

Commission on the Status of Women

March 2026

During Women's History Month in March the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) holds its annual meeting at UN Headquarters in New York City March 9-20, 2026.

International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8, 2026, the day before the Commission officially begins. The Commission is the intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the "promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women."

The theme of the 70th CSW Conference is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda serve as the foundation for all UN Commission activities. 17 SDGs were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2014 to provide a framework for development of all countries in the 21st Century. SDG 5 is the basis for ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including promoting inclusive legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws and policies and addressing structural barriers. No nation has attained complete legal equality for women and girls. It is one of the seventeen goals adopted by the UN as a Program of Action to ensure positive outcomes for the world population in the 21st Century.

UN Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) have organized themselves in committees that work closely with their relevant commissions. The Committee on the Status of Women, for instance, seeks to shape the policies of the Commission on the Status of Women. The recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women are published in the Agreed Conclusions of all 45 member states of the Commission and they are expected to be implemented at the international, national and local levels .

The Congregations of St. Joseph UNNGO which has general consultative status with ECOSOC participates in the Commission of the Status of Women. There are formal meetings as well as interactive sessions among UN delegates and NGOs. Many of the events are available on [UN Web TV](#).

There is much to be done to achieve the SDG 5 Targets. The Targets include:

1. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls
2. Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality.
3. Eliminating all harmful practices.
4. Recognizing the value of unpaid care and domestic work.
5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels.
6. Enhance the use of technology particularly information and communication.

The historical basis for SDG 5 was the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in 1995 a "landmark global blueprint for women's empowerment and gender equality."

An international treaty to enforce the rights of women was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly known as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Countries which ratify the Convention are obliged to comply with its provisions. Of note: the United States of America is one of only a few countries who have signed but not ratified the treaty which means the country does not have to comply with its provisions.

Looking to the Future and the protection and rights of women, there is much that needs to be done:

- \$369 billion per year is needed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment across key global goals, including poverty and hunger.
- A strong legal framework can promote positive change, but despite progress, 54 percent of countries still lack laws in all key areas of gender equality.
- At the current rate of women's 2.3 more hours per day of unpaid care and domestic work than men, the gender gap in power and leadership remains entrenched.
- Globally women hold just 26.7 percent of seats in legislatures; 35.5 percent in local government and 28.2 percent of management positions in the workplace

So, at this midpoint before 2030: NONE of SDG 5 indicators are at "target or almost" achieved.

What leverage does each of us have to forward achievement of SDG 5?

UNNGOs within the UN system have access to the diplomats of each of the 193 countries, in the UN system. NGOs realize the countries that support their concerns and policies in the UN system and work closely with them for adoption of policies supporting the rights of women. The member countries of the UN system vote for policies based on self-interest. Countries that have functioning democracies are influenced by their citizens who influence their elected officials to support policies their constituent's favor. In countries lacking effective democratic systems, leaders tend to base their international decisions primarily on their perceived self-interests.

The use of international law is another way to influence UN member countries' policies. These Treaties and Conventions such as CEDAW have the potential to increase the global practice and protection of human rights. The International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court preside over cases protecting human rights.

What is lacking in the international system is a means to force compliance. Until then the only compliance is the mechanism of public opinion.

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