THE INTERNATIONAL GENDER CHAMPIONS: 2020 IN TWEETS!

#INTGenderChampions
In a year of multiple landmark anniversaries to advance sustainable development and gender equality, 2020 has powerfully demonstrated the pressing need for individual and collective leadership to ensure that women and girls are not left further behind. Figures continue to emerge of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in all spheres - economic, educational, social, political, health - and devastating impacts on their personal safety.

In these turbulent times, the IGC has proved to be a key pillar of international cooperation - a robust network of leaders committed to countering the multiple threats undermining gender equality, and to transforming new challenges into productive opportunities.

The challenge we now face to ‘Build Back Better’ requires us to get ahead of both the COVID-19 curve and the growing curve of gender inequality. Our webinar series ‘Living Up to the Challenge’ in April and May, attended by over 400 Champions and Focal Points, allowed us to reflect on how we need to move beyond merely reacting to circumstances and become truly gender responsive in our organisations and programmatic work.

The accelerated use of technology and the adoption of flexible working schedules has allowed us to re-evaluate ‘business as usual’, but gaps remain in our organisational policies and cultures. Inclusive policies and workplaces, including parental leave for women and men and affordable and accessible childcare, are critical if we are to rebalance the care burden, redefine career paths for women and men, and shift social perceptions and norms. The Champions for Parental Leave campaign with UN Women and the Gender Champions Challenge helped us to move towards those goals.

Change takes time and concerted efforts. The IGC’s Fifth Anniversary highlighted how much we can achieve as a global network. Collectively, 133 male and 121 female Champions and 170 Alumni Champions have made over two thousand commitments, initiated new programmes and policies, and shaped a host of laws and practices. Our Panel Parity Pledge, equally important in virtual and in-person spaces, was fully adhered to by 78 per cent of those who responded to our Annual Survey. Single-sex panels have truly become unacceptable in the Hubs in which we operate.

Two new Impact Groups in Vienna on Representation and on Gender Equality in Nuclear Regulatory Agencies have reinforced the benefit of peers uniting to identify targeted actions. Agile in their structure, these Groups have resulted in transformative change in the areas of representation, trade, disarmament, justice and standards and we are excited to see more emerging.

We will have the opportunity to broaden the scope of our collaborations in 2021 through the framework of Generation Equality and our membership of The Nest, a ‘network of networks’, which includes global leaders and youth leaders. We also look forward to the Paris Generation Equality Forum when our Paris Hub will be formally launched.

I am confident that together we can drive much needed positive change within our organisations and programmatic work. Achieving gender equality is one of the best vehicles we have to avert the multiple growing global crises, and truly leave no one behind. Doing so will require us to think differently and act differently. On behalf of the IGC Global Board, I invite you to work with us to rise to the challenge.

Martin Chungong
Secretary-General
Inter-Parliamentary Union
Chair of the IGC Global Board
In January 2020, Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), was unanimously approved to succeed Ms Arancha González as the Chair of the IGC Global Board, following her appointment as Spain’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation.

The year brought further changes in the membership of the Global Board: Ambassador Pennelope Beckles of Trinidad and Tobago was also invited to join her country’s government as Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and the tenure on the Board of Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), came to an end. We extend our thanks to these colleagues for their engagement and are delighted to welcome the new members leading activities in Paris and Vienna: Ms Louise Mushikiwabo, Secretary-General of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Ambassador Valentin Zellweger of Switzerland moved from Geneva to Nairobi, where he will continue his engagement in the network through the Nairobi Hub. His successor in Geneva, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, who has been a long-standing Gender Champion in New York, became a Board member ex officio.

The Chair and Global Board work in close collaboration with the IGC Secretariat, which the Geneva Centre for Security Policy has incubated since September 2019, with the generous support of the Swiss government.

At a time when it is abundantly clear that inequality is growing, international cooperation is needed to address the COVID pandemic and other pressing global issues, including the climate crisis and nuclear disarmament. IGC co-founders Ambassadors Hamamoto and Michael Møller called on colleagues to build a stronger community of Alumni Champions: “It is essential to bridge differences in cultures, interests and priorities so that we can stand united for one common cause: we are Champions for change, and we won’t stop until gender equality is the norm.”

