

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

Report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the 68th Session
of the Commission on the Status of Women**

New York, New York, United States of America

March 12 to 13, 2024

Report

A delegation from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UIPU) participated in the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York from March 12 to 13, 2024. The delegation's activities focused on the parliamentary meeting organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, held on 12 March 2024. The Canadian delegation also participated in several side events and working meetings during its mission in New York.

The Canadian delegation was composed of:

- The Honourable Rosemary Moodie, Senator;
- The Honourable Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Senator;
- Ms. Pam Damoff, Member of Parliament;
- Ms. Lena Metlege Diab, Member of Parliament;
- Ms. Leah Gazan, Member of Parliament; and
- Ms. Andréanne Larouche, Member of Parliament.

The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Lyla Malow, Association Secretary, and Ms. Dominique Montpetit, Advisor.

PARLIAMENTARY MEETING

The topic of the March 12, 2024, parliamentary meeting organized by the IPU was "Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty." The meeting involved sessions and a special segment:

- Session 1 – Prioritizing poverty reduction to achieve gender equality
- Special segment – Gender-responsive budgeting: A tool for poverty reduction?
- Session 2 – Gender-sensitive institutions breaking the poverty cycle

Ms. Véronique Riotton, Member of the National Assembly (France) and member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, opened the meeting. She explained that the IPU works with UN Women to promote women's equality and that the organization strongly believes that no progress can be made without effective, gender-sensitive parliaments. This parliamentary meeting will therefore provide an opportunity to join forces to urge parliaments to take stronger action to achieve gender equality.

Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU and Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania, also delivered introductory remarks at the opening of the meeting. She pointed out that it is essential to continue to promote the cause of women and girls and fight against intergenerational discrimination to achieve real-world results for these people. She noted that women's poverty is a symptom of inequalities between women and men. Dr. Ackson also advocated for more gender-sensitive, gender-balanced and safe parliaments for women.

Ms. Sarah Hendriks, UN Women Deputy Executive Director, wrapped up the opening remarks by noting that this parliamentary meeting would provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to incorporate their observations and perspectives into the work of the

Commission on the Status of Women. She emphasized the importance of doing more to address and prevent women's poverty, for example by supporting the development of laws that respect gender equality and women's rights and the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting.

A. Session 1 – Prioritizing poverty reduction to achieve gender equality

Session 1 explored “how parliaments can drive change and reinvigorate policymaking to address the needs of women and girls living in poverty and ensure that legislation and policies in the economy and finance sectors are equitable and inclusive, and do not maintain, perpetuate or exacerbate poverty¹.” Five presentations were delivered during this session:

1. Ms. Clara Mattei, Associate Professor of Economics, New School for Social Research: Ms. Mattei began her presentation by emphasizing the fact that economic models and theories are not gender neutral. Their impacts often benefit people in positions of power and mask the effects of capitalist economic systems. Poverty is the direct consequence of the way these systems operate. They do not prioritize the well-being of populations. She noted that parliaments can combat this economic logic in a way that will benefit women by opposing austerity policies and promoting the distribution of resources to those who need them.
2. Ms. Mona Sinha, Global Executive Director, Equality Now: Ms. Sinha began her presentation by saying that the links between discriminatory laws and poverty are clear. At least 3.9 billion women still do not enjoy full equality. This prevents them from fully participating in the labour market or guides their choices, which results in a deficit of female leadership. She also said economic systems ignore several aspects that contribute to personal and economic well-being by placing a disproportionate focus on activities that are not beneficial to the planet. She shared three recommendations to end women's poverty through legal reforms. First, she recommended that all discriminatory and sexist laws be repealed. Second, she called for these laws to be replaced with laws that promote gender equality. Lastly, she noted the importance of supporting feminist movements.
3. Ms. Rebecca Riddell, Policy Lead, Economic and Racial Justice, Oxfam America: Ms. Riddell focused her presentation on the connection between taxation and gender equality. She began her speech by noting that tax systems often exacerbate women's economic situation by making them poorer. To raise revenue without making women poorer, governments can tax wealth by taxing corporations, not income. She highlighted the need to develop a transparent, strong and fair international tax architecture.

