





DIRECTORS'
WELCOME LETTER

Dear Delegates and Faculty Advisors,

On behalf of the organizers, the Advisory Board, and the Executive Board of AUSMUN 2019, it is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the 12th annual AUSMUN Conference. With over 900 delegates registered from more than 40 national and international educational institutions, this conference will be the biggest one yet!

This year's background guide was diligently written to provide delegates with enough guidance for their research. It will act as a great starting point for delegates to familiarize themselves with the topics of their respective committee. After a short letter that gives the chairs a chance to welcome their delegates, a summary, a brief history, a discourse on the issue, and the latest developments of the issue will be presented. In the summary, delegates will have their first quick briefing on the issue where concerns will be defined. Followed by that, the guide delves into the root causes of the issue by identifying its history. Then, a discourse section will look into the issue with further scrutiny by presenting both sides of the topic's debate and examining some of its challenges and influences. Finally, it will aim to provide delegates with the latest activities in regards to the matter and any progressions in its respect. At the very end of the guide, delegates will find questions that will guide their thinking, some suggestions that will guide their research, and references that they can use for further relevant information. However, it is important to point out that depending solely on the guide will not be sufficient enough to prepare delegates for the conference. It is highly encouraged for delegates to look at the Delegate Handbook on the AUSMUN website and to view the "How to Research" video created by AUSMUN.

The theme of this year's conference is youth empowerment. This is very important as we are the children of tomorrow. Even if delegates are not necessarily planning on pursuing an occupation in the field of law or politics, MUN is an enriching experience to all. MUN is supposed to teach more than just details on a certain crisis, it educates them to work harder, to think on their feet, to learn from others and from themselves, to fall and to fail, and to break free from their fears. It dares them to be without hesitation. It dares them to add to the world. To Speak. To act. To know. We all understand how difficult it is to be a delegate. It requires a suspicious load of work and consumes most of one's energy. But we want delegates to give it their all and to get what they came here for.

Finally, I would like to conclude this letter by extending my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this background guide in any way or form. It is the collaborative work of the chairs, the AUSMUN Research Team, and the AUSMUN Media Team. On behalf of them all, we truly hope that you find this background guide of great help and use.

All the best with the conference and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at research@ausmun.com.

Nada Nassereddin
Director of Research
AUSMUN 2019



COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN



Tala AlBunni



Obaid Al Marri



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MODERATOR'S WELCOME LETTER

Dear Delegates,

It gives us extreme joy and pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you as chairs of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) committee. We wish to take this opportunity to emphasize on the exhilarating learning experience every participant will earn through joining AUSMUN.

The objective of the committee is to defend the rights of women and improve people's mindset towards the realities of the conditions women around the world face. CSW is focused on providing a powerful voice for women and establishing their rights, fighting discrimination against women, and applying justice. The committee aims to promote the idea of ending gender biases and to create awareness to help flourish women's capabilities and capacities. At the moment, 45 Member States are included in the procedures of voting and passing resolutions.

We would like from our delegates to join the experience and have the courage to speak up. We want to hear your country's stance and we want to see you as delegates empower each other and pushing through. We want you to be proud and look back on the three-day conference and not regret or wish things went the other way around. Since you are in charge of every action you possess, make sure to do it wisely. You can only attain success with determination, hard work, and believing in yourself.

We look forward to meeting you and if you have any further inquiries, please do not hesitate to reach us on g00068436@aus.edu.

Sincerely,

The CSW Chairs.

TOPIC 1

Establishing an International Legal Framework for Maternity Leave

SUMMARY

The issue of establishing an international legal framework for maternity leave is a multifaceted topic which pertains to the legislative, executive, and judicial actions taken to ensure the rights of women within the workforce and to guarantee 'fair and considerate' maternity leave laws. This issue became prominent after the rampant rise in the major concerns following the proportion of women covered by maternity protection under legislation (Addari, Cassirer, & Gilchrist, 2014). Many of the treaties and legislation that focus on maternity leave have been formulated in parallel with the objectives of human rights. These reaffirm the importance of women's rights, children rights, gender equality, and ensure the strict protection of women through the ratification of conventions and treaties both internationally and domestically. However, despite international efforts, there still exists no international legal framework for maternity leave and therefore, the CSW is eager to collaborate with Member States to try to establish one.

HISTORY

Whilst considering the matter of maternity protection and its fundamental incorporation into key human rights treaties, the issue has been subject to widespread debate as to its legislative implementation in recent history. Historically, grants over maternity have been enacted as early as 1911, where a prominent chancellor of the United Kingdom, known as David Lloyd George, enacted maternal health benefits on the political agenda through the National Insurance Act (Addari, Cassirer, & Gilchrist, 2014). Onwards, the advent of rise of women in the labor force in the mid-20th century saw incorporation of legislation with varying differences from company to company and nation to nation. In a modern context, advances and discussions to internationally organized forums have assisted in deliberating the issue to the global community in an attempt to unify, collaborate, and create a consistent form of legislation that can be applicable throughout nations and across cultures in order to ensure 'fairness' and 'uniformity of standard'.

