



**REPORT**

**OF THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION**

**ATTENDING THE ROUNDTABLE**

**DISCUSSIONS**

**ON THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN THE**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

**ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF**

**DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**(CEDAW)**

**22 JUNE 2023**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly organised the parliamentary roundtable discussion on women's rights, in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Hon. Cynthia Lopez Castro, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, chaired the roundtable discussion and delivered an opening statement together with Mr. Volker Turk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU.

The discussion focused on the role of parliament in advancing women's rights to political participation, decent work, and education on an equal basis with men.

Roundtable participants endorsed concrete transformative pledges and recommendations that will feed into the December 2023 Human Rights 75 Initiative High-Level Event.

In addition, the 2023 edition of the Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was launched at the closing session.

Parliament of Namibia was presented at the roundtable discussion with the rest of the delegation, consisting of:

Hon. Kletus Karondo (National Assembly)  
Hon. Melania Ndjago (National Council)  
Hon. Ueutjerevi Ngunaihe (National Council)

Adv. Tousy Namiseb, Secretary to the National Council, Mr. Willem Isaak, Deputy Director, National Assembly, Ms. Priskila Kulula, Parliamentary Clerk, National Council, and Mr. Sackeus Iikela, Information Officer, National Council accompanied the Members of Parliament to the roundtable discussion.

## **2. OPENING STATEMENTS**

Hon. Cynthia Lopez Castro, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians stated that the roundtable discussion stands on the strong foundation that the IPU has developed with the CEDAW Committee. The spirit of putting human rights at the centre is no longer a given but mandatory. CEDAW and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remain essential tools for parliament to close the gender gap and protect human rights in all areas of life. Fulfilling the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW requires strong efforts and actions in all aspects of our mandate as parliamentarians. As parliaments, there is a need to break barriers to ensure that the issue of parity is realised. In the roundtable discussion, the successes, challenges, and way forward in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were discussed.

One key element in these adventures will be revitalising the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the many treaties that guarantee women's rights. For the past twenty years, the IPU has been involved in international human rights engagements, including the CEDAW convention, which was the first body to adopt the comprehensive role of parliament. It is the hope of the IPU that they will take the handbook with them to use it in tracking multiple challenges in tracing gender equality. There are still laws that do not grant the same equality between men and women on matters related to nationality and families.

The IPU and the High Commission share the ambition to create a human rights ecosystem, and the IPU would want to be part of that system. That's why they share the belief that parliaments alone cannot drive the change that the world wants to see without the effort of the Office of the High Commission to mark the **75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It is no coincidence that there was a focus on women's rights and a reaffirmation that women's rights are Human rights. Despite the progress made in institutionalising women's rights worldwide, there are pushbacks on many fronts, even in laws that are supposed to recognise and grant these rights. Gender equality in respect for human rights is the core and mission of the IPU.

The IPU believed that there cannot be genuine democracy, sustainable development, peace, social justice, and generally no means of achieving Agenda 2030 if there are no serious actions to achieve gender equality. The 2030 Agenda target would require transformative actions for gender equality in particular. The realisation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target would not be met if we left the women's population behind. There is a need to solidify and have much more ambition in the actions so that they will have lasting results.

Hon. Cynthia López Castro, Mexican MP and President of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians, said "We need more women in the high-level positions, so they have this vision of gender equality and have more sensibility. I think the big challenge for a woman is to raise her hand, believe in herself and say yes, I want to be there. Trust women and give them a chance to participate by creating quotas. To achieve gender equality in Parliament is to have equal representation, to have the same opportunities, and the same rights."

Mr. Volker Turk stated that in order to ensure the rejuvenation of the global consensus and the independent invisibility of the human rights regime in economics, culture, and civil and political rights, there should be protection of the environment and the right to protect human rights. Repeatedly, there would be a need to ensure that in each culture and religion, human rights are part of their participation to gain universality. If one looks at women parliamentarians and women in politics, which, by the way, is one of the sports lights, only 26.5% of women are in parliament and in just 36 countries we have a woman head of State or Government. There is progress, but it would take 150 years to fully realise equal participation in politics and meaningful participation.

Mr Turk stated "the type of hatred and misogyny we see against women in public and political life is mindboggling, and it is extremely important that we are vigilant about it, identify why it is happening and that we try to counter it."