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), [Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty](#), Concept Note and Agenda, 12 March 2024.

4. Mr. Georgios Stamatis, Member of Parliament (Greece): Mr. Stamatis spoke about the need for access to disaggregated data in order to develop policies that are sensitive to the needs of women and girls. He also discussed the importance of increasing women's representation in decision-making positions, particularly in parliaments. With regard to women in politics, he advocated for the establishment of quotas to increase their representation and legal frameworks to prevent violence against women in politics.
5. Ms. Julie LaShell Adderley, President of the Senate (The Bahamas): Ms. LaShell Adderley began her remarks by noting that women's economic empowerment promotes financial stability and sustainable economic growth. She pointed out that women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic. She shared examples of programs implemented by the Government of The Bahamas and the Bahamas Development Bank that aim to empower women, including loan and child care programs.

During the discussion period, **Ms. Damoff** took the floor to share the Canadian perspective. She noted that women's and girls' poverty is rooted in the systemic gender-based discrimination they face at all stages of their lives. Poverty among women and girls is not only a cause of gender inequality; it is also a consequence. Inequalities in access to education and the labour market, the gender wage gap, and the burden of unpaid work and caregiving are all factors that undermine women's economic security.

Ms. Damoff also shared information on the Government of Canada's child care investments. She said women's participation in the labour market in Canada recently reached an all-time high of 80%. She noted that progress will nevertheless need to be much faster if the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 is to be achieved. The COVID-19 crisis slowed or even reversed downward trends in poverty rates and led to a second pandemic of violence against women.

In addition, Ms. Damoff pointed out that poverty reduction strategies must take into account gender-based experiences and systemic inequalities. She cited a Canadian Chamber of Commerce report indicating that the glacial pace of progress means it will take decades to achieve gender parity in businesses and boardrooms. Ms. Damoff added that in order to effectively address poverty among women and girls, it is essential to seek to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality. This means:

- ending all forms of discrimination;
- eliminating gender-based violence;
- recognizing the real value of unpaid care and domestic work;
- ensuring women's full participation at all levels of decision-making; and
- undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources.

Ms. Damoff said women and girls who are racialized or living with disabilities are even more affected by government policies, which often push them into poverty. These women and girls must therefore be taken into account in policy development. She added that access to sexual and reproductive health services must be a priority. Finally, Ms. Damoff

stressed the need to incorporate gender equality into the law-making, budgeting and auditing processes of our parliaments now to ensure the elimination of gender-based inequalities and discrimination from national laws, policies and programs.

Representatives of the following parliaments and institutions then shared information on the actions taken by their parliaments or governments to achieve gender equality: Chile, South Korea, Morocco, Italy, Mexico, Greece, Brazil, the World Bank, Chad, the United Kingdom, Poland, South Africa and France.

B. Special segment – Gender-responsive budgeting: A tool for poverty reduction

The special segment provided a platform for parliamentarians to share information, practices and lessons learned in designing and implementing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in their respective countries. Five presentations were delivered.

Ms. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (Canada), began the presentations by acknowledging the presence of many participants who are fighting for women's rights. She added that many women's rights defenders around the world are feeling discouraged because the concept of gender equality is under attack in several places around the world. Even in countries like Canada, where several advances in equality have been made, women still face discrimination due to sexist and colonial systems. They also face consequences for defending women's rights. She mentioned a few Canadian initiatives on gender equality, including:

- the announcement of Canada's first gender-balanced Cabinet in 2015;
- the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting;
- the federal public sector [*Pay Equity Act*](#);
- legislation regarding harassment of federal workers; and
- access to free menstrual products in federal workplaces.

Ms. Hajdu also highlighted the devastating impacts of violence against women, including cyberviolence. She concluded by reiterating that women's rights activists must work together and support each other to advance the cause of women.

