



# Status of Women in the United Nations System

2016

# FOREWORD

This publication profiles the current status of women in the staffing of the UN and the challenges to the achievement of a 50:50 culture.

The ambitious and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided a revitalized global gender equality compact. When world leaders gathered to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) last year, they did so knowing that the commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls everywhere will make a crucial contribution to progress across all of the goals and targets, and that “the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.”

By adopting the SDGs’ internationally agreed upon and time-bound targets, we have now placed the rights of women and girls squarely at the heart of the global agenda, with a clear view of their role to shape sustainable progress, and a definitive expiry date for gender inequality.

The United Nations convened the processes that brought governments together in these far-sighted goals. As a standard setting organization, it has a responsibility to lead by example and ensure the equal and active participation of women at all levels.

This publication profiles the current status of women in the staffing of the UN and the challenges to the achievement of a 50:50 culture. There is some encouraging progress towards gender parity throughout the UN System, although it is not uniform, and insufficiently rapid. The change we need will not happen without a committed, multi-pronged approach.

The implementation within the UN of accelerators that are successful in national contexts offer cause for optimism. The application for example of strong temporary special measures, combined with renewed leadership commitments, improved monitoring mechanisms and enhanced facilitative policies, can move the UN to its goal of gender equality.

Leadership from the top is essential in deep cultural change. Equality is not a statistic, it is a mindset. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has championed gender equality throughout his tenure, helping make the shift of the achievement of gender equality from a ‘women’s issue’ to its rightful place as a human rights issue. However, this change is also everyone’s responsibility. Human rights are integrally the business of the UN; and every part of the system has a responsibility to act, to focus on where progress against inequality is not being made, and adjust accordingly.

I invite you to take inspiration from the results this publication portrays – both the points of progress for replication, and the points of stagnation, for swift attention. It is imperative that we learn from our successes, act on our failures, modify our mindsets and ensure that achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment within the UN system informs all of our actions as we strive for parity by 2030.



**Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Director, UN Women

# INTRODUCTION

## Legislative and Institutional Framework

The UN's commitment to achieving system-wide gender parity is underpinned by a strong legislative and institutional framework which has been consistently developed and strengthened since the founding of the United Nations in 1945. This framework includes the Charter of the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Resolutions of the General Assembly, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and most recently the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, internal accountability mechanisms such as the System Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) systematically measure and propel progress towards the equal representation of women at all levels by means of harmonized and uniform standards commonly agreed to by the entities of the UN system. Also, regular and public reporting is undertaken every two years to the General Assembly through the Report of the Secretary-General on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN system,

The Charter of the United Nations (1945) stipulates that there shall be no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in every capacity and under conditions of equality in the system's principal and subsidiary organs. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) reinforces this principle, stating that there can be no distinction or discrimination on the basis of gender. A year after the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established CSW, a statutory body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Since its inception, CSW has made pivotal contributions to gender equality, including the drafting of CEDAW. Considered the international bill of rights for women, CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and has since been ratified by 189 member states. Its Article 4 stipulates that the adoption of temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discriminatory.

In 1995, the seminal Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women set forth governments' commitments to enhance women's rights. Paragraph 193 of this Platform specifically mandates actions to be taken by the United Nations, including establishing a goal of 50:50 gender balance for UN staff at the professional levels and above by 2000.

In addition, the UN General Assembly has repeatedly set progressively increasing targets for the representation of women within the UN system. Today, the goal of 50:50 gender parity applies to all categories of UN staff posts, regardless of the type or duration of appointment, the source of funding, or staff rules under which the appointment is made. The UN regularly reinforces its commitment to gender equality by adopting resolutions to this effect, including General Assembly Resolution 70/133, adopted in December 2015.

Furthermore, the visionary blueprint for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, articulates as one of its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) a strong stand-alone goal, SDG 5, specifically dedicated to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Target 5 of SDG 5 aims to "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life."

Together, this foundational framework consisting of the Charter of the United Nations, an international human rights treaty, parliamentary legislative documentation and institutional policies, practices and accountability tools constitute the comprehensive gender equality compact that drives change to empower women and attain and sustain the goal of their equal representation at all levels.

## Resolution 70/133

*The General Assembly,*

28. Calls upon the United Nations system to continue its efforts towards achieving the goal of gender balance, including with the active support of gender focal points, and requests the Secretary-General to provide an oral report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth and sixty-first sessions and to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system, under the item entitled “Advancement of women”, and on progress made and obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance, with recommendations for accelerating progress and up-to-date statistics to be provided annually by entities of the United Nations system, including on the number and percentage of women and their functions and nationalities throughout the United Nations system, as well as information on the responsibility and accountability of the offices of human resources management and the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for promoting gender balance.

## A multi-pronged approach

Progress to achieve the equal representation of women across levels and everywhere in the UN system requires a multi-pronged approach based on evidence and analysis. The equal representation of women at all levels is first attained through the selection, appointment and advancement of women. It is then facilitated by an organizational culture that is conducive to and supportive of their success. And finally, it is sustained by ensuring systematic and meaningful accountability.

