

Canadian Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien
Union interparlementaire

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting
its participation at the 61st Session of the United Nations
Commission on the Status of Women**

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

**New York, New York, United States of America
March 17, 2017**

Report

Introduction

A Canadian delegation participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) parliamentary event on March 17, 2017 that was organized with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and held during the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) at the UN Headquarters in New York City. The IPU's parliamentary event was attended by parliamentarians from national and regional parliaments, as well as government officials and representatives of international organizations.

Agenda¹

The theme of the IPU event was *Empowering parliaments to empower women; Making the economy work for women*, which complemented the UN CSW's priority theme for the 61st Session, *Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. The IPU event focused on three key areas: 1) lifting the barriers to women's economic empowerment; 2) empowering women at work; and 3) promoting the financial inclusion of women. The event provided Canadian parliamentarians with the opportunity to expand their knowledge of the barriers to women's economic empowerment and leadership, and to learn about the efforts of other countries, as well as UN Women and the IPU, to address discrimination and empower women in the economic realm.

The Canadian Delegation

The Canadian delegation included the following parliamentarians:

- Mr. David McGuinty, Member of Parliament and Head of the Delegation
- The Honourable Anne Cools, Senator
- The Honourable Marilou McPhedran, Senator
- Ms. Pam Damoff, Member of Parliament
- Ms. Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament
- Ms. Sheila Malcolmson, Member of Parliament
- Mr. Sven Spengemann, Member of Parliament
- Mr. Jamie Schmale, Member of Parliament

¹ Agenda and other documents related to the event are available at the IPU's parliamentary event website, [Empowering parliaments to empower women: Making the economy work for women](#).

The delegation was accompanied by Mr. David Chandonnet, Association Secretary, and Ms. Laura Munn-Rivard, Analyst, Legal and Social Affairs Division, Library of Parliament.

Opening Session

Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia and the President of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians opened the session. Ms. Mensah-Williams welcomed the participants and recognized the ongoing collaboration between the IPU and UN Women. Ms. Mensah-Williams noted that women's economic empowerment is critical for sustainable global economic growth and for the maintenance of peaceful and inclusive societies. She welcomed the interest and energy of the parliamentarians present at the session and she acknowledged that no country is free of discrimination based on gender. She reminded parliamentarians that there is a strong business case for gender equality in the economy: research has shown that companies that have gender equality on their corporate boards perform better and that countries with better gender equality outcomes see corresponding economic growth. She noted that women's equal participation in the economy would add USD \$12 trillion to the global economy. Therefore, investing in women would benefit us all.

Ms. Mensah-Williams invited parliamentarians to promote economic gender equality by implementing a strong and effective legal framework; building a favourable social environment; adopting policies to assist women in the workforce; facilitating mentorship of women; and influencing the economic agenda in ways that assist women at the international level.

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, Executive Director of UN Women, told the parliamentarians at the meeting that they are collectively on a journey to remove barriers to women's economic empowerment. An important step in this journey is to address discriminatory legislation that prevents women's full participation in the economy. She reminded delegates that parliamentarians can make a huge difference, although the work will be at times painstaking and will require perseverance. There is a need to repeal and amend discriminatory laws and enact laws that improve women's economic empowerment. As well, parliamentarians must ensure the full implementation of legislation that benefits women and must address negative stereotypes that hurt women's progress. Dr. Mlambo-Ngucka concluded by stating that positive change will come if more women run for political office and more women become heads of state.

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union suggested that parliamentarians play a critical role in the economic empowerment of women. The lack of female economic empowerment is a significant challenge to gender equality. Mr. Chungong stated that parliaments need to partner with the executive branch of government, civil society, business, media and other stakeholders to promote the economic empowerment of women. He asked that parliamentarians use their law-making powers, their budgetary review powers, and their powers to ensure accountability to reinforce gender equality, specifically with respect to women's economic empowerment.

