



UNDERSTANDING CSW

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)



The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

CSW serves to:



Promote women's rights

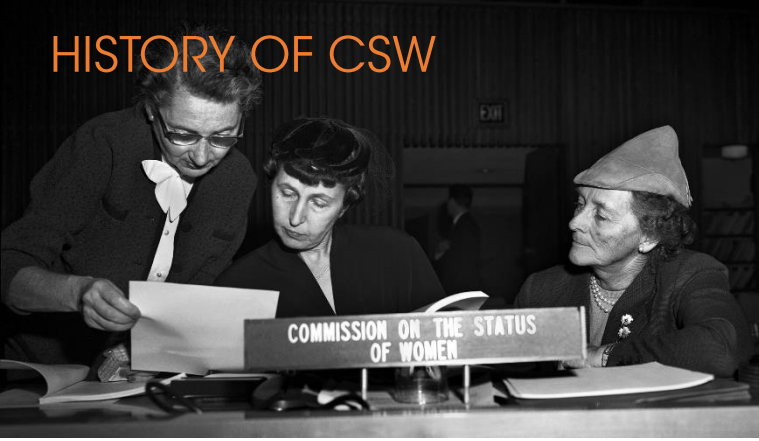


Document the reality of women's lives throughout the world



Shape global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

HISTORY OF CSW



Images UN Photo

1945

- **The United Nations Charter is signed in San Francisco.** In its preamble, it reaffirms “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”.
- **Of the 160 signatories to the Charter, only four were women**— Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Virginia Gildersleeve (United States), Bertha Lutz (Brazil) and Wu Yi-Fang (China). Bertha Lutz and Minerva Bernardino, had proposed to add “women” to the founding document of the United Nations.

1946

- At the inaugural meetings of the United Nations General Assembly, **the Sub-commission on the Status of Women was established** under the Commission on Human Rights.
- Following a call from women delegates and representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for a separate body specifically dedicated to women’s issues, the first chairperson of the Sub-commission, Bodil Begtrup (Denmark) requested the Economic and Social Council in May 1946 for a **change to full commission status**.
- On 21 June 1946, the **Sub-commission formally became the Commission on the Status of Women**. Shortly thereafter, the Section on the Status of Women was established in the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Secretariat to provide secretariat functions.
- **The Commission’s mandate is to “prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women’s rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields” and to make recommendations on “urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women’s rights”.**

1978

- The Section on the Status of Women becomes the **Division for the Advancement of Women**.

1996

- The Commission’s mandate is expanded to taking the leading role in **monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

2010

- The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (**UN Women**) is formed.



Images: UN Women/Ryan Brown

PURPOSE OF CSW

During its first session, the Commission declared as one of its guiding principles: to raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate all discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law.

At the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up.

METHODS

Under its current methods of work, established by ECOSOC resolution 2015/6, at each session the Commission:

- Convenes a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights, and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission, including through ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and good practices;
- Engages in general discussion on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made, and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges;
- Convenes interactive expert panel discussions and other interactive dialogues on steps and initiatives to accelerate implementation and measures to build capacities for mainstreaming gender equality across policies and programmes;
- Considers one priority theme, based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly and linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Evaluates progress in implementing agreed conclusions from previous sessions as a review theme;
- Discusses emerging issues, trends, focus areas, and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, including equality between women and men, that require timely consideration;
- Considers in closed meeting the report of its Working Group on Communications;
- Agrees on further actions for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting agreed conclusions and resolutions;
- Contributes gender perspectives to the work of other intergovernmental bodies and processes;
- Reports on the aspects relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women of the agreed main theme of the Economic and Social Council, in order to contribute to its work; and
- Celebrates International Women's Day on 8 March, when it falls within its session.



Images: UN Women/Ryan Brown

ANNUAL SESSIONS

Every March, the CSW holds its annual session in New York City at the United Nations headquarters, around a specific “priority theme.” The session includes ministerial segments (roundtable discussions among State representatives), a general discussion among all Member States on the status of gender equality, interactive panels, and closed meetings. States, UN entities, and civil society organizations participate in the agenda.

Toward the close of the session, the CSW adopts the “agreed conclusions” (policy considerations and recommendations related to the “priority theme” for that year) and agrees on the following year’s priority theme and provisional agenda. During the session, the CSW may also adopt other resolutions related to gender equality.

THEMES

Priority Theme

The overall purpose of the CSW is to promote, monitor, and review progress and challenges in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women. To focus its work, the CSW adopts a “priority theme” for each year. The 2023 priority theme, for example, is “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”

Review Theme

The CSW also focuses on a review theme where the purpose is to review progress made on one of the previous themes in order to ascertain the success of the interventions and the global impact that it has had. The 2023 review theme, for example is “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (agreed conclusions of the sixty-second session)”

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Civil society organizations may participate in CSW activities in several ways. Non-governmental organizations with ECOSOC consultative status may register to attend the CSW annual sessions, can contribute written submissions related to the priority theme, and can sign up to deliver oral statements during the general discussion or interactive panels. Civil society organizations also organize many side events to coincide with the annual CSW session. One organization, NGO CSW, coordinates many of these events through its NGO CSW Forum.

THANK YOU

We hope this information helps you understand the history and annual context of the CSW. For more information on current and future CSW events visit unwomen.org/en/csw or ilithalabantu.org.za/our-global-presence.

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