GLOBAL ALUMNI CHAMPIONS

Over 210 Champions have left their roles or IGC Hubs to become Alumni Champions and are leading organisations and governments around the world. Alumni Champions include the President of Ethiopia, Ms Sahle-Work Zewde; Ms Kyung-wha Kang, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea; and Ms Sigrid Kaag, Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.
TRANSFORMING NORMS ONE COMMITMENT AT A TIME

Achieving gender parity whereby women and men have equal rights, roles, responsibilities, and voices in all spheres of life requires concrete and sometimes simple actions. Personal commitments by leaders provide the vehicle for these actions, driving change within organisations and multilateral hubs.

The first pillar of being an International Gender Champion, the Panel Parity Pledge (PPP), requires each Champion to commit to no longer participate in single-sex panels, whether they are all male or all female. From being commonplace, single-sex panels are now considered unacceptable in the IGC’s multilateral Hubs. Leaders at the highest level of the international system are the most effective at changing it, shifting conversations and perceptions through organisations, public forums and the media by this simple yet transformative commitment.

In 2020 Champions reported a success rate of 78 per cent of full adherence to the PPP, a five-point increase compared to 2019 and a nine-point increase compared to 2018. Furthermore, almost all of the 26 Champions who did participate in single-sex panels record being involved in only a maximum of five such panels throughout the year and pointed out a noticeably increased diversity in panels overall in their professional spheres.

Challenging norms takes courage, but is effective: 60 per cent of demands that panels should be gender-balanced resulted in immediate corrective action 50 per cent or more of the time, and 32 per cent of Champions reported that their requests for gender parity were met 100 per cent of the time.

Some of the main actions Champions took in 2020 if they did find themselves on single-sex panels were to:

- request that an invitation to participate be extended to a qualified leader/expert of the other sex – sometimes even on the spot from among the audience;
- decline an invitation to participate by explaining the PPP and the importance of gender-balanced panels, and/or delegate attendance to teammates of another gender to increase the panel’s diversity;
- make public statements via social media or other channels to draw attention to the issue of gender parity, either as a whole, depending on contextual sensitivity, or in specific fields/events; and
- request active participation from the audience, particularly by those belonging to the under-represented sex on the panel.
Actions taken by Champions to achieve their Commitments (in %)

Focus areas of commitments
(each commitment can touch upon multiple areas)

2020 Commitments Level of Achievement

We have successfully accomplished this Commitment. We will replace it with a new Commitment

We have partially accomplished this Commitment but we plan to continue our work to establish long-term success

We have successfully accomplished this Commitment, but we plan to continue our work to establish long-term success

This Commitment proved too difficult to achieve. We will replace it with a new Commitment

INTERNATIONAL GENDER CHAMPIONS
CASCADING CHANGE

In addition to the PPP, Champions make two personalised commitments per year to advance gender equality in their organisations and/or programmatic work. These commitments are designed to be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) and are customised to each Champion’s organisation and programmatic work. Every year Champions report through the IGC Annual Survey on the progress they made towards fulfilling their commitments and on remaining gaps and challenges.

Some 472 commitments were made in 2020. As in previous years, the two main focus areas of the Champions’ commitments were organisational culture and leadership, with a significant increase in the number of commitments focused on workplace culture and practices.

Despite unprecedented challenges caused by working from home, the need for virtual teamwork and other fundamental professional obstacles brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, once again more than two-thirds of the commitments were successfully accomplished in 2020, similarly to last year’s success rate. One-third of commitments were partially met. Only 2 per cent of commitments were not achieved out of the 282 that were reported on.