Mr. Chungong also reminded delegates that parliaments are themselves workplaces and that parliamentarians should make their environments inclusive to all, including women. Furthermore, female parliamentarians should be given the opportunity to contribute equally in parliament; women should be included on typically male-dominated budget and financial committees, and should not be assigned solely to committees focused on women or social issues. In addition, parliaments should mainstream gender into parliamentary processes and every decision or law should be reviewed with a gender lens. Mr. Chungong said that to build a favourable environment for women's economic empowerment, efforts must focus on combatting sexual harassment of women, violence against women and cyber-harassment of women.

The remainder of the event was chaired by Ms. Mensah-Williams and Ms. Taylor Kennedy of Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs acted as the moderator.

Session 1: Lifting the barriers to women's economic empowerment

The theme for the first session was *Lifting the barriers to women's economic empowerment*, which focused on the empowerment of women in the economy by addressing discriminatory norms and legal barriers to women's autonomy.

Mr. Augusto Lopez-Claros, Director, Global Indicators Group, Development Economies, World Bank Group, began his remarks by highlighting the valuable information contained in the World Bank database on laws restricting women's economic empowerment. He noted that some countries limit women's economic empowerment by limiting women's mobility, restricting women's working hours and banning women's participation in certain occupations. All of these restrictions contribute to the gender wage gap.

Mr. Lopez-Claros noted the pervasive character of such restrictions. The database covers 173 countries and 90% of them have at least one legislative restriction on women's economic participation. Thirty countries have 10 or more restrictions embedded in law.

Mr. Lopez-Claros also spoke of growing income inequality, both within and between countries, and the political implications of this inequality such as citizenry backlash against politicians and the rise of demagoguery. He said that empowering women is very important for the economic growth and political stability of countries. He applauded countries that are eliminating legislative restrictions on women's economic prosperity, but reminded delegates that there are hundreds of restrictions that remain in countries around the world.

Ms. Abigail Hunt, Senior Research Officer of the Overseas Development Institute indicated that all women, notably the poorest and most marginalized, need to have full and equal economic empowerment. She noted that fiscal and social policy can reinforce one another, and gave an example of Mexico's public childcare system, whereby the country created affordable childcare options that served to both create 50,000 jobs for childcare workers and also allow poor mothers to work.

Ms. Hunt stated that parliamentarians have a key role in ensuring that policy making and spending decisions use gender-responsive budgeting. As well, Ms. Hunt noted that

it is critical that the differences of diverse groups of women be considered in policy and law-making efforts. To do so, parliamentarians must: 1) ensure the collection of high-quality data, including data on marginalized women; and 2) provide opportunities for organizations that are working with women at the grassroots to participate in the policy-making process. She called on parliamentarians to ensure that political institutions are responsive to women and women's groups.

Ms. Oby Nwanko, Vice-Chair of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee, explained that the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee operates on three platforms: 1) engaging state parties to help implement the convention; 2) receiving and reviewing submissions on progress from state parties; and 3) providing recommendations and guidance on the provisions of CEDAW and the obligations of state parties.

Ms. Nwanko told delegates that women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty. In particular, female-headed households are at significant risk of falling into poverty, in large part because absent fathers are not contributing to the economic stability of the family.

She called on parliamentarians to make an effort to incorporate the provisions of CEDAW into their jurisdictions' legislation in order to empower women, including Article 11 (equality of men and women in employment) and Article 13 (prohibiting discrimination of women in the economic realm). She said that strengthening women's economic security includes guaranteeing equal access to microcredit, financial counselling and loans; promoting equal access to employment opportunities; the repeal of discriminatory laws; and the implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

Ms. Pia Locatelli, Member of Parliament in the Chamber of Deputies of Italy and member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians said that parliaments need to empower women in three ways: through legal equality, gender-balanced representation and effective action in parliament.

Ms. Locatelli stated that parliamentarians should first push for legal equality for women by repealing discriminatory laws that relegate women to a lower position in society. Secondly, Ms. Locatelli said there should be gender-balanced representation in parliament. Speaking from her own experience, Ms. Locatelli noted that her party had established a quota for female members of 20%, but that she realized that even with this quota, women's voices were too feeble. She recommended that quotas for women's representation be set at a minimum of 30% for there to be a noticeable impact.