In the UN Security Council, on the women's security agenda, there was not much progress made because, on negotiation tables, one still sees prominent men. Maybe this is because men are the ones mostly at the battle field, but to build peace, and for peace to be sustainable and inclusive, all

segments of society need to be at the table. There has been transformation in society for the last couple of years with women and young people in leadership, but when it comes to finding a solution, women are mostly not included. Watch carefully all the forthcoming negotiation processes. For example, in the Russia-Ukraine war, it will be men leading those negotiations, and there will be a segment of society not represented, particularly women. History shows that they have seen countries fall back into conflict, especially because of the non-inclusivity of women.

Ensuring human rights must not only be a question of equality and fairness but also be a path towards a more sustainable future for everyone. It should also be a path where human rights are implemented, technological advancement is strengthened, and the risk of climate change is eliminated. It was for that reason that the roundtable discussion would offer some opportunities to focus on the role of parliamentary cooperation in creating a new memorandum for Human rights and placing women's rights high on the national and international agenda. Each and every member of parliament is important, and the IPU depends on their contribution and individual commitment.

Mr Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, said “Despite progress and the near universal adoption of the Convention, no country can yet claim to have fully achieved gender equality. Indeed, gains in women's rights and gender equality are at serious risk of being reversed by multiple crises.”

The IPU and the Office of the High Commissioner enjoy a longstanding cooperation. These two organizations share the belief that without parliaments we cannot drive the change that we want to see in the world. It has been a natural move for the IPU and Parliaments to pool efforts with the Office to mark this year's 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To mark this partnership, it is no coincidence that we focus specifically on women's rights. Participants gathered in Geneva to reaffirm that **Women's Rights are Human Rights**. Despite progress in institutionalizing women's rights worldwide, there is a rollback on many fronts – in discourses, in acts and even in laws that are supposed to recognize and guarantee these rights. Gender equality and respect for women's rights are at the core of the mission of the IPU.

There can be no genuine democracy, no sustainable development or peace, no social justice and more generally no means for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, if parliaments are not serious about achieving gender equality across the board. Reaching our 2030 targets on time will require transformative action. Transformative action for gender equality in particular is vital.

Mr Chungong stated that “We cannot meet the SDG targets if we leave half of the population behind. So, we need to solidify existing gains toward these goals and be much more ambitious in our actions so that we can have lasting results.”

Transformative change must start at home – **so firm parliamentary action on gender equality must start with transformation from within**. Parliament should mirror society in all its diversity so it can live up to the expectations and needs of everyone – meaning people of all genders, all age groups, all social backgrounds and origins, whether they live in urban or rural areas, with or without disabilities.

Far too many countries still have laws that do not grant women the same rights as men on matters related to the family or nationality. One in three women worldwide still face domestic or sexual violence in their lifetime. And just over 26% of members of parliament globally are women, well behind our gender parity target.

Ms Nicole Ameline, CEDAW Committee expert and IPU focal point, said “Parliamentarians are essential drivers of the paradigm shift towards gender parity in all spheres of life. The CEDAW Committee and the IPU have been working closely together to make sure parliaments as institutions and individual MPs can fulfil their transformative role, and advance women’s rights both in laws and in the minds.”

### **3. SESSION 1: DISCUSSION ON ARTICLE 21 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHT – ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S FULL AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS**

Women’s participation in public and political life is enriched by the Human Rights Instrument and the Convention on Forms of Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The degree of Women’s participation in public and political life globally has improved since the adoption of these instruments, however, it remains significantly less represented.

Only one in four parliamentarians is a woman. It will take 155 years to reach equality, realising the participation of women and not only the question of rights for women but also equality.

#### **Obstacles women face in participating fully in politics are:**

##### **Gender-based violence**

Gender-based violence at home and in public sphere and even in the political life is a global phenomenon that constitutes a key barrier to women's political participation. GBV in politics targets women more than men e.g. sexist threats, sexual harassments; online harassment; and women political candidates and journalist are exposed to online GBV.

Limiting access to public resources, in particular for women who may be interested in holding public offices and political decision-making positions, is an obstacle that women face in participating in decision-making. Women who are human rights defenders and have political ambition have the consequence of facing violence, and to fully realise their political rights, they will always be under threat. Both women and men can experience violence in politics; however, gender-based violence targets mostly women.

