



Ms. Noor Al Malki Al-Jehani
Ms. Nurah Alamro
Mr. Buhm-Suk Baek
Ms. Nadia Amal Bernoussi
Mr. Rabah Boudache
Ms. Milena Costas Trascasas
Mr. Sebastiao Da Silva Isata
Mr. Aldo de Campos Costa
Ms. Jewel Major
Mr. Ajai Malhotra
Mr. Javier Palummo
Ms. Vasilka Sancin
Ms. Patrycja Sasnal
Mr. Dheerujlall Seetulsingh
Mr. Vassilis Tzevelekos
Ms. Catherine Van de Heyning
Mr. Frans Viljoen
Mr. Yue Zhang

Advisory Committee - United Nations Human Rights Council
Geneva

Sent by email:

August 2, 2023

Dear members of the Advisory Committee,

We respectfully address you from the [GQUAL Campaign](#), a global initiative aimed at achieving gender parity in international justice. Since its launch in 2015, GQUAL has contributed to highlighting the underrepresentation of women in key international spaces and has fostered and proposed solutions with the support of diverse actors, including States, international organizations, civil society, and academia. The [GQUAL Declaration](#), which establishes the core strategies of the Campaign, has been signed by more than 1,000 prominent people from over 90 countries, including Heads of State, international judges, lawyers, diplomats, academics, and activists.

The purpose of this communication is to follow up on the Advisory Committee's report on the representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms ([A/HRC/47/51](#)), issued on 21 May 2021. Further, we would like to provide an overview of the important impact achieved by the report both at the UN and in other multilateral spaces.

As you might be aware, the GQUAL Campaign worked closely with Prof. Elizabeth Salmon as former member of the Advisory Committee and rapporteur of this report. GQUAL submitted substantive input to the written questionnaire and the draft prepared by the Advisory Committee and helped coordinate regional consultations in Africa and Latin America. Once the report was issued by the Advisory Committee, GQUAL organized a [symposium with Opinio Juris](#) to promote the importance and content of the report, including through a blog post from [Advisory Committee member Elizabeth Salmon](#), and prepared

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materials in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) summarizing its findings and recommendations, which were used in [communication campaigns](#). Since the issuance of the report, GQUAL has kept contact with relevant stakeholders regarding progress on the implementation of the recommendations included in the report and has presented the report in [multiple events where members of the Advisory Committee have participated](#), as well as as a [key part of our advocacy efforts](#).

Throughout 2022, we had the opportunity to work closely with Ambassador Federico Villegas in his capacity of President of the Human Rights Council. According to publicly available information, during his tenure, Ambassador Villegas proposed candidates to 23 special mandates, including Special Rapporteurships, Working Groups and Expert Mechanisms. In 16 of these positions (69,56%), Ambassador Villegas nominated women, often prioritizing a female candidate over the first choice in the shortlist presented by the Consultative Group based on gender and geographical considerations.¹ Our public requests to promote gender parity through the appointments of women in mandates where women have been historically underrepresented have been based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, which Ambassador Villegas has acknowledged considering in bilateral meetings held with us, particularly the recommendation contained in para. 79 of the report.

The impact of these decisions has changed the composition of the Special Procedures. Today, out of 83 positions in the 59 Special Procedure Mechanisms, women occupy 48 (58%), achieving gender parity for the first time and creating unprecedented opportunities for deeper discussions on diversity, representation, and sustainable gender parity. These decisions helped break the glass ceiling for women on several mandates. Women were appointed to the Special Rapporteurship on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, led only by men for 29 years,² the Special Rapporteurship on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,³ led only by men for 18 years, and the Special Rapporteurship on Torture, led only by men for 37 years.⁴

Following close work of the GQUAL Campaign with the relevant UN missions before the UN in Geneva, in June 2022, the Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a [new Resolution \(A/HRC/50/L.22\)](#), which was promoted by Mexico, Argentina, Chile and others,⁵ urging States to remove all barriers that prevent the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in all fields. This resolution followed up on the implementation of the recommendations included in the 2021 report of the Advisory Committee. Concretely, the

¹ Such were the cases at least in the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Rapporteur on Racial Discrimination, and the candidate of the Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples Rights.

