



Economic and Social Council

Working towards political stability

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Topic: Discussing gender equality in political representation and participation

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II. Introduction

Committee

In the realm of international collaboration, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) stands as a fundamental institution, tracing its origins back to 1945 as one of the six principal organs of the UN. With an evolving mandate, it has grown alongside shifting global standards. Tasked with the complex relationship of economic policies, social advancements, and environmental concerns, ECOSOC has progressively expanded its scope and role to include a broader commitment to sustainable development since its post-World War II reconstruction efforts. This transition has not been without its challenges, as persistent inequality, pressing climate concerns, and the nuances of global trade continue to shape the council's agenda.

Recently, the council has implemented and focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as playing a central role in issues such as the critical COVID-19 pandemic, gender equality, digital inclusivity, and peacebuilding. Over 70 percent of the humanitarian and financial resources of the UN are allocated to ECOSOC. In addition, ECOSOC takes on a new dimension of importance when delving into the domain of tax matters, as taxation policies emerge as integral elements of development.

Topic

Gender equality in political representation and participation is a critical aspect of building inclusive and democratic societies. In the past, and many present countries, women have been severely underrepresented in their countries decision-making. Many barriers are put up which limit their access to pivotal roles, resulting in, as of 2023, there being less than a third of leadership roles which are held by women. Yet the term gender inequality manages to go beyond that. It encompasses creating an environment where individuals of all genders have equal opportunities, influence, and impact in shaping the political landscape.

III. Definition of Key Terms

Suffrage

Is the right for both men and women to be able to freely vote in a political election. A suffragette, however, is a woman who fought for women's rights to vote. And is commonly referred to as someone who membered in the group of activists led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst during the early 20th century.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is a phased and complex process in which an individual or a group embraces a radical ideology or belief that accepts, uses, or condones violence, including acts of terrorism, to reach a specific political or ideological purpose.

Democracy

Democracy is a government system in which power is vested in the hands of the people, either directly or through elected representatives.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an economic and political ideology that emerged in the mid-20th century and has had a significant influence on global economic policies. It is usually referred to as market-oriented reform policies and reducing, especially through privatization and austerity, state influence in the economy.

Feminism

Feminism is a socio-political and cultural movement that advocates for the social, political, economic, and legal rights of women to be equal to those of men. Its goal is to challenge and amend historical and ongoing gender-based inequalities and discrimination that women have faced throughout the years

IV. History of the topic

The history of feminism spans from ancient Greece to the modern-day suffrages for women, encompassing pivotal movements like women's marches, and the recent #MeToo movement. Over time, these collective issues have formed one of the most enduring topics which showcases the endurance and resilience of the fight for equality.

Womens Movement

First wave:

The Secena Falls convention

At the 1848 Seneca Falls convention, which was the first wave of the women's movement in the US, women started to realize that they were treated unequally for years on end and how gender roles really played a part in their discriminatory society. Elisabeth Cady Stanton was the first woman to go against women's social civil and religious rights and preach for equity. Resulting in an epiphany for many others. On the 19th and 20th of July, 1848, over 300 other women attended the protest. The Declaration of Sentiments was a successful initiative at a time when privileged white men dominated the US.

19th Amendment: Women's right to vote!

Gradually, other countries around the world emerged after New Zealand had granted their women the constitutional right to vote. They were the first sovereign state to sign off a new Electoral Act into law. New Zealand was looked at as a revolutionary democracy and had stimulated other countries to radicalize women's suffrage. As a result, it led many other sovereign states to do the same, such as Australia in 1902 and Finland (1906).

However, other democracies such as the United Kingdom or the United States did not let women get their right to vote until after WWI. The joint contribution of this war proved the other sex of their right to equality and the same rights as in New Zealand. After decades of protests, the 19th Amendment passed in 1919.

This granted an improvement by securing their earned right to vote. Notwithstanding the fact, that many women in minority still had not secured their right to vote long into the 20th Century because of discriminatory voting laws.

Second wave:

Womens Liberation movement

The second wave of feminism is usually limited to the '60s to the late '80s, in which women's so-called "roles" were back. After the Second World War, women returned to their homes to take care of their children or back to being housewives, which ultimately brought the second wave of feminism.

At the time feminism was described as "women's liberation" since their goal was to fight for equality and to focus on feminism. This spread from the US to Western countries such as Germany, where it was a key component of today's feminism. Both the Equal Pay Act and Equal Rights Amendment, which made equality for women legal and banned opposite-sex discrimination, were passed.

