

March 26 , 2018

Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar  
Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities  
Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures

Dear Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar,

We respectfully address you, in your capacity as Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures, to request your intervention before the Human Rights Council Consultative Group (CG) and encourage its new members to adopt “Guidelines on Gender Parity” to guide the selection process of special mandate holders during their tenure.


This would not be the first time that these guidelines are adopted. In June 2015, the CG adopted “Guidelines on Gender Parity”, to address gender disparity in the special mandate holder selection process. The Guidelines recommended the establishment of gender targets that the CG would take into account for the approval of the short lists of candidates that would be interviewed and presented to the President of the HRC for election.

The current underrepresentation of women in the Special Procedures is a matter of concern. We believe it undermines their legitimacy and diminishes their impact, and it fails to adequately reflect the values of equality and non-discrimination that those positions were created to uphold. The CG has a fundamental role and the opportunity to change this.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of January 2018, women represented 44 percent of mandate holders. This figure drops significantly, however, if we exclude some mandates that are strictly related to women’s rights and have been historically assigned to women. Meanwhile, there are still several mandates that have never been occupied by women, including some with decades of existence, such as the rapporteurships on torture and freedom of expression. Women are also acutely underrepresented in several working groups. According to data compiled by the [GQUAL Campaign](#), 18 mandates out of a total of 57 have never been occupied by a woman.

Without appropriate actions, the representation of women across these bodies will not necessarily increase in a linear or sustainable way. Experience shows that progress in gender parity does not preclude the possibility of regression. Thus, to sustain existing gains, it is of utmost importance that the new membership of the CG adopts a gender policy to guide its work, and recommend future memberships to maintain it. Eventually, these guidelines should be included in a resolution of the Human Rights Council that could complement Resolution 5/1, by incorporating gender parity as an official requirement for the special procedure selection process.

Finally, a perusal of the candidates for special procedure positions shows that in some election sessions there are not enough women candidates. This particular situation makes it more evident and urgent that the CG approve Gender Parity Guidelines, and take practical steps to ensure the consideration and selection of women for the upcoming elections and encourage the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to take appropriate actions to avoid this situation.



The individuals signing this letter are members of the [GQUAL Secretariat](#), a global campaign seeking to achieve gender parity in international tribunals and monitoring bodies. The undersigned hope that your intervention before the new membership of the CG that will start its mandate on April 1, 2018 can take on this request and lead with decisive actions to achieve gender parity in the Special Procedures.

Sincerely,

**The GQUAL Secretariat**

Viviana Krsticevic

Maria Noel Leoni

Claudia Martin

Alexandra McAnarney

Alejandra Vicente



**GQUAL**

