government of his/her country. In addition to recognizing that women have the capacity

to exhibit leadership in various settings, **it identifies socialization and negative stereotyping as factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in government and other institutions.** Moreover, it lists specific actions to be taken by governments, political parties, various organizations and institutions, and the United Nations to guarantee that women have equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. Among the listed actions, governments are prompted to devote themselves to achieving gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, to **protect and promote** the equal rights of men and women to partake in activities of a political nature, to give support to indigenous women so that they become more heavily involved in decision-making at all levels of government, etc. The Beijing Platform for Action also advises political parties to take actions such as evaluating party structures and procedures and including gender issues in their political agendas; various organizations are encouraged to strengthen the sense of unity among women and to express approval of women so that they may be influential in decision-making processes.

In June of 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women.<sup>105</sup> **UN Women** was entrusted with the tasks of giving assistance to intergovernmental bodies like the Commission on the Status of Women, supporting Member States as they put into effect standards created by intergovernmental bodies, and ensuring that the UN system is truly dedicated to establishing gender equality. Ultimately, UN Women has played a crucial role in the fight to increase the representation of women in government. In fact, the **UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality** was created with the intention of promoting the economic and political empowerment of women by means of multi-year grants of up to \$5 million. In regards to the political empowerment of women, the Fund for Gender Equality encourages and backs women who strive to assume political positions of leadership and partake more actively in political processes.<sup>106</sup>

Additionally, UN Women and the Inter Parliamentary Union worked together to create the **Women in Politics 2015 Map.**<sup>107</sup> The map reveals that the number of women in executive government and in parliament has continued to rise, but the rate of progress has been slow. In a press release, UN Women claims that the “snail’s pace of progress on gender equality and women’s participation in public and political life will need to be tackled head-on



for the overall success of the new goals,” referring to the Millennium Development Goals of 2015.<sup>108</sup> According to the map, the total number of women serving as the Heads of State and/or Government changed depending on the region. In 2022, even with an increasing number of countries having women serve as Head of State or Head of Government, UN Women predicts that “gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.”<sup>109</sup>

## AREAS OF REFORM

With varying success, numerous measures have been taken to heighten the level of female participation in the field of politics. One manner in which the lack of representation of women in government can be addressed is through the implementation of programs with a focus on education. Although most nations now legally bestow electoral rights upon women, the situation in many nations is that women often are unaware of the ways that they can become actively involved in government. That is, women may lack knowledge of the manner in which the government operates or they may lack an understanding of the necessary resources and actions that must be taken to properly have an influence in the realm of politics. By establishing programs that seek to improve the political knowledge of women and provide them with a further comprehension of the electoral system, women may then be better enabled to pursue a career related to government and have an impact in the political decision making process of their respective nations. In addition to the creation of educational programs, actions may be taken to encourage schools to address the lack of representation of women in government and to encourage girls in schools to become more aware of governmental affairs. One of the factors contributing to the lack of female political participation is the stark differences between the education levels of men and women throughout the world. Thus, delegates may strive to lessen the extent to which these levels differ.

One of the common actions taken by various nations to address the political issue is the establishment of quota systems. As previously mentioned, nations such as Rwanda have successfully passed laws mandating that a certain percentage of the seats in government belong to women. Delegates may consider establishing a universal quota system, indicating that all participating nations agree to set aside a specific minimum percentage of electoral seats for women. Delegates may also encourage all

participating nations to implement a quota system that is specific to the nation, as opposed to being universal, allowing each nation to individually select the percentage that will be specified by law. However, the usage of quota systems is a rather controversial topic due to the differing perspectives on the extent to which governments should be actively involved in the results of elections. Some nations may find it necessary to address the issue through legislation; other nations may find it unnecessary to interfere with the law in such a way. Some leaders prioritize pure meritocracy over the use of a quota system to promote marginalized demographics. Delegates must consider all views during discussions of the topic.

## QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

Although these questions should be addressed in working papers or resolutions, delegates should not feel the need to limit themselves to answering these questions. The representation of women in government is an issue with multiple underlying factors to consider. The following questions are not exhaustive of the entire topic. Consequently, delegates are highly encouraged to address any additional questions when writing working papers and draft resolutions during committee sessions.

Are gender quotas effective for elevating the representation of women in government? Why or why not?

If gender quotas should be implemented, which type of gender quota system is most effective for the current situation within each nation? Why?

Should the government of a given nation play an active role in determining the extent to which women participate in political affairs?

How can it be determined that the measures taken to raise the political involvement of women in government are allowing women to truly work actively, effectively, and influentially within the governments of their nations?

How can the implementation of educational programs be utilized to address the underrepresentation of women in government? How effective are they?

Should increasing the representation of women in government be a priority? Why or why not?

## POINTS OF CONTENTION

There are numerous ways in which nations can be divided into blocs when addressing the representation of women in government. Four potential bloc positions are the following: (1) Nations with Legal Candidate Quotas, (2) Nations with Voluntary Party Quotas, (3) Nations with Reserved Seats, and (4) Nations without Gender Quotas. Although these bloc positions have been labeled according to the system of gender quotas, delegates need not feel limited to discussing quotas when attempting to determine a collective solution to the issue of lacking female political participation. The introduction of the quota system in this background guide is intended to serve as a launching point for further research and deliberation and not to restrain delegates from exploring other avenues.