In light of these global movements, the UN decided to designate the year 1975 as the year of the women

Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher

Margaret Thatcher, also known as the "Iron Lady" was the United Kingdom's first female Prime Minister, leading the country's policies from 1979 to 1990. As the first woman to ascend to this political position, her presence was remarkable, slowly gaining global respect and cementing her leadership position as a strong leader.

Climbing the ranks

Thatcher's success gained a lot of popularity, given the fact that she was one of the UK's longest-serving Prime Ministers of the 20th century.

As she entered the political field, she was selected as a Member of the Parliament, and from there on, Margaret had been upgraded to several junior ministerial positions. She was known for her strong views on conservatism, and thanks to her prominent character, was given the leading role of the Conservative party, which was the first time a woman even got the chance, and came in first, ultimately making her Prime Minister.

Global Impact

Her overall impact was very diverse. Ranging from being in alliance with the United States president of the time, President Ronald Reagan to the widespread debate on her policies and statements.

During the Cold War- Era, her close partnership with the US gained worldwide talk, therefore boosting her global influence, apart from helping the Western world during the Cold War by vocalizing her criticism against Soviet policies.

Her active engagement with other superiors from all across the spectrum made her able to navigate through their complex negotiations and actually influence them into using and utilizing her policies.

Such as neoliberalism. She had stood by this practice and had discussed it on various occasions, making it talked by over the globe, contributing to its global spread in the 1990's. Her prominent role had managed for her to be undistinguishable in universal history.

Her legacy:

Her strong and decisive attitude made her one of the most effective leaders at the time, helping her gain respect and surpass gender barriers. She made it clear that women can also be effective leaders by expressing themselves. Quoted by Angela Merkel, the former Chancellor of Germany, she stated:

"Margaret Thatcher was an exceptional leader for Great Britain and the world. She showed that it is possible for women to assert themselves in politics. She had to fight hard, but she prevailed, and I was always impressed by that. She shaped politics in her time, and she left behind a deep impression."

Although she hadn't proved it with protests, her groundbreaking achievements and determination paved the way for many other women as political representatives, normalizing and encouraging them to stand their ground.

World's first female president

Sirimavo Bandaranaike's political career was marked down in history by its significance and commitment to advance in social injustice. Her role as the first female prime minister and later on president symbolized a lot of progress in gender equality in political leadership.

Her journey

One way to put her journey would be the start of her journey kicked off where her husband's ended.

Subsequent to Solomon Bandaranaike, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister and leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), passing her wife had to take over this role as the leader of the SLFP leading it to victory. Sirimavo had also briefly held the position of president, in other terms being elected as the first-ever female president in 1972.

This referendum was marked down as a significant milestone for women in global politics.

A vocal advocate for women's rights

Her role as a founding member of the International Women's Year (1975) and chairperson marked a significant impact on the global women's movement. The constant engagement with the United Nations (UN) and the Commission on the Status of Women were in her favor when promoting gender equality and women's rights globally.

Sirimavo's commitment to women's rights and her influential role in international forums like the UN or the NAM (Non-Aligned-Movement) made her a proper global advocate for gender equality. Her efforts helped shape the global agenda for women's empowerment

V. Timeline of events

19th Century

1893 - New Zealand

New Zealand became the first self-governing country to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

20th Century

1920 - United States

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, granting women the right to vote.

1960s – Europe

Many European countries, including France, Italy, and the Netherlands, grant women full suffrage rights.

1980s – Africa

Several African countries, including Zimbabwe and Kenya, see women's political representation increase.

1993 – Rwanda

Rwanda's constitution mandates that women hold at least 30% of parliamentary seats, leading to a significant increase in female representation

2000s - Middle East

Countries like Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait grant women the right to vote and run for office.

21st Century

2015 - Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia holds its first municipal elections in which women can both vote and run for office.

2020s - Global Progress

Women continue to make strides in political representation worldwide, with more countries implementing gender quotas and women achieving leadership positions

VI. Previous attempts to solve the Issue

1. The efforts to minimize and equalize the gender gap in politics have been going on for decades, however, despite the efforts given, no real solution has been found which would completely demolish it. Although the initiatives, which have aimed to promote gender equality in political representation and decision-making, have evolved over time they are still challenging social standard.

The UN has played an essential role in the promotion of gender equality, by being the primary source for the founding of many international agreements, such as, but not limited to:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- UN Women
- UN Charter

UN Charter, one of the most important agreements as of today, laid the foundations for the recognition on gender equality as a fundamental principle of life. As well as recognized the fundamental human rights, its efforts marking a significant milestone in the recognition of equal rights.