Finally, Ms. Locatelli recommended the adoption by parliamentarians of effective, strategic action in parliament to empower women. For example, in Italy, Ms. Locatelli suggested that female parliamentarians were struggling to influence legislation and to have gender mainstreamed in all policies. As a response to these challenges, they established a women's caucus. Through this caucus, female parliamentarians have joined forces to achieve results; for example, the caucus focused on demanding support for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and have now received \$2 million euros for a plan to support the resolution.

Interventions by Canadian Delegates

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Pam Damoff, Member of Parliament, acknowledged that Canada has made great progress in terms of gender equality compared to many countries. She highlighted that Canada currently has its first gender-equal Cabinet and that the government will be conducting, for the first time, a gender-based analysis of its 2017 budget. However, Ms. Damoff suggested that access to affordable childcare remains a significant challenge for many women in Canada. There is no national childcare system in place, and she indicated that this situation has a negative impact on women's economic empowerment.

Furthermore, Ms. Damoff said that women living with disabilities in Canada are particularly vulnerable in terms of their economic security. She stated that the rate of unemployment is 75% among women living with disabilities and that 58% of women with disabilities live on less than \$10,000 a year. She asked the panelists how Canada, and other countries, can make efforts to include women with disabilities in the economic realm.

In response to Ms. Damoff's intervention, Ms. Hunt suggested that parliamentarians can establish anti-discrimination policies, which can create economic opportunities for women living with disabilities. As well, practical challenges, such as the accessibility of workplaces and transportation to and from work, must be addressed through direct conversations with women living with disabilities. Parliamentarians should highlight the contributions that women living with disabilities already make to the paid and unpaid sectors and should reinforce positive images of women living with disabilities in the labour market. Lastly, social protections should be established to protect the economic security of women living with disabilities.

Ms. Nwako indicated that improved education is needed for girls living with disabilities and that negative stereotypes should be countered. Parliamentarians should raise awareness in their countries of the abilities of people with disabilities.

Ms. Locatelli spoke of legislative efforts in Italy to promote the hiring of women and men living with disabilities, as well as certain compulsory building requirements to eliminate architectural barriers for individuals with physical disabilities.

Session 2: Empowering women at work

The theme for the second session was *Empowering women at work*, which examined the benefits of increasing women's participation in the labour force, including in economic leadership positions, and highlighted the importance of examining women's working environments, including women's overrepresentation in the "informal" and unregulated economy.

Mr. Vinicius Pinheiro, representative of the International Labour Organization, told delegates that at the current rate of progress it will take several decades to solve labour imbalances, which is too long. He stated that gaps between men and women in labour force participation rates, opportunities, access to employment and wages must be

addressed now. Mr. Pinheiro noted that the three major challenges to women's equal economic participation are: 1) an inadequate work-life balance for women, in particular because of a lack of affordable childcare; 2) women's inferior working conditions and pay when compared to those of men; and 3) a lack of safe transportation and the prevalence of violence against and harassment of women in workplaces.

Mr. Pinheiro suggested that parliamentarians need to focus on promoting policies of equal pay for work of equal value. He reminded delegates of ILO Convention 100 (Equal Remuneration), which was adopted in 1951, 66 years ago. While it has been ratified by many countries, equal pay for work of equal value remains a concern globally. Mr. Pinheiro recommended that parliamentarians: 1) guarantee pay equity through legislation; 2) pass legislation to provide incentives to companies to commit to pay equity; and 3) introduce measures to address women's disproportionate contribution to unpaid care work.

Professor Maria S. Floro, Professor of Economics, American University in Washington, D.C., told delegates that empowering women at work means providing decent work, decent and equitable pay, and decent care (the valuation of unpaid care and the sharing of care responsibilities). She said that countries should establish social protections for individuals in times of instability, protect the rights of citizens to organize in labour unions, and invite the participation of citizens in labour market decisions.

Ms. Floro explained that unpaid care and domestic role responsibilities limit women's economic participation. Domestic chores, gathering of fuel and water, and care of elderly and children are key to survival or societies, and yet are taken for granted. She recommended that parliamentarians make efforts to gather data on unpaid work in order to make such work visible to policy makers. Parliamentarians were reminded of Sustainable Development Goal 5.4 which is: "Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."

