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Forum: GC1

Issue: Promoting the participation of women in political and public life

Student Officer: Shared

Position: -

Introduction

Women in our society today take a major part in society. Even though the social system in our world takes or at least tries to take an “equal” approach to women in the public life and in politics, when looked at from an analytical perspective. It is clear that this is not the case. Underrepresentation in our society is a big issue and it is important to fix in order to reach to a consensus on implementing a clear infrastructure on the economy of a country and for the value that country stands.

When looked at from a different perspective it is not vivid on the reasoning behind the issue. However, as one thing stands another remains: how to fix the issue. Even though in a polarized world today it is harder to enforce certain ideals and perspectives that certainly have been a part of the society for a long time now, it is possible to develop on the issue.

Currently, in our world today, women when looked at in depth have an average 17% wage gap when compared to men (Catalyst, 2018). In an economic standpoint like such, the problem stands risen for politics as well - “Only 24 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of November 2018, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995” (UN Women, 2019). Leadership as seen in the world today is definitely a male dominated system and it is important to create equality and promote the participation of women in political and public life.

Definition of Key Terms

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It defines what establishes discrimination against women and sets an agenda for action in order to minimize and prevent discrimination against women.

The Millennium Development Goals: The millennium development goals are a blueprint for development set by the UN and agreed upon by all member states. The MDGs were aimed to be achieved by 2015. After the MDGs the Sustainable Development Goals were set by the UN for the same aims but with a later target date.

Women suffrage: Women’s suffrage was a movement to fight for women’s right to vote. The movement took place in many countries around the world, including USA, Switzerland and etc., after the movement, in several countries women were given the right to vote in elections.



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Background Information

When viewed from a global perspective, women are restricted both politically and publically through discrimination by the law, gender roles, and gender stereotyping, despite their abilities and rights, underrepresentation of women as leaders, voters, academicians is an ongoing issue. Their access to political life is limited through violence and intersectional discrimination, a combination of social identities such as but not limited to gender, socioeconomic status, and race which causes the individual to experience discrimination and systemic oppression.

Women's chances of running for office and in politics are limited by institutions and laws which are discriminatory and can be observed through capacity gaps which suggest that women lack the chances of obtaining education and resources necessary for becoming a leader. The UN GA Resolution on women's political participation quotes "Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women."

Signed or ratified by many states, The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a treaty which addresses women's human rights. The CEDAW general recommendation focuses mainly on "the right to vote and to be eligible for election; the right to participate in policy formulation and implementation; and the right to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with public and political life" (Women in Political and Public Life, rm.coe.int). CEDAW's General Recommendations provide an effective clarification of women's rights and regulations which should be considered by states in order to ensure political and public equality.

In our current world, empowerment of women not only depends on the formal sector (political parties, elections), their mobility, access, and freedom in formal and informal political spaces must be considered as well. The newly emerging forms of communication and technology which make access to public and political life easy and will, therefore, have a great impact on the empowerment of women both publicly and politically.

There are several other steps which have been taken to improve women's rights such as The Beijing Platform for Action which aims to provide equal participation by removing the barriers.

While The Millennium Development Goals measure progress towards gender equality in part by the proportion of women in parliamentary seats.



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Timeline of Major Events

Date	Description of Major Event
19.09.1893	For the first time in history New Zealand has allowed women suffrage. This was a milestone on the issue of strengthening women in politics.
23.03.1976	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) established and entered into force therefore all member states have recognised the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the “human family.”
18.12.1979	The United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) adopted a convention: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As the title indicates, this convention aims to reduce discriminatory policies and to take part in more women's global situations. Thus, all member states have accepted the obligation to provide equal opportunities to women in all areas of life.
24.05.1990	The resolution adopted for “Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat” which contains recommendation for 30% quota for female political leaders. (A/RES/45/125)
25.06.1993	The Vienna Declaration and Action Program was recognized as the final document of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993. This document is very important in terms of protecting human rights and emphasizing fundamental freedoms. The document denies any gender-based discrimination.
15.09.1995	For further actşın and strengthening women equality, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) was signed It calls upon all institutions to provide equal opportunities for women in political sphere.