Ms. Flavia Rwabuhoro, Member of Parliament (Uganda), presented the gender equality agenda in Uganda. She noted that the Ugandan Constitution provides for the possibility of implementing affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups to address the inequalities they face. In addition, the Public Finance Management Act stipulates that all ministries must develop measures to combat inequality. Ms. Rwabuhoro noted that the Government of Uganda adopted a national policy on women in 1997 for the purpose of guiding the allocation of resources and planning of government programs, which has made it possible to mainstream gender concerns in all sectors of the economy. She concluded by presenting some examples of government programs aimed at promoting gender equality and the economic empowerment of women and vulnerable people.

Ms. Céline Calvez, Member of the National Assembly (France), presented the history of the implementation of gendered budgets in France. She stressed that the first approach put in place lacked breadth and was limited. A group was set up to identify how gendered budgets could be introduced in France. The group made recommendations in this regard,

including political leadership, asking the French government to be part of the implementation, enshrining the practice in law and advocating for stakeholder training. Ms. Calvez identified key lessons learned from the French experience:

- finance is never neutral;
- there is no need to start from scratch because some countries or municipalities already have experience in this area;
- all the necessary data are not yet available; and
- ways must be found to interest and engage governments in the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting.

Ms. Teresa da Silva Neto, Member of Parliament (Angola) and President of the Parliamentary Women's Caucus of the Angolese National Assembly, informed participants that the President of Angola signed a decree in 2021 allowing the application of gender-responsive budgeting. She noted that gender-responsive budgeting is a tool for including gender issues in all government policies. She added that, since Angola incorporated this tool into its procedures, United Nations Human Development reports have noted an improvement in gender equality at the national level. However, Ms. da Silva Neto said much remained to be done to achieve equality, but that parliamentarians were engaged in this endeavour.

Ms. Khadouj Slassi, Member of Parliament (Morocco), began her presentation by pointing out that social and environmental issues affect women differently than men, in particular because of the lack of consideration of women's needs in the development of public policies. Speaking about her country, she said promotion of gender equality favours sustainable development, which is a key, high-priority issue in Morocco. The country faces significant gender inequality and, in recent years, gender mainstreaming in public policies, including the budget, has been prioritized. Ms. Slassi added that gender-responsive budgeting is an entry point to achieving gender equality. Finally, she presented some of the programs available in Morocco aimed at achieving gender equality, such as free and compulsory basic education and literacy programs.

C. Session 2 – Gender-sensitive institutions breaking the poverty cycle

Session 2 examined “how parliaments can address women's poverty by placing gender equality at the centre of their composition, and organizational and functional structures.”² Ms. Beatrice Duncan, Policy Advisor, UN Women, opened the session by addressing some issues related to gender inequality and the role of parliaments. First, she noted the importance of creating gender-sensitive parliaments to promote the achievement of gender equality. She went on to explain that parliamentarians need to be informed about socio-economic and gender inequality issues in their countries as well as the root causes of gender inequality. She concluded by pointing out that parliaments can hold governments to account for gender inequality and can work with the judiciary to ensure compliance with laws.

Three presentations were delivered during this session:

² IPU and UN Women, [Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty](#), Concept Note and Agenda, 12 March 2024.

1. Ms. Priskila Arulpragasam, Co-Lead of Delete Nothing: Ms. Arulpragasam shared her experience working with parliamentarians on sexuality education projects for young people in Sri Lanka. She added that parliamentarians have been working with civil society organizations to ensure that these projects are successful. However, she noted that the voice of women's rights activists is often limited to the parliamentary bodies more directly related to social issues, even though all issues have a gender dimension. She pointed out that parliamentarians should work with civil society organizations to ensure that gender analysis and women's needs are included in policy and law development.
2. Ms. Zainab Gimba, Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Network and Member of Parliament (Nigeria): Ms. Gimba presented the work of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Network. She said the organization works with civil society organizations to ensure that its actions are practical and not merely theoretical. She provided some examples of initiatives to strengthen gender equality that had been implemented by Commonwealth parliaments (pay equity, social transfers, labour rights, etc.). She concluded by encouraging parliamentarians at the meeting to establish multi-party caucuses to address issues facing women.
3. Ms. Daniella Cicardini Milla, Second Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies (Chile): Ms. Cicardini Milla focused her remarks on the issue of women's poverty. Women face challenges in several aspects of their lives that prevent them from becoming empowered. Parliaments play a key role in addressing women's needs. She mentioned some initiatives in place in Chile: proportional representation of women in parliament and access to reproductive health services for women. She discussed the importance of having women in parliament to take part in decision-making and having an arm's length body in parliaments to deal with women's issues (e.g., a parliamentary committee).