Ms. Naisula Lesuuda, Senator of Kenya, Deputy Chairperson of the Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association, informed delegates that Kenya is examining a number of issues that affect women's economic participation including maternity and paternity leave, equal pay for work of equal value, and harassment in the workplace. Ms. Lesuuda noted that while Kenya's constitution protects the rights of women, there is a need to improve the implementation and enforcement of such rights. For example, parliamentarians should examine the accessibility of the court system for women who are seeking justice in cases of discrimination.

Interventions by Canadian Delegates

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament, noted that Canada now has a gender equal cabinet and has made significant progress on women's rights. However, she said that there are areas for improvement on women's economic prosperity; one such area for improvement is the persistent gender wage gap in Canada. She asked the panelists for advice on how to guarantee ongoing momentum towards full gender equality. In

particular, Ms. Dzerowicz wondered if quotas in the workplace, for example at the corporate level or senior executive level, are an appropriate approach to ensuring the advancement of women in economic leadership positions. She told delegates that an effective approach in Canada has been to provide young women in the workplace with sponsorship, not just mentorship; sponsorship involves a business leader actively advocating on behalf of, and creating advancement opportunities for, a high-potential individual.

In response to Ms. Dzerowicz's intervention, Mr. Pinheiro pointed out that a 2012 European Union study found that mandatory quotas are more efficient compared to voluntary quotas to increase the representation of women in economic leadership positions.

Ms. Floro, in response to Ms. Dzerowicz's question on maintaining momentum towards full gender equality, recommended public investment in transformative policies related to unpaid care work. The goal is to reshape social and cultural expectations so that women are not primarily responsible for this work.

Session 3: Promoting the financial inclusion of women

The theme for the third session was *Promoting the financial inclusion of women*, which examined women's access to banking and financial services, women's financial literacy and women's access to entrepreneurship opportunities.

Ms. Gabriela Cuevas, Senator of Mexico and Rapporteur of the IPU Standing Committee on International Development and Trade, spoke of the challenges in achieving global financial inclusion. She stated that as of 2016, 2 billion adults worldwide do not have a bank account, and that South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific regions together account for more than half the world's "unbanked" adults. Furthermore, four of every 10 adults in the world are not connected with the financial system, and 59% of those individuals are excluded because they do not have enough money to open a bank account.

According to Ms. Cuevas, women make up 55% of the world's "unbanked" adults, totalling 1.1 billion women. Globally, 59% of men are reported to have a bank account compared to 50% of women. As well, 54% of working-age women participate in the formal economy globally, compared to 81% of men.

Ms. Cuevas argued for technological innovation in the banking sector to increase accessibility and the implementation of legislation to eliminate discrimination within the financial sector, with the goal of ensuring financial equality. Parliamentarians can take action in a number of ways by passing legislation or promoting policies that guarantees women's access to land, property and housing, and to equal pay for work of equal value; eliminates restrictions on the type of employment women can undertake; and expands paid maternity/paternity leave, as well as nursery and childcare services.

Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, International Trade Centre, indicated that women need access to credit, and that the majority of women already in business are using micro-credit, small loans typically given to low-income borrowers.

According to Ms. González, parliaments should ensure that legislation upholds women's equal right to own assets and obtain credit and loans. Furthermore, there should be efforts to diversify the supply of financing opportunities and regulate the securities market so that it is female-friendly. Lastly, gender-disaggregated data on the financial system need to be gathered to see whether women are participating equally in the economy,

Ms. Kavita Bali, Director, Development and Strategic Partnerships, Women's World Banking, explained that her organization is backing women's economic access to the financial sector. She said that efforts to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals should propel the world towards the full financial inclusion of women in the economy. She recommended developing investment institutions focused on women, designed for women of every income level (including women with low incomes) and at every stage of life. As well, Ms. Bali recommended that financial institutions build diverse teams, including more women within their workforce and as clients.