A key factor in the successful realisation of the PPP commitments was the engagement of employees, which remains the primary means used by over half of the Champions to fulfil their pledges. Encouragingly, significantly more gender-related programmes were implemented and field-centric commitments were made in 2020 (25 per cent of commitments) than in 2019 (15 per cent of commitments) and 2018 (12 per cent). 86 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the impact of their commitments was significant, while 70 per cent claimed that their commitments had led to transformative change. This echoes another positive development reported by Champions in the Annual Survey – that of the implementation of new programmes targeted at gender equality (including gender-responsive budgeting) in their Hubs.

Transformative changes in the network’s member organisations are clearly under way. 98 per cent of respondents stated that since they had become Champions, gender equality was integral to their organisations’ strategic objectives and programmatic outcomes, up from 91 per cent in 2019. Interestingly, Champions’ commitments and priorities seem to have continued to cascade down onto all levels of Champions’ organisations, with all staff members being dedicated to work towards achieving gender equality, while training programmes to improve awareness of issues related to gender equality were completed by senior and middle leaders in 60 per cent of the organisations reported on. According to 80 per cent of survey respondents, senior leaders have become more responsive to gender issues, whereas the remaining 20 per cent reported equal levels of responsiveness. The figures for middle managers were slightly lower at 76 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively. No one reported reduced responsiveness.

Although some challenges remain, the most prominent of which were the cancellation of meetings and other initiatives as a result of COVID-19 and the lack of time and resources, the survey demonstrated that through their renewed commitments, Champions are steadily driving change in their organisations and beyond, and that their involvement with the IGC plays a significant role in facilitating this progress.
Reaching a critical mass of leaders who are advancing gender equality within Hubs has led to gradual but concrete systemic changes, and helps us to progress collectively towards global goals.

The perception widely reported in the Annual Survey is that the IGC Champions have contributed to:

- increased awareness of gender barriers and strategies to overcome them;
- more frequent references to gender equality in UN resolutions, outcome documents and multilateral negotiations in governing bodies;
- the improved representation of women at senior management levels;
- the improved gender balance of delegations;
- new programmes targeted at gender equality, including the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting; and
- the greater availability of sex-disaggregated data.

The IGC is uniquely placed to develop Impact Groups. Building on multi-stakeholder collaboration between academic research centres and permanent missions, international organisations, civil society, business and the private sector, IGC members are identifying gender ‘blind spots’ and developing toolkits, laws and policies to tackle the systemic challenges facing efforts to achieve gender parity. 2020 saw the launch of two new Impact Groups in Vienna.

NEW Impact Group: REPRESENTATION

The Vienna Hub has formed its own Impact Group on Representation, led by the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), and the Embassadors of Finland and Afghanistan, with the aim, among other things, of advancing the use of and more widely disseminating the Gender-responsive Assemblies (GRA) Toolkit. Members are working on at least two specific outcomes:

1) the piloting of artificial intelligence-based software to analyse the share of speaking time of men and women at events of Vienna-based entities; and

2) the dissemination of the UN System-wide Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, including Sexual Harassment and its adoption by the assemblies of Vienna-based entities.
Regarding the first outcome, the Vienna Impact Group began consultations with machine-learning software providers with the aim of piloting a range of available software in order to clarify its usability for virtual meetings, data protection issues, possible costs and feasible outputs. The objective is to identify in the first half of 2021 the software that best fits the purposes of the Impact Group.

To achieve the second outcome, the Impact Group is planning to develop an awareness-raising video on the Code of Conduct. It is also holding discussions with the UN Department of Safety and Security and the governing body secretariats and ethics, gender and internal oversight offices of Vienna-based organisations on how to strengthen cooperation and coordination in order to implement and disseminate the Code of Conduct and ensure an effective complaints process to deal with cases of harassment.

Since its inception, the Impact Group has benefited from the engagement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN Office at Vienna (UNOV), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, and the Permanent Missions of Australia and the Philippines in Vienna.

NEW Impact Group: GENDER EQUALITY IN NUCLEAR REGULATORY AGENCIES

A second Impact Group on Gender Equality in Nuclear Regulatory Agencies was launched in Vienna on 29 September 2020 during a virtual meeting with heads of regulators from nine countries and two international organisations – the Nuclear Energy Agency and the IAEA. This Impact Group is co-led by the President of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission; the Ambassador of Canada to nuclear agencies in Vienna; and the IAEA.