² See: Letter of the President of the UN HRC, 22 February 2022. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Letter-from-the-HRC-President-list-of-SP-candidates-for-11-vacancies-HRC49.pdf>

³ See: Letter of the President of the UN Human Rights Council, 2 June 2022. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/220602-letter-from-the-hrc-president-list-of-sp-candidates-for-8-vacancies-hrc50.pdf>

⁴ See: Letter of the President of the UN Human Rights Council, 2 June 2022. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/220602-letter-from-the-hrc-president-list-of-sp-candidates-for-8-vacancies-hrc50.pdf>

⁵ See: Twitter of the Mexican Mission in Geneva, July 2022: <https://twitter.com/MisionMexOl/status/1545417233723260934?s=20>; Twitter of the Chilean Mission in Geneva, July 2022: <https://twitter.com/ChileONUGinebra/status/1545394057404456960?s=20>

Resolution “*encourages States to make public any progress made and good practices adopted in order [to ensure women’s equal representation in human rights bodies and mechanisms](#)”, and invites the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to inform the HRC “*periodically of the progress made to implement the recommendations addressed to her office*”. This resolution presents a specific opportunity for follow up on the implementation of the recommendations and we have been working with the OHCHR to promote the presentation of information.*

In addition to the significant impact in the UN system, the Advisory Committee report has impacted the discussion on gender parity within the Organization of American States (OAS).

As such, in October 2022, the General Assembly of the OAS adopted by consensus a Resolution ([AG/CG/doc.10/22 rev.1](#)), which for the first time establishes gender parity, along with equal geographical representation and representation of different legal systems, as key criteria for the composition of both the Inter American Commission and Court of Human Rights.⁶ This resolution was approved with the key collaboration between the United States, Argentina, Chile, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The resolution – which directly refers to the Advisory Committee report in its preamble - is the result of GQUAL’s advocacy work, where we successfully proposed OAS Member States to follow the work of the Advisory Committee on this matter.

We further persuaded States to request the Inter American Commission on Women (CIM) to present a report on good practices and recommendations to achieve a representative composition. This proposal was included in the resolution adopted by the OAS General Assembly and the report of the Advisory Committee was directly referenced as a key starting point. Later on, the GQUAL Campaign worked closely with the CIM to develop [regional consultations](#) and [expert meetings](#), and provided input for the drafting of the report. Ms. Milena Costas was invited as an expert to participate in the consultations, as well as Ms. Elizabeth Salmon, who participated as an expert in these meetings providing further information on the report and the work done by the Advisory Committee. Eventually [the report was adopted in June 2023](#), by the OAS General Assembly. Among the good practices cited in the report, the work of the HRC and the Advisory Committee’s report were prominently featured. The recommendations included in the CIM’s report mimic many of the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee.

The above information shows the remarkable impact that the Advisory Committee report has had so far in advancing gender parity in international courts and bodies. We congratulate the members of the Advisory Committee for the positive impact that has been achieved so far. We further believe the report has the potential of triggering long-lasting impact if effective follow up remains a priority. In this regard, we call on the Advisory Committee to craft opportunities to follow up with different stakeholders on the implementation of the recommendations included in the report. We encourage the Committee to consider proposing a follow up instance to the Human Rights Council to document the measures taken to implement the recommendations and map opportunities to follow up.

⁶ See: CEJIL’s Twitter, October 2022: <https://twitter.com/cejil/status/1580693542153789441?s=20>; Silvia Serrano’s Twitter, October 2022: <https://twitter.com/silviajerranog/status/1582767144697069573?s=20>



The GQUAL Campaign will remain available to collaborate on this important task, and to ensure the Advisory Committee report remains a key tool to promote gender equality in international courts and bodies.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and remain at your disposal for any information you may require.

Sincerely,

The GQUAL Campaign Secretariat

Viviana Krsticevic

Maria Noel Leoni

Claudia Martin

Alejandra Vicente