Interventions by Canadian Delegates

Following these presentations, delegates participated in an open debate on the issue.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson, Member of Parliament, told the delegates that the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women is currently conducting a study on women's economic security in Canada. She said that parliamentarians should ensure there is gender-based analysis of legislation, policies, and infrastructure spending. As an example, Ms. Malcolmson called on parliamentarians to ensure that government procurement contracts undergo a gender-based analysis; the British Columbia provincial government applied equity initiatives to a major highway expansion, and this led to an increase in female participation in the project's workforce (from 2% to 20%). She suggested that when a government is using public money for infrastructure projects, the government should make efforts to ensure that the spending benefits women and men equally.

Ms. Malcolmson also said that in order to encourage the private sector to increase the representation of women on corporate boards, governments should set an example by ensuring gender-balanced appointments to Crown corporations. She explained that her private member's bill, Bill C-220, seeks to achieve gender balance on the boards of federal Crown corporations by establishing quotas for the minimum proportions of men and women on those boards.

In response, Ms. González agreed that government procurement is an excellent method to promote women's economic success. She said that states have a huge amount of purchasing power, for schools, hospitals, infrastructure and defence. Ms. González said that there are two possible ways for governments to promote increased female participation in procurement projects: 1) establish a quota for female-led businesses in procurement purchasing; and 2) provide incentives for state entities to purchase from female-led businesses.

Mr. Sven Spengemann, Member of Parliament, acknowledged the presence of several men in the room, recognizing their work as allies of women in the fight for gender equality. Mr. Spengemann said that raising awareness of inequalities is

important in the fight for gender equality. He provided, as an example, his private member's bill, Bill C-309, which seeks to establish a gender equality week in Canada in the last week of September each year. The goal is to invite the Canadian public, including the private sector and not-for-profit sector, to raise awareness of gender equality in Canada. On the topic of women's economic wellbeing, he suggested that the male-dominated financial and banking sectors could promote gender equality week in order to raise awareness of women's economic prosperity. While Bill C-309 does not require government expenditures because it is declaratory in nature, Mr. Spengemann said it creates momentum for the public to push for improvements in gender equality.

In response to Mr. Spengemann, Ms. Cuevas said that the establishment of a gender equality week is a great idea, and that it opens the door for additional legislative efforts to promote women's full economic equality.

The Honourable Anne Cools, Senator, shared her thoughts on the importance of female political leadership and stated that she has been a Senator for 34 years and will be retiring next year. She asked delegates to consider the impact that violence has on women's economic prosperity, and to examine the continuum of violence; both men's violence against women, and women's violence against men.

Concluding Remarks

Ms. Mensah-Williams concluded the event by recommending that parliamentarians focus on three key priorities in efforts to promote women's economic empowerment. Firstly, parliamentarians must address gender stereotypes, women's unequal access to education and to decision-making positions, and discriminatory legislation. Secondly, parliamentarians must review labour and social policies to promote equality at work, as well as the need for affordable childcare and improved sharing of unpaid work between men and women. Lastly, parliamentarians need to promote women's abilities to make economic decisions with regards to investing, starting businesses, saving and accessing financial services. Part of this work involves applying gender-based analysis to budgets and fiscal policies to identify the impacts of these measures on women and men with the goal of removing any inequalities.

Ms. Mensah-Williams noted that women are a diverse group and that all groups of women need to be fairly represented in parliaments. She acknowledged that parliamentarians have a heavy agenda ahead of them in promoting women's economic wellbeing and reminded parliamentarians to work closely with allies as we are all stronger together.

Respectfully submitted,

David McGuinty, M.P.,

President,

Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
ACTIVITY	61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
DESTINATION	New York, New York, United States of America
DATES	March 17, 2017
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Marilou McPhedran Hon. Anne Cools
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. David McGuinty, Head of delegation Ms. Pam Damoff Ms. Julie Dzerowicz Mr. Sven Spengemann Mr. Jamie Schmale Ms. Sheila Malcolmson
STAFF	Mr. David Chandonnet, Association Secretary Ms. Laura Munn-Rivard, Analyst
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 9,670.97
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 4,189.00
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0.00
PER DIEMS	\$ 2,543.10
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 246.46

TOTAL

\$16,649.53