This Impact Group is undertaking collective actions to advance gender equality in the nuclear regulatory community, including:

- an assessment of hiring practices and/or retention efforts to identify ways to improve gender balance;
- the promotion of a workplace environment that values diversity, and identifies and removes barriers to women being appointed to nuclear scientific and operations positions;
- the promotion of gender parity on panels and/or in delegations; and
- support for efforts to focus on youth education in order to build the female talent pipeline.

In collaboration with members, terms of reference are under development and the Impact Group will reach out to other heads of regulatory agencies who may share its objectives and wish to join.

REPRESENTATION

In 2020, the Geneva Impact Group on Representation continued to engage with heads of international organisations and member states on how best to advance the implementation of the *Gender-responsive Assemblies (GRA) Toolkit*, which was launched in 2018. In January, the Swedish Ambassador convened a high-level meeting in partnership with the two other Impact Group co-leaders – the IPU and Women at the Table. The meeting brought together top representatives from the ILO, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), and Geneva-based Ambassadors from Nordic countries to further advance their efforts in this regard.

In November, on the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the *Gender Advisory Group of the President of the 75th UN General Assembly Volkan Bozkir*, who had recently become an International Gender Champion, the GRA Toolkit was shared as a key instrument for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the General Assembly in New York. In 2021, the Impact Group will collaboratively continue to develop the GRA Toolkit by integrating new best practices and a focus on how COVID-19 has impacted women’s participation and influence in international decision-making processes in an increasingly virtual and gender-unequal world.
TRADE

In 2020, the Trade Impact Group (TIG), co-chaired by the Ambassadors of Botswana and Iceland in Geneva and the International Trade Centre (ITC), continued to welcome supporters of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment, gathering a total of 127 World Trade Organisation (WTO) members and observers. Throughout the year the TIG held several meetings at the technical and ambassadorial levels and gatherings of Buenos Aires Declaration supporters to discuss the next steps for the global trade and gender agenda. TIG members also collected voluntary questions and answers on gender that were included in the WTO Trade Policy Reviews of 21 countries.

Building on the six seminars held in 2018 and 2019, the TIG developed a publication to report back on progress made through the implementation of the Buenos Aires Declaration. The report includes findings from the seminars, which focused on ‘Gender-based Analysis of Trade’, ‘Women in Global Value Chains’, ‘Women in Public Procurement’, ‘Gender Considerations in Trade Agreements’, ‘Women in Digital Trade’, and ‘Smart Financing for Women’s Entrepreneurship’. Readers can benefit from the 32 good practices and recommended texts provided by 40 WTO members and other organisations. The report was launched at the first meeting of the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender at the WTO in December 2020 and is available on the ITC and WTO websites in English, with versions in French and Spanish to follow shortly.

DISARMAMENT

Established in September 2018, the Disarmament Impact Group (DIG) is co-chaired by the Ambassadors of Canada, Ireland, Namibia, and the Philippines in Geneva and the Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). The Impact Group convenes meetings of experts to promote dialogue, share knowledge and pursue concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within the various disarmament processes.

In 2020, the DIG launched an updated version of the Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack for multilateral practitioners, which explains the relevance of gender perspectives to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, and contains ideas that can support diplomats in applying a gender lens to their work. The active engagement of Gender Champions contributed to a growing appreciation of the importance of gender to disarmament dialogue and action. In 2020, several arms control and disarmament meetings focused on gender-related considerations, for instance:

- The Conference on Disarmament (CD) held a session to discuss women’s participation and gender perspectives in disarmament. States also discussed a proposal to update the CD’s rules of procedure, making them gender neutral, but no consensus was achieved.
- The Group of Experts of Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons discussed gender and diversity considerations in efforts to address the threat of improvised explosive devices.
- Gender perspectives featured in 18 resolutions adopted by the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.
- The informal webinars of the Biological Weapons Convention Meetings of Experts included a presentation on the relevance of gender perspectives to the institutional strengthening of the Convention.