##### **Gender Stereotype**

Deeper-rooted gender stereotypes defining the roles of men and women often associate women with being excluded from the decision-making table. The example and assumption that women are weaker is not true, and the need for women to look towards men's protection and guidance continues to hinder women's participation in decision making. Preservation of traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintaining gender-based inequality will hinder progress if not addressed. Women also face discrimination against disabilities, age and ethnicity, and those

associated with human rights activism face even greater obstacles to public and political participation; they are often targets of social injustice.

Women have shown over time that they can equally participate in decision-making in any sphere of social or economic development. And as mentioned, only 26.5% of the world's parliamentarians are women; the world is therefore behind the gender parity target. That's why the global board of the International Gender Committee has adopted two pledges. **One to achieve gender parity**, and two **to engage various institutions in an extensive manner to fight violence against women**.

There is a need for transformative change. Parliamentary change should start within that and mirror society in all its diversity so that it can meet its expectations.

### **Sexual harassment**

One in three women worldwide still faces sexual violence in their lifetime. This is a critical worrisome concern, especially when it comes to women in the political environment. Surprisingly, male colleagues are mostly perpetrators in harassing those women. This harassment takes place inside parliament as well, when women are in their constituencies, and also in their private lives. Women also experience harassment from anonymous people, especially online. Online violence, or the creation of fake news or images, is also one of the most common forms of violence against women in public and political life. The aim of all this gender-based violence against women would be to discourage women from political activism.

Based on research conducted, where women were able to exercise a strong influence on the negotiation process, there was a much higher chance that an agreement would be reached and implemented. The 2016 peace agreement in Columbia benefited from women's participation, who managed to introduce key points on gender equality, including a no amnesty provision for sexual perpetrators of sexual violence, paving the way for sustainable peace.

Every parliament should have a **select or standing committee on gender issues**, allowing it to focus on the international conventions it is a party to and especially on the obligation to monitor the implementation of human rights obligations under the conventions, such as CEDAW.

Promotion of women's rights is not only moral, gender parity is a critical issue in the current crises affecting the globe, including climate change, migration, and pandemics. Of late, efforts to improve gender parity have proven unsuccessful due to gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. Gender inequality has therefore become one of the factors that causes conflict across the globe. Empowering women is a way of building sustainable peace, considering women are the source of family care and advocates for peace.

Women's roles in peacekeeping and negotiation cannot be left out when focusing on their role in decision-making activities. Developing initiatives to increase women's representation in political and decision-making bodies, providing training, and addressing structural barriers that limit women's participation Promotion of sustainable peace and inclusive societies is an important pillar of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and a major focus of the IPU strategy. Women's contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding have been overlooked or marginalised for a long time.

Women's unique perspective can offer the most effective strategy for resolving them. Research shows that when women are included in conflict resolution, they are more likely to prioritise the needs of their communities for sustainable solutions that include cultural differences, political and religious differences, the negative effects of climate change, and migration.

Parliaments are key to promoting human rights through **legislative, representative, budgeting, and oversight roles**. Parliament can pass legislation that ensures the promotion of women's rights, including human rights, and equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions, including parliamentary seats to ensure gender sensitivity.

The human race normative framework, the interpretation of norms by the UN treaty bodies, and the recommendations developed by the Human Rights Mechanism, including special procedures provide guidance to states and parliaments on how to overcome such obstacles. According to such a framework, promoting women's participation requires strengthening the national legal frameworks to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in the public and political spheres, protect women from violence on and offline, ensure freedom of opinion and expression, access to information, peaceful assembly and association, and access to justice.

Parliament can also consider allocating funds to programmes that promote women's rights. Parliament should also ensure that legislation related to women's rights included in the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights and other international treaties on human rights is ratified, domesticated, and implemented by governments. Parliamentary committees on human rights and gender equality are key to providing oversight of the implementation of laws on women's rights. Parliament can also work hand in hand with civil society.

It is also essential to introduce legislative measures that facilitate gender parity, such as quotas, reserved seats in parliament for women, financial assistance, outreach training for women candidates, women candidates and women MPs promoting public relations, media participating including media interviews, quality childcare services, and the provision of additional security for women. It will also be concluded to promote family responsibilities among men and women.