To this end, the present publication provides a snapshot of trends and statistical data on various aspects of the representation of women in the UN system including system-wide accountability as well as findings related to organizational culture and examples of entity practices. 35 entities provided data to UN Women which was used in this publication in the sections on the Representation of Women, the Selection, Appointments, Career Advancement, Separation and Accountability. Of these, 27 entities also completed a survey which informs the section on Organizational Culture.

“To be truly transformative, the post 2015 development agenda must prioritize gender equality and women’s empowerment. The world will never realize 100 per cent of its goals if 50 per cent of its people cannot realize their full potential.”



**UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,  
International Women’s Day, 8 March 2015**

## UN Women

As the United Nations’ Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) among its other responsibilities, is mandated to lead, promote and coordinate accountability for the work of the United Nations (UN) system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It does so inter alia by monitoring and reporting on the status of women in the UN system, and advocating for their equal representation at all levels and in all occupations.



“Management reform must ensure we reach gender parity, sooner rather than later. The initial target for the equal representation of women and men among UN staff was the year 2000. Sixteen years later, we are far from that goal. I pledge to respect gender parity from the start in all my appointments to the Senior Management Group and the Chief Executive Board, and by the end of my mandate we should reach full gender parity at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels, including Special Representatives and Special Envoys. We need a clear roadmap with benchmarks and timeframes to achieve parity across the system, well before the target of 2030.”

**Secretary-General-Designate António Guterres, remarks to the General Assembly after taking the Oath of Office, 12 December 2016**



# ENTITIES COVERED IN THIS REPORT

<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency
<b>ICAO</b>	International Civil Aviation Organization
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>ICSC</b>	International Civil Service Commission
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMO</b>	International Maritime Organization
<b>ITC</b>	International Trade Centre
<b>ITC-ILO</b>	International Training Center of the International Labor Organization
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>UN Secretariat</b>	United Nations Secretariat
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICC</b>	United Nations International Computing Centre
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNITAR</b>	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
<b>UNJSPF</b>	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>UNSSC</b>	United Nations System Staff College
<b>UNU</b>	United Nations University
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNWTO</b>	World Tourism Organization
<b>UPU</b>	Universal Postal Union
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WIPO</b>	World Intellectual Property Organization
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization

## Data Sources:

- Data on personnel, vacancies and separations covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 was submitted by the above 35 entities.
- Survey on entity policies and practices impacting the status of women, administered by UN Women in the first quarter of 2015, was submitted by 27 out of the 35 entities.
- Additional entity practices and data in the Improving Accountability section were drawn from UN-SWAP reporting.

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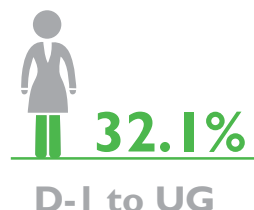
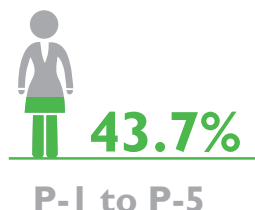


# Representation of Women

# REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

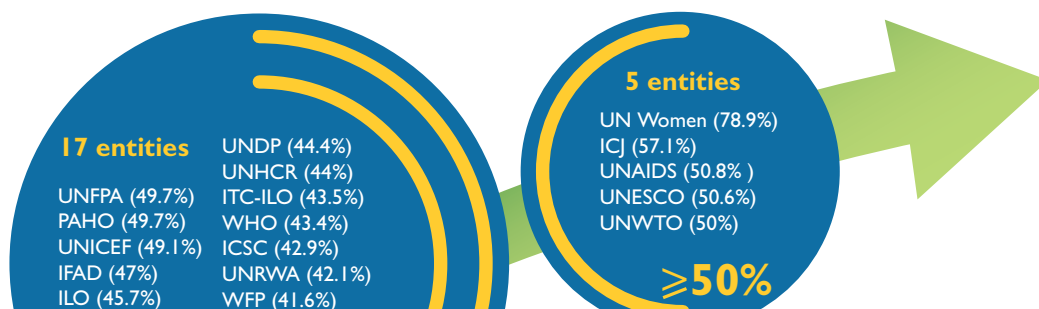
## Representation of Women in the UN system, by Level

			 %
UG	216	81	27.3%
D-2	387	169	30.4%
D-1	1,135	573	33.6%
Sub Total	1,738	823	32.1%
P-5	4,062	2,289	36.0%
P-4	6,163	4,435	41.9%
P-3	5,506	4,557	45.3%
P-2	1,516	2,049	57.5%
P-1	72	115	61.5%
Sub Total	17,319	13,445	43.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,057</b>	<b>14,268</b>	<b>42.8%</b>



A negative correlation exists between the representation of women and seniority – **as grade levels increase, the proportion of women decreases.** The sharpest declines occur between the P-2 and P-3, and P-4 and P-5 levels, with drops of 12.2 and 5.9 percentage points, respectively. Such decreases indicate there are blockages in the pipeline hindering the career advancement of women within the UN.

## Representation of Women, by Entity



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