In the build-up to the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the UNIDIR published the research report Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (available in English, French and Spanish), which proposed an original approach to gender-responsive arms control and disarmament measures, structured around the four WPS pillars of participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. In October, the Impact Group co-hosted the event ‘Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda’. The panel discussion featured former President of Ireland Mary Robinson, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, and UN Women Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér, and highlighted the latest research into and synergies between the WPS and disarmament agendas.
While much of the focus in 2020 was on keeping states aware of accountability issues related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), progress continued on the Call It What It Is project to support a more effective definition of sexual violence in international criminal justice. In November 2020, co-chairs of the project Canada and Sweden, in collaboration with the International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties (ICC-ASP), co-focal points on complementarity Australia and Romania, and the Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ), organised a panel discussion to identify ways to support the ICC’s efforts to extend the implementation of the Rome Statute on SGBV.

This event underlined the importance of The Hague Principles of Sexual Violence as providing a ‘footnote’ for practitioners to cite domestic innovations on this issue rather than developing an approach to international criminal law and expecting it to filter down. Judges can provide general parameters through their reasoning processes. The ICC-ASP Bureau remained committed to undertaking further work on the issue in 2021.
GETTING AHEAD OF THE CURVE

As COVID-19 spread exponentially in March 2020, fears rose that this pandemic, like previous ones, would exacerbate existing inequalities, which would in turn exacerbate the outbreak. Board Chair Martin Chungong and the IGC Secretariat wrote an opinion piece highlighting the need for gender-responsive policies and practices, and arranged a webinar series that would allow members to exchange best practices on the subject of ‘Living Up to the Challenge’.

Attendied by over 400 Champions and Focal Points, the series provided a timely forum for global leaders in our multilateral Hubs to exchange views on various aspects of dealing with the pandemic over three thematic sessions.

Session 1: “‘Respond Don’t React’: Gender-responsive Programming in Times of Crisis’

Champions in this first recorded session highlighted:

• the critical role of human rights and civil society perspectives in ensuring effective and comprehensive measures to deal with the pandemic;
• the importance of women’s leadership at all levels: “It is time to give women equal voice in shaping preparedness and response strategies” (Ms Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights);
• the need for economic incentives and relief packages that respond to the needs of women;
• the provision of essential services to address gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health (see OHCHR Guidelines);
• that governments are to apply a gender lens in all guidance, programmes and investments related to COVID-19 and use gender markers to ensure tangible progress (see Women Deliver’s ‘Open Letter’ to governments); and
• the need for strengthened partnerships, the establishment of a high-level international advisory board, and a dedicated non-discriminatory fund to support women’s organisations (see Gender Concerns International’s recommendations).
Session 2: “‘Get Fit for the Challenge’: The Need for Organisations to Lead by Example”

Champions in this second recorded session highlighted:

• the need for a holistic approach through system-wide gender parity strategies and whole of Mission policies (see the Canadian Mission’s UN Gender Pledge);
• the importance of building on progressive flexible working policies to nurture the psychological and physical well-being of colleagues;
• specific adaptations to support family friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19 (see UNICEF, ILO and UN Women guidance and OSCE’s guidelines on remote working);
• the critical role that managers play in adapting to the specific needs of staff;
• the opportunity the pandemic provided for stakeholders to reset healthy work and life boundaries for women and men, including for unhealthy conference practices;
• the need to equip women and girls with access to digital tools and skills to limit or reduce the widening labour market gap; and
• the need to include young people in shaping new business models and practices.