DISCOURSE ON THE ISSUE

The development and progress of any economy depends on its workforce, where both males and females work together to keep it running. One of the many reasons for women to discontinue in the workforce is due to the practice of unpaid maternity leave, which is forcing more and more women out of the workforce, even though women take 2.5 times more of unpaid work than men (“Parental leave is the key to economic prosperity,” 2017). In almost all businesses, there must be at least one female present in the workplace. Since there is at least one person who might ask for a maternity leave at some point in time, it is crucial to have a standard for the said leave. Maternity leave usually differs from one business to the other in terms of its duration and whether or not it is paid. If paid, the question arises as to how much the person is being paid. It is vital to ensure a standard so as to avoid any and all forms of mistreatment or injustice. Consequently, an International Legal Framework for maternity leave needs to be established. By establishing an International Legal Framework, all countries can be united on the concept of maternity leave. One cannot be sure that the principles of the Charter of the United Nations are being upheld if there is no proper foundation to begin with. Therefore, to avoid any mishaps or inequality amongst the working mothers, the legal framework needs to be established. This would eradicate a significant number of lawsuits and it would create a semblance of comfort in knowing that there is no mistreatment in these particular situations. Furthermore, this affects female employees in terms of morale and it affects the businesses in terms of productivity. However, similar to the concept of “one size fits all”, it is also important to acknowledge that many Member States and businesses might not look favorably upon this, because the standards set by the framework might not work be applicable or attainable to them.

PAST IO ACTIONS AND THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Amongst the various international organizations that promote and highlight the importance of maternity leave is the International Labor Organization (ILO) that has been working to ensure that there is social justice in the global labor force, where women are granted their basic human right to earn their pay when they are on maternity leave (“Maternity protection,” n.d.). This will ensure that the expectant mother does not have to worry about childbirth and it also safeguards her economic condition after giving birth. Other organizations include PL+US and MomsRising, which are organizations aiming to promote maternity leave by impacting the public and workforce policies to grant women their rights (“PL+US,” n.d.; “MomsRising,” 2018).

Furthermore, the UN General Assembly resolution on the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/22/2263) had been passed in 1967, where Article 10 of the resolution identifies the rights to maternity leave as a human right. It emphasizes that a person shall not be dismissed due to maternity and must be given a paid maternity leave and shall be guaranteed a return to employment (“United Nations General Assembly,” 1967). Another resolution on this issue was published by the Secretariat of the United Nations in 2005 and was titled as Family leave, Maternity Leave and Paternity Leave (ST/SGB/2009/4). It also entitles female employees to the rights mentioned previously (“Leave and Insurance | HR Portal,” 2005). The major limitations of these resolutions include the fact that small businesses that pay for women on maternity leave are being impacted in terms of their cost of running (“Families Commission”, 2010). Also, the resolutions do not consider the recessionary pressures, which means that women on maternity leave would be expected by their employers to return to work early due to any financial crisis or recession in the economy.

Moreover, considering the issues of maternity leave are persisting in current times and have been existent over the period of the last ten years, it can be said that the resolutions were ineffective in solving the issue in its entire complexity. As stated in the 2014 report of the ILO, “Of the 167 countries with information available, 86 – or just over half – provide some flexibility regarding when and how the leave can be taken.” and “[...] although the extended leave period may be unpaid” (Addati et al., 2014, p.13). This is an indication that there has been progress with regard to the issue, but it is of complex nature in the present times. However, these findings pertain to the ILO and the last UN resolution regarding maternity leave was in 2007 (“Maternity Leave,” n.d.). Hence, it is essential to discuss and update the actions regarding the issue.

QUESTIONS THE DISCUSSIONS AND THE RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS

- Does your Member State have any laws enforced on maternity leave?
- What is the most successful mode of maternity leave thus far?
- How does maternity leave impact the workplace?
- Would it be more beneficial if the maternity leave was paid or if it was unpaid? Why?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

- Paternity Leave.
- Countries with Paid Maternity Leave and how it Affects their Economy.
- The Effect of Maternity Leave on Employee Morale.

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TOPIC 2

Promoting the Involvement of Women in Political Participation

SUMMARY

The promotion of women involvement in political participation has been the main aim of the Commission on the Status of Women and other corresponding bodies of the United Nations. Multi-year programs on the issue have called for the enablement of an “environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, fields of education, health and work” (Alefsen, 2005). However, many of the actions taken regarding the promotion of women in political participation, as per the CSW committee, are not purely in forms of programmatic and legislative approaches, but rather the attempts are to achieve “de facto” equality with men. Furthermore, the issue surrounds the political, governmental, organizational, and communal institutions that govern domestic or international policy with the encouragement of implementing reforms as to ensure female participation is ensured and enabled. Therefore, it is important to encourage and increase the resources necessary for women to become effective leaders in politics.