The presentations were followed by a question-and-answer period opened by **Senator Osler**. She noted that gender mainstreaming in parliaments can promote and achieve gender equality. She also said nearly 55% of the seats in the Senate of Canada are now occupied by women as a result of Prime Minister Trudeau's efforts to achieve gender equality in the upper house. She went on to say that processes for including gender issues in the work of parliaments, such as developing gender-sensitive laws and budgets, can help highlight economic and social inequalities between women and men in our societies and to find potential solutions to address them. She noted that, for this reason, Canada reiterates its support for the commitments set out in the [*Kigali Declaration – Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world*](#), which was endorsed by the IPU in 2022.

Senator Osler then noted that the issue of gender mainstreaming in legislative processes was recently studied by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. In its final report, the Committee recommended that Gender-based Analysis

Plus (GBA+) be considered when legislation is introduced and considered in Parliament. She discussed the barriers to the full implementation of GBA+ in Canada that were identified by the Committee, including:

- limited availability of training;
- timing of the analysis;
- lack of capacity, such as lack of time and availability of tools and resources;
- lack of disaggregated data and quality data; and
- lack of mechanisms to assess GBA+ results and improve its implementation.

In concluding her remarks, Senator Osler noted that one of the Committee's proposals was that Women and Gender Equality Canada establish resources for parliamentary committees to support their use of GBA+ when considering legislation.

Representatives from the following parliaments then shared information on the actions taken by their parliaments or governments to achieve gender equality: Mexico, Chile, Italy, Morocco, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Bolivia, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa and Greece.

SIDE EVENTS AND WORKING MEETINGS

A. Side event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The IPU, in conjunction with a number of partners³, organized a side event on the topic of "Equal participation and leadership for a more peaceful world: Lessons learned and the way forward" on 13 March 2024. Members of the Canadian delegation participated in this activity. Ms. Nicole Ameline, Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), opened the meeting. She emphasized the importance of achieving gender parity to create a new governance model. She said the lack of parity in decision-making positions is a violation of women's rights and hinders the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

Afterwards, Dr. Ackson addressed the issue of women's representation in national parliaments. She noted that gender parity is key to building stronger, more innovative and more resilient communities and institutions. She also said better inclusion of women in decision-making positions can lead to more sustainable peace processes. She went on to say that the establishment of quotas for improving women's representation, anti-harassment policies and family-friendly policies are the way forward for parliaments.

The first presentation was delivered by Ms. Mariana Duarte, Gender Partnership Programme Officer for the IPU, who presented the new IPU [report](#) on women in parliament. On average, women accounted for approximately 27% of parliamentarians globally in 2023, an increase of 0.4 percentage points from the previous year. Despite this, the rate of progress has plateaued and slowed compared to previous years. Women

³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Generation Equality's Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership, GQUAL, International Gender Champions, United Arab Emirates Gender Balance Council, Canada and the Permanent Missions of Ireland, Mexico and Switzerland to the UN.

are also underrepresented as speakers of legislative assemblies around the world: they accounted for around 24% of speakers in 2023. Ms. Duarte noted that quotas for women's representation are linked to increased women's representation in parliaments. In addition, she said that women parliamentarians are more often targeted by violence and disinformation. She concluded her presentation by sharing IPU members' commitments to increase women's representation in decision-making positions at the UN, which include adopting a resolution to that effect.