Champions in this third recorded session highlighted:

• the need to strengthen women’s access to labour markets and family support services, and for funds dedicated to female entrepreneurship;
• the crises resulting from the pandemic could help shape more gender equitable trade; for example, the ITC is building the capacity of SMEs to access finance and drive gender-smart procurement;
• private companies continue to apply the Women’s Economic Empowerment Principles and can be even more ambitious in their efforts to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
• to avoid increased risk of radicalisation via the internet governments need to increase aid, transparency and accountability, and build trust in communities where women are key agents of change, but are the most silenced and most negatively affected by the pandemic.
STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION

All six IGC Hubs adapted quickly to online collaboration among their members and seized opportunities for cross-hub exchanges. Building on the COVID-19 ‘Living Up to the Challenge’ webinar series, the Geneva-based Secretariat initiated ‘super-hub’ meetings for Focal Points, including a week of events to mark the IGC’s Fifth Anniversary, and workshops, salons, events and podcasts to support the Gender Champions Challenge.

In early March, Ambassador Monique van Daalen of the Netherlands hosted the first Champion-level meeting of the year in Geneva to mark the beginning of International Women’s Week and launch the 2019 IGC Annual Report. In her opening remarks, Ambassador Van Daalen invited colleagues to “push back against the push back” of women’s rights being politicised and threatened, and Board Chair Martin Chungong spoke of the need to shift mindsets and culture. Prof. George Kohlrieser provided insights and facilitated a discussion on how to ‘Lead Change from Within’.

Also in March, Mr Noel Curran, Director-General of the European Broadcasting Union, launched the All Things Being Equal report at the Graduate Institute to guide media companies on ways of advancing gender equality. Fellow Champions Aniela Unguresan (Co-founder of the EDGE Certification) and Martin Chungong, together with Ms Larissa Bieler, Director of Swissinfo, discussed how to ‘Unlock Gender Equality’ in an industry that has a huge capacity to influence public perceptions.

Adapting quickly to virtual collaboration following confinement measures adopted in Switzerland, members of the Geneva Hub continued to
publish reports and host a multitude of online events on trade, health, sanitation, disarmament, girls in ICT, gendered algorithms, big data, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Plan International launched a new Human Rights Database, and on the 20th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS, many Champions came together to lead human rights resolutions. Spain led the first Human Rights Council resolution on the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations and Fiji led a resolution on promoting and respecting the right of women and girls to fully enjoy their human rights in situations requiring a humanitarian response.

Many Geneva-based UN agencies continued to report on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. The ILO’s Global Wage Report pointed out that women have been hardest hit economically by declining employment and the care burden resulting from the pandemic. While UN emergency funds were released to tackle increased gender-based violence, much funding has been diverted to pandemic response measures. The UN Population Fund emphasised the need for critical funding for integrated sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian response settings.

The year concluded with a virtual Champion-level peer exchange facilitated by Ms Jennifer Brant, Director of Innovation Insights, in order to capture lessons learned and focus areas for strengthened personal commitments and cross-network collaboration in 2021, particularly building on Generation Equality Levers and Action Coalitions.

New York

In early October, the new Ambassador of Switzerland to the UN in New York, Pascale Baeriswyl, joined the New York Hub and became Chair of the Steering Group. On behalf of the Steering Group she formally welcomed the current President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, as a Gender Champion, and Champion Patricia A. Torsney, Permanent Observer of the IPU, was pleased to join the General Assembly President’s Gender Advisory Board.

New York-based Champions participated in the IGC’s international webinars and events that were held globally to mark the Fifth Anniversary of the IGC network, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in New York until June 2020, moderated the webinar “Respond, Don’t React”:

Gender-responsive Programming in Times of Crisis’ in April 2020. As part of a wider IGC network webinar series on ‘COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Living Up to the Challenge’, the discussion gathered over 130 network members while the recording of the series reached dozens of viewers on YouTube. Overall, this timely webinar series enabled IGC New York to advance substantive discussions, build on partnerships, and ensure that gender equality and women’s rights remain at the top of the global agenda.

Additionally, Hub leaders supported the IGC Secretariat and UN Women with a seminar on ‘Moving the Needle: Parental Leave Policies in the UN System’, which took place virtually in October. New York Gender Champions EU Ambassador Olof Skoog, Ambassador Aliya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani of Qatar, and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka participated as speakers or panelists in the discussion on family-friendly policies as a critical component of efforts to achieve gender parity.