### **Statistics**

No functioning parliament today has zero women, which is a good sign. Six countries today have parity, but the rate of parity is very slow; it may take 60 years to reach parity in parliament. Regional statistics show that America has a high level of women's participation, but in the Middle East and North Africa, there is a sit back. 22.7% of speakers are women. In some countries, both chamber speakers are women, which is a good thing. Only 12% of women chair defence committees and 8% of women chair transport committees compared to other committees. However, there are advancements in standing committees' dealings with the environment.



#### **4. SESSION 2: DISCUSSION ON ARTICLE 23 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS- THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN ENSURING WOMEN'S EQUAL ACCESS TO DECENT WORK**

According to the ILO representative, (almost) 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its promise of freedom, equality, and justice for all, gender equality remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations and one of the most elusive yet fundamental objectives of our societies. Social, legal, cultural, and institutional norms often combine to stall or even reverse progress on gender equality.

To illustrate, ILO data show that the labour force participation rate of women in 2022 stood at under 50 % (47.4%), compared with 72.3% for men. This means that for every economically inactive man there are two such women. And, according to the World Economic Forum, the global Economic Participation and Opportunity gender gap stood at 39.7% in 2022. At the current rate of progress, it will take 151 years to close this gap.

The structural determinants that inhibit women from participating equally and equitably in social, economic, and political life, including in decision-making instances, are well-rehearsed, with discrimination and gender stereotypes based on societal attitudes about reproductive roles and responsibilities at the core.

This was revealed even more starkly by the COVID-19 pandemic: in 2020, 2 million mothers left the labour force, due to the additional demands for unpaid care and support brought about by the shutdown of services.

According to the ILO studies, most women are still in the caregiving sector due to the segregation of roles and duties between men and women; and men as the main source of household income. Those sectors are mostly found in the informal sector. These women caregivers are more likely to be outside the labour force and, when they enter the paid workforce, they are more likely to work fewer paid hours, more likely to be in involuntary part-time work and in informal and insecure work, and are less likely to be covered by social protection.

Socially imposed gender roles, mainly that women are the sole carers. This is combined with other factors such as ethnicity, disability, migration, and age. This still contributes to the exclusion of women from the labour market. Women continue to perform over three-quarters of unpaid care work, aggravating time opportunity costs by limiting their opportunities to engage in other activities, including paid work or income-generating activities. A significant factor behind these facts is the attempt to reconcile paid work and family or care responsibilities.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, about 2 million mothers worldwide dropped out of the labour force due to the additional demands for unpaid care and support brought by the closure of services such as daycare and schools.

The 2019 International Labour Organisation (ILO) report indicates that conventions that talk of violence are important steps towards protecting women's rights at work as they recognise the right to be free from violence and harassment in the workplace. The majority of governments are trying their level best to protect women's interests, but in the private sector, it is still difficult to protect

women's rights. Most women in the private sector are still under threat when they go on maternity leave. Motherhood penalises those women who may take days off for reasons such as maternity, and this puts more effort or burden on women's earnings.

Critical issues, such as the situation of breastfeeding women at the workplace, need to be addressed. It is important that employers can provide breastfeeding facilities and that those women are not discriminated against.

Adopted in 2019 by the International Labour Conference, the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, No. 190, has rightly been called a "landmark Convention". The Convention and its Recommendation 206, recognise, for the first time, the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment – not just for some but for everyone. It acknowledges the current and changing nature of work, applying well beyond the physical workplace, to include commuting, cyber-violence and harassment, work-related social events and private houses when they are places of work. at the core of the Convention is the adoption of an "inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach" for the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment. This approach envisages actions in the areas of protection and prevention, enforcement and remedies, and guidance and training, with particular attention to the often gendered nature of violence and harassment.

Unless the present trajectory is changed and a transformative and measurable agenda for gender equality in the world of work is put at the centre of institutions, decision-making processes, policies and legal frameworks, advancing the relative socio-economic position of women and achieving equitable outcomes for our societies as a whole, will remain out of reach. This will require transformation of the way work is arranged and regulated, to ensure that working hours and work arrangements do not penalise or discriminate against workers with family responsibilities, either in terms of access to employment, labour market attachment or career advancement, but rather support workers to reconcile work and family responsibilities. This is the premise of ILO Convention 156 and its Recommendation 165 on Workers with Family Responsibilities.