The second presentation was given by Ms. Maria Noel Leoni, Deputy Executive Director at the Center for Justice and International Law and founder of the GQUAL Campaign. The objective of this campaign is to achieve gender parity in decision-making positions. Ms. Leoni said that states impede improvement in women's representation in leadership positions, as they tend to appoint more men than women to positions under their responsibility. She noted that it is essential to ask the states to not only collect more data on women's representation but also to better disseminate information on job openings so that more women can apply.

The final presentation was given by Dr. Melissa Torres, Vice-President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She stressed the need to dismantle the systems of oppression that affect women in leadership positions rather than simply focusing on increasing the number of women in these positions. Increasing the presence of women in systems that perpetuate patriarchy and gender inequalities is not equitable.

During the question-and-discussion period, **Senator Moodie** noted that women are now in the majority in the Senate of Canada. She added that the ultimate goal should not be equality per se but for all women and girls to feel included and safe in parliaments and in society. She added that women parliamentarians in Canada experience violence, both online and in person, and that consequences must be enforced for those who perpetuate these acts of violence.

B. Side event held by the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie

The *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* (APF) held a side event on 13 March 2024 on the theme of "Gender-responsive budgeting: a tool for equality in public policy funding" [translation] and invited **Ms. Larouche** to represent the Parliament of Canada and the UIPU at this activity. In addition to Canada, panellists from Belgium and Senegal shared their gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) experiences.

The event opened with Ms. Isabelle Gueguen's introduction of the concept of GRB. It is a "public financial management tool that can be used to integrate gender considerations into budget decision making. It can be used to identify budget measures that will be effective at closing gender gaps and advancing gender equality objectives."⁴

Following Ms. Gueguen's presentation, the panellists detailed the GRB situations in their respective countries. During her presentation, Ms. Larouche stated that Canada has a long history of gender mainstreaming in public policies. She explained that, following the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) document in 1995, the

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Gender Budgeting in OECD Countries 2023](#), 18 July 2023.

Government of Canada committed to implementing gender-based analysis, now known as gender-based analysis plus, in all of its departments and agencies.

In particular, Ms. Larouche noted that, in 2018, the Parliament of Canada passed the [Canadian Gender Budgeting Act](#), which sets out a new policy that requires the federal government to consider gender and diversity in the federal budget, as well as in taxation and resource allocation decisions. Since 2019, Canada's federal budgets have included a statement on the impact that budget measures have on gender, diversity and quality of life. She presented a number of ways to integrate gender into the work of the Parliament of Canada, that is, during:

- the consideration of budget implementation bills;
- studies conducted by parliamentary committees; and
- the study of the estimates.

In closing, Ms. Larouche provided an overview of the work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which studies issues related to the status of women and to gender equality.

C. Working meeting with the United Kingdom's delegation

The Canadian delegation participated in a working meeting with the United Kingdom's delegation on March 12, 2024. This meeting provided an opportunity for members of both delegations to discuss topics of common interest, such as respect for and implementation of women's rights in both countries, and to compare the political systems of Canada and the United Kingdom.

D. Working meeting with the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Members of the Canadian delegation were able to speak with representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination on March 13, 2024. This working meeting was an opportunity for the two delegations to discuss topics of common interest, such as the impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on women and girls; women's representation in decision-making positions, including in parliaments; violence against women and girls; and reproductive health.

Respectfully submitted,

The Hon. David McGuinty, P.C., M.P.

President of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
ACTIVITY	Annual Parliamentary Meeting at the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
DESTINATION	New York, New York, United States of America
DATES	March 12 and 13, 2024
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Rosemary Moodie, Senator Hon. Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Andréanne Larouche, M.P. Ms. Pam Damoff, M.P. Ms. Lena Metlege Diab, M.P. Ms. Leah Gazan, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Lyla Malow, Association Secretary Ms. Dominique Montpetit, Advisor
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 9,366.85
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 6,299.94
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,789.74
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 31.50
MISCELLANEOUS	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 18,488.03