President of the General Assembly @volkan_bozkir established a Gender Advisory Group to mainstream gender equality throughout #UNGA75 and pledged to join the @INTGenderChamps. So it was my great privilege to welcome him on behalf of the leaders network. We count on your lead! 🇨🇭
Vienna

The Vienna Hub has continued to move the needle on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Vienna and beyond, recruiting new Champions and broadening the focus of its activities. At the first Champions’ meeting on 5 March, Champions expanded the Representation Impact Group to Vienna under the leadership of UNIDO Director-General Li Yong; Ambassador Khojesta Fana Ebrahimkhel, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN in Vienna; and Ambassador Pirkko Hämäläinen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN in Vienna.

To mark International Women’s Day, Gender Champions heading up Vienna-based organisations – the CTBTO, IAEA, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)-Vienna Regional Office, UNIDO, UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), UNOV and UNODC – participated in an advocacy campaign organised by their gender Focal Points highlighting that while progress has been made, ‘We Must Do Better’ in our efforts to achieve gender equality.

October saw the launch of the first ever Enabling Environment Week, a series of webinars organised by Vienna-based organisations – the CTBTO, IAEA, IOM-Vienna Regional Office, the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCI-TRAL), UNIDO, UNOOSA, UNOV and UNODC – participated in an advocacy campaign organised by their gender Focal Points highlighting that while progress has been made, ‘We Must Do Better’ in our efforts to achieve gender equality.

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In November, the second annual Vienna Discussion Forum (VDF) was organised by five International Gender Champions representing UNIDO, UNODC, and the Permanent Missions of Finland, Norway and Sweden in Vienna. In the context of COVID-19, the VDF centred on gender-responsive crisis preparedness, response and recovery efforts to avoid perpetuating or exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. The UNODC and UNIDO sought to identify how they can contribute to post-pandemic reconstruction and beyond. Lastly, at the final Champion-level meeting of the year in December 2020, Vienna-based Champions shared their experiences of fulfilling their S.M.A.R.T. commitments in the time of COVID-19 and jointly reflected on the challenges they faced and their achievements.
Den Haag

2020 marked the second year of existence of the IGC Den Haag Hub under the leadership of the Embassies of Canada and Switzerland. Despite global challenges, the Hub managed to successfully grow to comprise 42 Champions and broaden its impact, maintaining activities throughout the year on several themes.

In January, Swiss Ambassador Heinz Walker-Nederkoorn, the TMC Asser Research Institute for International Law, and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute’s Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics organised a roundtable discussion on ‘Decoding Biases in Artificial Intelligence: Does AI Have a Diversity Problem?’, which attempted to link artificial intelligence and gender equality in political, diplomatic and academic circles in The Hague.

Addressing violence against women is a strong theme for the Hub, building on the work of the Justice Impact Group. In May, the Swedish Ambassador, Ms Annika Markovic, and Canadian Ambassador, Ms Lisa Helfand, hosted a webinar on the impact of quarantine measures on domestic violence, and how to respond to reports of abuse and related needs. In June, on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms Melinda Reed, Executive Director of the WIGJ, published an opinion piece on the IGC website inviting all Gender Champions to offer a more inclusive and survivor-centric justice-based response to sexual violence.

CARE Nederland and the Embassies of Canada and Sweden organised a discussion around CARE’s Women Mean Business Global Report that highlighted the pathways to successfully supporting women entrepreneurs in low-income communities and addressed the impact of COVID-19 on women’s economic justice and rights. In November, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Embassy of Sweden convened a virtual dialogue to explore opportunities for achieving gender balance in disarmament forums and the challenges that such an initiative might face. Among others, the speakers included Mr Fernando Arias, Director-General of the OPCW, who presented the Organisation’s initiatives related to gender representation and its ongoing gender audit.

