



For the attention of the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council:

His Excellency Mr. Stuart Harold COMBERBACH (Zimbabwe)

His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Karim HASHIM MOSTAFA (Iraq)

His Excellency Mr. Andranik HOVHANNISYAN (Armenia)

His Excellency Mr. Álvaro MOERZINGER PAGANI (Uruguay)

His Excellency Mr. Iakovos IAKOVIDIS (Greece)

CC:

Mr. Eric Tistounet, Chief, Human Rights Council Branch
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
hrcspecialprocedures@ohchr.org

6 July 2023

Re: *Adoption of Gender Parity Guidelines by the HRC's Consultative Group*

Excellencies,

On your capacity as members of the HRC's Consultative Group (CG) in its current cycle, we are writing on behalf of the [GQUAL Campaign](#) in relation to the uniquely significant opportunities that your mandate provides towards the adoption and implementation of measures to sustain, advance, and institutionalize gender parity and representation within key HRC mechanisms, including the Special Procedures (SP) mandates.

In its work around the HRC's 53rd-55th sessions cycle, the current CG has the unique opportunity to ensure that the recently attained gender parity amongst SP mandate holders ([OHCHR](#)), is firmly maintained and institutionalized through concrete measures, whilst adhering to all other criteria that should guide the appointment of SP mandate-holders, such as independence, impartiality, competence, expertise, and geographical balance.

Indeed, as of today 58% of Special Procedures mandate-holders are [women](#), representing an unequivocal improvement from the situation that prevailed just 5 years earlier (with only 44% of women in 2018). Such marked improvements in women's representation have so far been the results of dedicated, concerted efforts and actions on the part of key actors, such as the reiterated practice of successive memberships of the CG of referring to gender balance as a key criterion for the conformation of shortlists of candidates presented to the HRC President, and the decisions of former HRC Presidents to prioritize equally qualified female candidates in cases of notorious underrepresentation. Further efforts include the recommendations developed by the HRC Advisory Committee in its [2021 report on gender balance in UN human right bodies](#), which expressly recognized that the lack of gender balance in international bodies affects not only women's right to equality, but also erodes the effectiveness of the



institutions and limits the range of issues and perspectives that should be part of their legal and political agenda more broadly.

In monitoring trends in the composition of international bodies, we unfortunately too often witness how gains towards a more balanced representation can be followed by setbacks. Likewise, it is imperative that the CG remains cognizant of the fact that women's equal and meaningful participation in international mechanisms is still not a concrete reality in most circumstances and spaces. In fact, the balance of women's representation in the SPs drops to just 45%, when figures from certain mandates related to women's rights and duties of care, are excluded. Further, at least 8 SP mandates had never been led by a woman, at the time of the letter. Thus, we believe that it is critical that the CG moves towards adopting specific measures that can sustain gender parity.

It is in this context that we would like to reiterate our request for the CG to adopt guidelines on Gender Parity, similar to those [adopted](#) by the Consultative Group in 2015¹. These Guidelines recommended the establishment of gender targets that the CG could consider for the approval of the short lists of candidates to be interviewed and the one submitted to the President of the HRC for appointment. Additionally, the adoption of such guidelines could now be inspired and based on some of the specific [recommendations](#) addressed to the Consultative Group in the HRC Advisory Committee's report, including the following:

- *Implementing guidelines on gender representation so that they are considered by every composition of the Consultative Group.*
- *Extending the deadline for calls for applications when not enough women candidates have applied.*
- *Shortlisting the candidate of the underrepresented gender, where two candidates are of equal merit, unless exceptional circumstances justify shortlisting the candidate of the overrepresented gender.*
- *Considering, when appropriate, a women-only list of candidates for special procedure mandates that have never been held by a woman.*
- *Ensuring gender parity in the composition of working groups not exclusively focused on women's right issues, including by considering women-only lists of candidates for special procedure mandates that lack parity (doing so on an alternate basis if the number of positions is uneven).*
- *Providing written justification where it makes a decision that results in a lack of gender parity or fails to address the gender-representation gap, in the interest of transparency and so that such impediments may be addressed in a timely manner in future selection processes.*
- *Continuing to list candidates' gender in its reports and provide information on how it has taken into account gender parity in selecting candidates for interviews and in drawing up shortlists for the President of the HRC.*

Given that no fewer than 26 of the SPs' recurrent reporting mandates will expire during the council's 53rd, 54th, and 55th cycles under the current CG's mandate, we believe it is important for this CG to act to ensure that gender parity is sustained. We thank you for your attention and remain available to provide additional information if required.

¹ See letters sent by GQUAL to the HRC Consultative Group: [April 2017](#), [December 2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), [April 2022](#), [May 2022](#)



Sincerely,

The GQUAL Secretariat

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