

## PARALLEL EVENT

# WOMEN IN POWER, GETTING TO 50-50 AT THE TABLE

### Introduction

by **Marie-Claude Bertrand**,  
President of CNFF

Your Excellency, Madam Ambassador, Dear Delphine O,  
Madam Senator, Dear Viviane,  
Ladies Presidents,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

We gather today at the United Nations for the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1946. Let us take a moment to honor three trailblazing ICW pioneers who participated in the very first session:

• **Bodil Begtrup**,

President of the Danish National Council of Women, member of ICW-CIF, appointed President of the first Commission,

• **Minerva Bernardino**,  
Dominican, member of ICW-CIF, she participated in the creation of the CSW, becoming its Vice-President and then President,

• **Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux**,

delegate for France, who chaired the Commission on the Status of Women for six years, served as President of ICW-CIF, and led the CNFF.



Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux

### United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security October 31, 2000

#### Almost 25 Years of Progress and Challenges

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, recognizing the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on women and girls.

The resolution advocates for the protection and full participation of women in peace agreements and is built on four key pillars:

1. The role of women in conflict prevention,
2. Women's participation in peace-building,
3. The protection of women and girls' rights during and after conflicts,
4. Addressing women's specific needs during repatriation and resettlement.

On the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscored the importance of gender equality in peace operations, stating:

**«Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more sustainable. Parliaments with more women pass more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination, and child support. The proof is clear: equality for women means progress for all.»**

However, despite significant progress, women and girls continue to suffer from gender-based violence and are often used as weapons of war during conflicts.

### CEDAW General Recommendation 40 Equitable and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems

Adopted on **October 22, 2024**, General Recommendation 40 enshrines parity as a **«permanent, cardinal, and universal»** principle of all decision-making systems. It highlights the importance of women's participation in negotiation and conflict resolution processes, stressing that women's



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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN



CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES FEMMES



Depuis 1901,  
pour les droits des femmes  
et l'égalité des chances

presence in dialogue and mediation forums is critical for building peaceful and sustainable societies.

During the discussions, many delegations from member states and NGOs welcomed the adoption of this recommendation, recognizing it as a milestone in the Committee's history. Nicole Ameline, Chairwoman of the Committee's working group, emphasized that parity is the only response to escalating conflicts, digital transformation, and climate challenges. She called for a **global movement** to uphold parity as a universal standard, reinforcing the legitimacy of decision-making systems.

### France's Commitment to Parity and Women's Representation

As part of its **Women, Peace, and Security Agenda**, France supports robust mandates and resources to ensure women's protection and participation in UN missions, operations, and peace negotiations. Since 1999, France has implemented laws to promote the equal and inclusive representation of women in political, social, and economic life. Key legislative milestones include:

- **Constitutional Law of July 8, 1999** – Amended Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution to promote equal access to electoral mandates and elective functions.
- **Constitutional Law of July 23, 2008** – Extended the principle of parity to professional and social responsibilities.
- **Parity Laws in Company Boards of Directors, Public Administration, and Political Parties**

Despite these efforts, women still face significant barriers to leadership. Men continue to occupy two-thirds of parliamentary seats, and only two women have served as Prime Minister since 1958 (**Édith Cresson 1991-1992 and Élisabeth Borne 2022-2024**). However, progress is evident:

- 45% of municipal councillors are women,
- 49% of regional councillors,
- 51% of departmental councillors,
- 51% of MEPs.

Yet, women hold only:

- 20% of departmental council presidencies,
- 10% of community council presidencies,
- Less than one-third of regional presidencies.

Additionally, key ministries such as defense, economy, and state budget remain predominantly male-dominated. While Yaël Braun-Pivet became the first female President of the National Assembly in 2022, women still occupy just **36% of seats in both the National Assembly and the Senate.**

### European Parliament Progress

Following the **2024 European elections, 39% of MEPs are women** – a significant **increase from 16% in 1979**. Although some countries have introduced quotas (France, Spain, Sweden, Finland), others achieve parity without such measures, demonstrating that gender equality is possible through political will and cultural shifts.

### Conclusion

The feminization of politics has been steadily advancing since the early 21st century. The increasing presence of newly elected women serves as a powerful example for younger generations, creating a ripple effect. This progress is the result of long-fought battles and the enforcement of several laws promoting gender parity in politics.

In France, the law on Equality and Citizenship, adopted on January 27, 2017, introduced the possibility of establishing youth councils within local authorities or public intercommunal cooperation bodies. These councils must respect gender parity, ensuring that the difference between the number of women and men does not exceed one.

General Recommendation 40 establishes parity as a fundamental, permanent, and universal principle for all decision-making systems.

The equal participation of women and girls in decision-making on current and future issues — such as digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and climate change — is essential to prevent any regression in women's rights.

As Civil Society, we must actively advocate for the implementation of GR 40 to guarantee that women, who represent more than 51% of the global population, are equally represented in decision-making processes at the highest levels and consistently present at negotiation tables for Peace.

**Let us continue to strive for 50-50 at the table – because women's equality is the cornerstone of a more just, inclusive, and prosperous world.**