The necessary frameworks are within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in CEDAW and in a number of International Labour Standards, also recognised as human rights standards - amongst other treaties. **Political will is an essential ingredient in translating those frameworks into reality.**

Equal pay legislation is key to promoting equality at the workplace so that women can have an equal-paying job with their male counterparts. For example, the Bahrain parliament would pass a law that would double the salaries of women. This would give women security when they are widowed, disabled, or have other conditions that may prevent them from practising in a decent job.

Banning wage discrimination between women and men in the workplace is highly encouraged, and those drafting laws should ensure that those laws do not discourage women as such. Wage protection laws are essential to protect women undertaking maternity leave, as they are mostly affected and fear if their salaries will be touched or not.

**Parliamentarians** are encouraged to support entrepreneurship laws to provide women with financial resources in order to open up businesses or boost their businesses, especially those that

are operating in the informal sector. The Ugandan government had gone a long way in achieving this concept of providing financial assistance to women.

Although several countries are trying their best to provide a conducive environment for promoting a decent workplace for women, they still face issues like gender-based violence and sexual harassment, which are still a problem in many societies, and strong interventions are still needed to be enforced. These are some of the factors that are preventing women from fully participating in being employed in decent work. Statistics still show that 1 in 2 women face sexual harassment at work.

## **5. SESSION 3: ARTICLE 26 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION**

Women experiencing sexual and economic violence do not have equal opportunities when it comes to resources all this is partly caused by education. In the sense that if they lack access to education, they are more likely to be abused. The argument is that women who have access to education are likely to be more enlightened, to be respected, and to get away from this violence.

Access to education should be the same for men and women. Tanzania passed a law in 2017 prohibiting school-going children from being married.

Girls have access to education, for example, in Namibia, notably, gender disparities in education are not a substantive issue as Government (and Parliament) has successfully addressed gender disparity issues at the basic education level. Notwithstanding this, net enrolment rate, transition to lower secondary, and lower and upper secondary gross enrolment rates are marginally higher for females than their male counterparts.

The statement by Hon Kletus Karondo on behalf of the Namibian parliamentary delegation is attached as *Annexure A*. Although Kenya still experiences systemic discrimination where girls cannot access certain subjects like science, which may lead to high-paying jobs in the market, the Kenyan government is working on addressing those issues so that equality is promoted through education.

Having a society that is free from these prejudices and free from violence and education is definitely one of the important tools that ensure that women have equal access to education. Because when women are at the decision-making table, they are able to lead. Women just need to have access to resources, and they would definitely make possible changes.

Adopting regulations to combat new risks when it comes to technologies is essential when they promote violence, as women often suffer from online violence such as body shaming and bullying. This could also be contributing factors in preventing women from going to school hence, it could have a major impact on achieving equality through education.

State officials, lawmakers, and other stakeholders should form alliances to create momentum for gender equality in education and technology. providing financial assistance for girls from poor backgrounds to access education, especially tertiary education, as most of tertiary education is still

not provided for free, unlike primary and secondary education. Technical and vocational educational training needs to be provided to women.

Policies and legislatures should be prioritised so that schoolgirls are provided with sanitary pads. This would have a greater impact as most girls often attend school and cannot afford sanitary pads. This can come with shame and bullying. Menstruation education also needs to be given to these girls so that they are enlightened and their journey to school is not disturbed.

Educating women has major benefits. Studies have shown that when women are educated, they are more likely to prioritise their community's needs, which is why governments are encouraged to support women and girls in accessing education.

## 6. PLEDGES

The roundtable also discussed the pledges and endorsed them, where the president asked members of parliament to come back with meaningful pledges that are transformative, including from civil society, parliament, and business leaders, on the types of commitments they could put forward.