### NATIONS WITH LEGAL CANDIDATE QUOTAS

Nations favoring legal candidate quotas advocate a system in which the law of a country requires that a specific number of candidate positions are reserved for women.<sup>110</sup> In 2011, a study found that of all the countries having gender quotas, approximately 38% had chosen to implement legal candidate quotas. Legal candidate quotas have been increasingly adopted in Latin American countries, the first being Argentina in 1991; a factor contributing to the rise of gender quotas in Latin America was the development of democratic institutions, women's associations, and civil rights groups in the 1980s. A concern of legal candidate quotas is that merely enacting a law does not ensure its success; in many cases, it has been found that legal candidate quotas have not been properly enforced due to lacking a well-defined method of implementation.<sup>111</sup>

### NATIONS WITH VOLUNTARY PARTY QUOTAS

Within this bloc, nations favor a system that sets a minimum for the number of women on candidate lists; since this minimum is not outlined by the law of the country but established by the statutes of individual political parties, it is not legally required of all political parties.<sup>112</sup> This approach, which is the most common type of quota, specifies that a political party voluntarily commit itself to nominate women for candidate lists until a specific percentage of female candidates is achieved.<sup>113</sup> Voluntary party quotas tend to be utilized most often by center-left-leaning parties.<sup>114</sup> In Western European countries with gender quotas, voluntary party quotas are primarily

used. Although gender quotas are not prevalent in Eastern Europe, countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary have chosen to adopt voluntary party quotas.<sup>115</sup> Like with legal candidate quotas, the concern with voluntary party quotas is that they are not being properly enforced.

### NATIONS WITH RESERVED SEATS

As previously mentioned, one of the main types of gender quotas used today in various governments throughout the world is reserved seats. Reserved seats is the name allocated to the gender quota that specifically regulates the number of women elected to a legislature or governmental body. In a study, it was determined that of the countries having gender quotas in the year 2011, 20% had reserved seats. In 1986, Uganda introduced the implementation of reserved seats; this type of gender quota has been similarly applied to the governments of other East African countries like Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. Progressively, more and more nations are using the system of reserved seats to introduce gender quotas; at an increasing rate, women in nations with reserved seats are being elected, as opposed to being appointed, such as in Jordan, Uganda, and Rwanda. There has been a rise in the number of countries in South Asia adopting political gender quotas; in South Asia, the system of reserved seats is the primary form of gender quotas that has been implemented. A concern regarding reserved seats is that many nations have chosen to adopt the system but have set the quota level below 30 percent, the percentage commonly regarded as producing effective results; such nations with lower quota levels are thus more likely to have lower levels of female representation in government than are those nations with higher quota levels.

### NATIONS WITHOUT GENDER QUOTAS

Although multiple nations have implemented different types of gender quotas, there are numerous countries that have chosen not to include gender quotas in their political processes. That being said, different nations often have various concerns about adopting gender quotas in the field of government. One possible concern among nations without gender quotas is that the establishment of gender quotas may imply that politicians are elected primarily due to their gender, as opposed to being elected due to their qualifications. Others often express the concern that the introduction of gender quotas can result in conflicts within the party organization or may not be in accordance with the principles of liberal democracy.

An additional concern is that creating quotas for women may lead to demands for quotas for other groups, which can result in political complications.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although this background guide addresses different aspects of the history of women in government and some of the research conducted on the current situation, it only provides a surface-level coverage of the topic. Since the manner in which the governmental involvement of women has evolved differs considerably from region to region, you are encouraged to research more extensively into the history of this involvement within your own nation. By developing a stronger understanding of how women have come to be involved in the political affairs of your nation, you will have a stronger ability to construct working papers and resolutions that can realistically and properly address the issue. You are also expected to research actions taken within your nation to increase the number of women working in government, if any. You should identify which actions were effective or have the potential to be effective and consider how these actions can be applied to other nations with similar political situations.

Furthermore, although many nations have taken action to ensure the electoral rights of women by legally granting them the right to vote and the right to hold a position in government, this does not guarantee that such laws are being properly enforced or that women are not being discouraged from having a political voice in their nations. It is suggested that you examine how the public perceives the political participation of women and the way that the cultural practices or viewpoints of the people in your nation may be influencing how extensively women are being represented in government. This background guide includes information on prominent women in government throughout the world, so you may find it helpful to evaluate the response of people in your nation and neighboring nations to the influence of prominent women in government.

Once you have developed a stronger understanding of the political situation of women in your nation, it is important to understand the political situation of women in other nations. You may find it useful to first identify the situation of women in nations that have the same or a similar type of government as does your nation and to identify the actions that these nations have specifically taken in regards to the representation

of women in government. If you come upon policies or legislation while researching that you believe could be successfully implemented in your nation, you are encouraged to delve further and identify how these policies or laws could be adapted to the governmental structure of your nation.

## CLOSING REMARKS

It is my hope that this background guide will allow you to have a better understanding of the issue of representation that will be addressed in committee and encourage you to delve further by conducting research of your own. I encourage all of you to enhance your comprehension of the issue by reading further and deeply analyzing the various facets of the issues. By engaging in further research, you will not merely supplement your knowledge but also improve your ability to actively and effectively participate in committee.

Being a delegate in Model United Nations is an excellent way to expand your knowledge of crucial issues, strengthen your skills in leadership and diplomacy, and explore how you can take effective action in the future. I encourage all of you to approach the conference with excitement, passion, and the desire to learn. The stronger your desire to learn and participate, the greater the likelihood that you will have a truly memorable Model United Nations experience.

As a Director, I look forward to seeing all of you take part in the experience and develop your skills as delegates. It is my duty and privilege to work with you, learn from you, and help guide you throughout the Model United Nations process so that together we can make the conference as enriching as possible. I hope that you find the topics to be captivating and the overall experience to be inspiring. Please do not hesitate to contact me as you research and prepare for the conference, and I look forward to meeting all of you in January!

Bella Nesti

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