This marked the year 1945 as the beginning of UN-established cooperation on this very topic.

2. Later on, the UN had signed off the “ [Womens Convention](#)”(1952) aimed to encourage more women to work in an equal political field. It was encouraged to get signed by all countries in order to recognise womens right to:

- The right to vote in all elections on an equal basis with men without any discrimination
- The right to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies at all levels of government.
- The right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy.
- The right to hold public office and perform all public functions without any gender-based discrimination.

This helped set a clear standard for gender equality in politics and over the years has contributed massively in the constitutional reforms in many countries, leading to the removal of many barriers constricting womens integration into politics

3. [The Beeijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) is a landmark held in Beeijing, China in September 1995. It aimed at advancing gender equality and womens empowerment and primarily to adopt a global agenda for the advancement during the next few decades. It issued on a wide range of issues affecting women, as well:

- as economic empowerment
- Education
- Healthcare
- Violence against women

And most importantly;

- Women's participation in decision-making

The Beijing conference greatly impacted on global gender efforts and brought together many different representatives which helped lead the awareness and mobilize women's situations.

However, in 2010, the UN released a new entity dedicated to equality and developing standards, called [UN Women](#). UN Women creates a healthy and supportive, especially for those in the LEDCs, community. It also promotes women's participation in politics by:

- Promoting women in leadership roles and political representation
- Enhancing economic opportunities
- Ending violence against women
- SDGs 5 (collaborating on the attempt to end the gender gap)
- Raising awareness and promoting change

Thanks to these effective approaches and the wide range of women's empowerment, womens equality continues advancing in the right direction.

VII. Major countries involved

United States

Although the US is one of the most influential countries in the world and has had several significantly major strides towards the right direction, it lacks female representation in the political aspect. Apart from all of the federal laws which protect females and prohibit discrimination, it has still not reached gender parity.

New Zealand

As the first self-governing country to grant women the right to vote, New Zealand is now a leader for the gender party in politics after successfully impacting our modern-day society. In the last elections, NZ had ranked at number 5 as one of the countries with the most women representatives, having a total of 48.3% of women in parliamentary positions.

Peoples Republic of China

“Women hold up half the sky” is a phrase used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in order to illustrate the importance of women in China’s economic state, however, it does not fail to overlook their political rights. Although the People's Republic of China does state their citizens have equal rights, in 2022 during the CCP’s National Congress it was revealed that out of 24 of their Politburo members, none were female. While the number of women in key political roles globally is steadily improving, female representation in the CCP has worsened over time.

This extreme type of underrepresentation is most likely to be at fault of the patriarchal roles in Chinese culture.

VIII. Questions a resolution must answer

- Why is feminism important?
- How has the UN helped diminish gender inequality and both empowered and encouraged women to successfully participate in politics?
- What measures have been taken in order to combat gender inequality in a political aspect?
- What past actions have helped evolve society, helping it get to the present situation?
- What mechanisms could member states use in order to continue the advancement made on political representation and participation?

IX. Possible Considerations for the Future

In spite of the fact that many initiatives have already taken place in order to combat the present issue, as previously stated in point VI. (Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue), bringing awareness to the situation and promoting women's roles in politics is not enough. These are just steps in the right direction of getting to the end goal of complete equality.

As a means to advance, the use of recourses, such as media, as a way of strategically maneuvering the modern-day stereotypes and shaping public perception as an aim to eliminate gender-based discrimination, would be considered an adequate intent to diminish the problem at hand.

Furthermore, the lack of diverse representation is a necessary change which should be targeted. Intersectionality is a striving goal so as to equally represent candidates from all different backgrounds and ethnicities also including socioeconomic statuses. This way equal representation can be achieved and brought into political-discussions and decision-making.

X. Conclusion

Ultimately, in order to achieve a democratic society, not only does the underrepresentation of women completely hinder democratic values, given it is fundamental for democracy to fully represent the interests and needs of the citizens, but women's participation in politics is a matter of human rights. Needing to emphasize the principle that all individuals should have equal opportunities to engage in civic life and decision-making processes. Despite many attempts to eradicate this issue, the matter at hand is still extremely present. Notwithstanding the fact that many countries have previously made and put forward initiatives to diminish the matter, most still deal with the point at issue, unable to get out from that never-ending cycle. Therefore, looking forward to the future, resolutions must be made to bring this problem to an end. We hope for interesting and fruitful debating sessions!

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