HISTORY

The role of women in different sectors has become an ever more prevalent issue within the modern age. Following the 20th century activist movements, civil right enthusiasts and the rise of the feminist ideology have attempted to assert their agendas within governmental legislation to allow the representation of women. As early as 1947, the CSW has had a promising influence within the promotion of principles and legislation to further ensure political representation of women. Furthermore, the creation of strong relations with non-governmental organizations (NGOS), the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the CSW advanced the UN Declaration on Human rights through the endorsement of women’s rights in all its forms. This was a pillar moment that created the foundation of both the movement of civil rights as well as consolidated the committee’s presence in the international stage. Therefore, through the international rise of social movements for political freedoms, the emphasis on the roles of women have become more evident and prominent than ever before.

DISCOURSE ON THE ISSUE

In the political system, women are faced with numerous obstacles. Despite having the capability and capacity to participate politically, women are hindered by discriminatory laws and institutions. They are underrepresented as voters and in leading positions, be it the elected office, the civil service, or the academia. When it comes to upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles have been violated in terms of ensuring equal rights. One principle, more or less, states that there shall be no discrimination between the population due to gender. Women's rights in the political system must be promoted heavily to ensure gender equality. It is crucial seeing that women hold only 22 percent of nationally parliamentary positions globally as compared to men. Therefore, women rights in the political system are severely diminished comparatively. Women of the world are held back by social constructs and governmental laws and that impacts society greatly in how it functions and how the governments of the world perceive one another.

Their participation in political arena can greatly benefit the governments' view on several topics, especially those that involve women. Therefore, it is crucial that they become involved in the overall political system. Based on previous studies, it has been shown that when women are placed in positions with authority, they tend to perform better as they are more likely to reach collaborative solutions to problems by being excellent mediators. Having more women in governmental positions or placed with higher authority could prove to be much more beneficial to the government than one might presume.

PAST IO ACTIONS AND THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The political participation of women is an essential constituent of a modern society where women secure positions of leadership and decision-making in their respective communities. As a result of this, women are given the equal opportunity, alongside men, to play crucial roles in the area of politics and governance to bring about economic benefit, resolve political conflicts, and increase co-operation between political parties in a country ("Empowering women in political participation and leadership," 2015). In current times, various International Organizations (IO) have been actively operating to increase awareness, educate individuals, and facilitate the involvement of women in politics. These organizations help to increase the number of potential women candidates who would hold office in the government by providing support as well as by boosting their confidence and experience in public situations (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005).

Moreover, the organizations can pressure political parties to increase women's political participation. Some of these IOs include the Political Institute for Women that offers unbiased courses for women political candidates, the Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS) that works to strengthen the role of African women in conflict resolution, and the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) that operates to provide technical assistance for organizational planning, training, and research, and The Arab Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI) that offers training, networking, and mentorship to women for leadership positions ("Global organizations promoting women in politics," 2018).

The United Nations have had several important resolutions concerning the participation of women in political and leadership positions. Some of these prominent ones include the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130), which covered all the necessary objectives including optimizing the electoral system, removing social and political barriers for women, promoting awareness of the importance of women participation and investigating on allegations of violence and harassment against women ("Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation," n.d.). Other resolutions include the 2003 UN General Assembly Resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142) and the UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 1990/15, which have highlighted the importance of ensuring increased participation of women and allocating a minimum set number of positions for women leaders.

Despite these resolutions and efforts by international organizations, the number of women in national parliamentary bodies have increased only by 22.8% in 2016 since 1995, and 38 states have less than 10% of women participation ("Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation," n.d.). Moreover, it is important to note that simply establishing a platform for women is not enough to catalyze more participation, but in actuality, there are factors like domestic violence and the roles the women play with regard to their families, which also have an impact on the effectiveness of the resolutions ("Online Discussion on women, political participation and decision-making in Africa," 2007). Women involved in agriculture, for instance, cannot leave their duties to run campaigns, while there is not enough food for their families. In addition, the UN General Assembly itself has far fewer female diplomats compared to male diplomats, which highly demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the resolutions (ibid.).

Furthermore, there are not any current resolutions regarding the issue, but the latest actions involve the fight against the violence towards women in politics across Latin America (“Across Latin America, women fight back against violence in politics,” 2018). Lastly, the latest development involves the participation of 277 women in the United States midterm elections, where their winning will increase the number of women in Congress to more than 100 (“Statement: UN Women welcomes the gains made by women of both parties in US midterm elections”, 2018). However, despite these developments, the CSW aims to work with Member States to promote the development of women in political participation.

QUESTIONS THE DISCUSSIONS AND RESOLUTIONS SHOULD ADDRESS

- What percentage of women are involved in your country’s government?
- Why is it that there are more men than women in the political aspect?
- How would the society and government be impacted if women were involved more in political parties?
- How could women be encouraged to become part of the political field?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Contributions by Women to Benefit Political Parties.
- Reasons behind Female Underrepresentation in Government.

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