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31.10.2000	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 has been adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council after recalling resolutions 1261, 1265, 1296, and 1314. The resolution acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. ¹ S/RES/1325 (Document)
01.08.2011	The United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) on Women's Political UN GA Resolution on women's political participation in 2011. resolution on women's political participation notes, "Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women." (A/66/150.)
19.12.2011	Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. The resolution is based on the elimination of discriminatory applications/restrictions regarding the women's political participation. (GA Resolution 66/130)
20.09.2014	2014 United Nations Women (UN Women) describe the HeForShe event as 'A Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality'. This encourages men to take a stronger stance in empowering women, simply because it has always been women who lead the 'Women's Rights' movements, in a historical context.
22.12.2015	A resolution by the UN GA was passed (A/RES/70/219) focusing on the role of women in development, allowing them to participate in political and public life.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved (Ekin)

UN Women

UN Women is the UN's organization to protect and improve women's rights. They advocate for equality for women in all areas of life, from health to politics. They have four main goals set in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals: to protect women from violence and abuse, to ensure that women participate in and benefit from government, to provide economic autonomy and security, and to provide them with the necessary opportunities to contribute to sustainable development.

¹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20001031.sc6942.doc.html>



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International Council Of Women (ICW)

The ICW is an organization established in 1888 as a multinational council to defend women's rights and their place in society. Today, it holds Consultative Status in the UN ECOSOC, indicating the worldwide respect and authority this NGO has in the field of women's rights. Their mission explicitly states that they wish to place more women in positions of power and authority, enhancing their participation in both political and public life.

Women for Women International (WfWI)

WfWI is an organization created to help women across the world who lack access to education and the necessary skills to support their families effectively or participate in political and public life. Many of the women the organization helps come from regions of war and extreme poverty. WfWI allows these women access to better healthcare, education, and the place in society they have been denied their whole lives. The wider aim is to teach women the necessary skills to contribute to sustainable change and create a more egalitarian, sustainable future.

Ellevest Network

Although it is a more minor and recent organization in contrast to those listed previously, Ellevest Network aims to support women working professionally. They strive for economic equality between men and women, and to elevate women to a higher status in the business world and society in general. They also work to provide additional career opportunities for women, aiming to eventually aid them in their lives and in their participation towards a sustainable world.

It is also important to note that there are many national organizations working within specific countries to improve women's rights and place in society, however they have not been explored thoroughly in this report.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) was a plan and it was implemented in order to create gender equality
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol (A/RES/34/180)
- Resolution on Women's Political Participation (A/RES/36/130)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (S/RES/1325/282000/29)
- Resolution on Women in development (A/RES/66/216)
- Resolution on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/70/131)
- Resolution on Women and political participation (A/RES/66/130)
- Resolution on Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (A/RES/72/148)
- Resolution on Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (A/RES/73/46)



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- Resolution that is a Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/RES/72/147)
- Resolution on Women in Development (A/RES/72/234)
- 59th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) gathered together on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Possible Solutions

There have been, many attempts to address the issue of strengthening women's role in politics since 1970's. Many of the attempts have had positive outcomes, however still this problem is pervasive and remains unsolved in some points.

Possible solutions for many of the current issues on agenda includes education of the public. Therefore, it can be suggested that raising awareness by holding seminars, or adding a title about equality among genders a school syllabus. Supporting local efforts to advocate for legal rights that enable women to participate fully in the political and economic life of their societies. There is a possibility of adding a "set number" of seats into government buildings including parliament therefore, there would be equal representation of genders. However there might be some inconvenience on the process of selections due to the fact that it might be unreasonable to select a candidate based on gender.

Another possible solution would be to create an international/regional framework to support the empowerment of women. Therefore providing skill building and leadership training for women civil society members, women's organizations, and female journalists, supporting women's participation in political and post-conflict transition, improving women's access to justice and increasing women's participation and representation in the justice sector and building capacity for civil society organizations to advocate for women's participation in political transitions and governance processes

For conclusion there can be solutions, including but not limited to: increasing the capacity of women candidates, raising awareness, improving legislation, increasing women's legal rights, using the quota system, including civil society and improving party policies and practices.

Useful Links For Further Research

- <https://rm.coe.int/1680599097> - Useful for deeper analysis into the subject and could be useful for previous studies and having a deeper understanding of the subject which will help to find solutions
- <https://www.womankind.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/women-s-rights/participation-and-leadership> - There are many useful links on the website, many articles



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- <https://womendeliver.org/2018/why-women-in-politics/> - Why women in politics?, facts about how women's participation will affect politics, useful for debate
- <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/gender-equality/> - In depth description of gender equality published by the UN
- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> - More information on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59>
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw59/feature-stories> - Further information on CSW59

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