Parliamentarians pledge to prioritize some or all of the following actions, **over the next two years**, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the executive, political parties, civil society and national human rights institutions:

1. Take action to ensure women's full, equal and safe participation in political decision-making at all levels, including by:
  - a. introducing or strengthening measures to prevent and combat offline and online gender-based violence against women in politics, including by adopting a zero-tolerance code of conduct and establishing an independent and specialized complaints mechanism;
  - b. introducing or strengthening legislated gender quotas, towards gender parity, that are mandatory, ambitious and duly enforced, to increase the participation of women in decision-making, including in peace negotiations and mediation teams.
2. Take action to ensure women's access on an equal basis with men to decent work, including by:
  - a. promoting ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization and introducing or strengthening legislation to ensure access to social protection for women employed in the informal sector;
  - b. introducing or strengthening legislation to ensure equal pay for work of equal value.
3. Take action to achieve gender equality in and through education and information systems, including by:
  - a. adopting or strengthening legislation to ensure that girls and boys have safe and equal access to good-quality, free-of-charge education, at primary and secondary level, and legislation to ensure that school curricula counter gender stereotyping;
  - b. adopting legislation to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the development of technology, including artificial intelligence algorithms.

The full text of the endorsed pledges is attached as *Annexure B*. The pledges could transform financial, human capital, and commitment to universal human rights institutions. There will be a high-level event in December 2023 where the pledges will be presented and linked to the 2024 summit of the future. The pledges will inform the human rights contents of the summit that will be held within the confines of the General Assembly.

## **7. LAUNCH OF HANDBOOK**

The handbook was launched at the closing session. The book, based on the CEDAW, highlights the roles in advancing the CEDAW convention, promoting ratification, and respecting the rights and principles of the convention. The book also includes information on how states should report to the CEDAW national committee.

The handbook demonstrates how parliaments can use the CEDAW Convention as a framework for advancing gender equality, and the human rights of women and girls. It introduces parliaments to the Convention and the work of the CEDAW Committee, a watchdog body made up of experts that monitors implementation and progress reported by countries as well as responding to complaints.

The handbook will help parliamentarians translate the convention into content-based actions. Also to prepare for law-making, budgetary questions, and parliamentary oversight. It provides important guidance on how parliamentarians can actively engage in the work of the CEDAW committees. The handbook would also help parliamentarians in the reporting cycle to the CEDAW committee. And also how parliamentarians can follow up.

It focuses on particular themes where the Convention takes on particular relevance, including challenging contexts such as those arising from armed conflicts, political instability, climate change and health crises.

The handbook details what actions parliaments can take to address gender-based violence. It recommends that parliaments include all acts of sexual violence committed by State and non-State perpetrators into national legislation to ensure their criminalization, investigation, prosecution and punishment.

It contains a wealth of case studies of how parliaments are helping eliminate discrimination against women.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Despite progress and the near universal adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, no country can yet claim to have fully achieved gender equality. Indeed, gains in women's rights and gender equality are at serious risk of being reversed by multiple crises.

Although some effort was made and positive results achieved in the world including Namibia, there are still many shortcomings and challenges with regards the following:

- women's full, equal and safe participation in political decision-making at all levels,

- women's access on an equal basis with men to decent work, and
- gender equality in and through education and information systems.

Therefore, Parliaments including the **Parliament of Namibia** are key to promoting human rights including women's rights, through its **legislative, representative, budgeting, and oversight roles**. Parliament can pass legislation that ensures the promotion of women's rights, including human rights, and equal representation of women and men in **decision-making positions**, including parliamentary seats to ensure gender sensitivity.

**Parliament of Namibia** is duty bound to ensure women's access on equal basis with men to **decent work** and gender equality in and through **education and information systems**.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Both Houses of the Parliament of Namibia must consider this report and support the pledges that commenced at the Geneva Roundtable held on 22 June 2023.
- The two Houses of Parliament must strengthen administrative and legislative measures, procedures and practises and take action to ensure:
  - women's full, equal and safe participation in political decision-making at all levels,
  - women's access on an equal basis with men to decent work, and
  - gender equality in and through education and information systems.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committees responsible for gender equality must consider examining the discussions, views, comments made at the Geneva Roundtable and implement the pledges that commenced on 22 June 2023. The parliamentary standing committees must report to the IPU through the IPU National Group.

## SIGNATURES



Hon. Kletus Karondo (National Assembly)

Date: 20.07.2023

*In the Constituency*  
*at the time of tabling in NA.*

Hon. Melania Ndjago (National Council)

*In the Constituency*  
*at the time of tabling in NA.*

Hon. Ueutjerevi Ngunaihe (National Council)

Date: .....

Date: .....