A final highlight of the year was the online Champion-level event entitled ‘Women as Agents of Peace’, organised by the Embassies of Canada and Switzerland, commemorating the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS. The event featured a discussion with Ms Christine Schraner Burgener, UN Special Envoy on Myanmar, who shared personal insights into her professional experiences in the field of peace and security.

Nairobi

The Nairobi Hub was officially launched on 26 June 2020. The virtual launch brought together current and prospective Gender Champions from UN agencies, the diplomatic community and various international organisations based in Kenya, who had an insightful discussion around gender equality in the world’s new COVID-de-
Since the soft launch of the Paris Hub at the Paris Peace Forum in 2019, the Paris Steering Group, which is composed of representatives of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Ireland and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, has been working to recruit new Champions to the network and launch its activities. The IGC Global Board was delighted to welcome the Secretary-General of the OIF, Ms Louise Mushikiwabo, as the first Paris-based Global Board member in February 2020. Furthermore, as the IGC has taken up a significant role in engaging with Generation Equality, the Paris Hub is working to actively engage its members and other collaborators with Generation Equality Action Coalitions, levers for change, and preparations for the Generation Equality Forum, to be held in Paris in June 2021.

Throughout the second half of the year, Gender Champions built a sense of community in their network through informal gatherings and discussions. In October the IGC Podcast Series was developed to host insightful discussions with Ambassador Alison Chartres of Australia and UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya Siddharth Chatterjee about building a career as a woman in the diplomatic corps, and the responsibility of everyone – with a focus on men and boys – to help deconstruct the global patriarchy.

In November 2020, the Nairobi Hub held its first official Champion-level meeting under the theme ‘Elimination of Violence against Women’ in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the commencement of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The opening remarks of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms Maimunah Mohd Sharif, led into a motivating discussion around Agenda 2030 and the issue of ensuring protection for women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings, national/institutional structures, and workplace policies to prevent violence, including in times of crisis. Speakers included the Head of the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr Olivier Dubois; the Regional Director of UNICEF, Mr Mohamed M. Malick Fall; the Regional Director of CARE, Ms Emma Naylor-Ngugi; and the Director-General of UNON, Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura.
The Fifth Anniversary was also an opportunity to launch the Gender Champions Challenge. With over 50 per cent of Champions’ commitments relating to leadership and organisational culture, the objective was to take the IGC and its members to the next level of awareness and action.

#ChampioningNewNorms

Building on UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore’s call to “use this golden opportunity to press the reset button”, the IGC Secretariat launched a call to action for members to accelerate an inclusive culture in line with the IGC’s core values and to identify the policies and practices that can move us forward faster in our new environment. As the well-known saying goes, “culture eats strategy for breakfast”, and without a diverse, engaged, inspired and empowered workforce it is hard to conceive of more effective programmatic policies.

From June to October, Champions were invited to nominate a gender-diverse task team to explore policies, practices and behaviours along the following guidelines:

✔️ What works for you? What are the strengths in your organisation that help to advance gender equality?

✖️ What are the glass ceilings that prevent parity, or sticky floors that inhibit an enabling and inclusive environment?

+++ What are the next steps and game-changing opportunities you see to truly level the playing field so that the talent and creativity of all your workforce can be harnessed?
Policies

- Establish a **legal framework** to ensure robust policies.
- **Include multiple diverse perspectives** in the drafting and review of policies to meet different needs and enhance the shared ownership of outcomes.
- **Set up a diversity and inclusion steering group** to review all policies from a gender perspective.
- **Dedicate senior staff** to ensure implementation and political support.
- Ensure that **guidance documents and training accompany the implementation of policies**.
- **Audit for Equal pay** using newly available EPIC tools (The Equal Pay International Coalition).
- **Make all roles flex** the norm, not the exception.
- **Offer shared parental leave** men and women and role model uptake.
- Ensure that **human resources (HR) policies** support career development.
- **Support Codes of conduct** with effective reporting and accountability mechanisms.
- **Gather gender disaggregated data** to include race, ethnicity, language, disability, age, education, socio-economic status, etc.
- **Inflexible core hours** and conference practices in multilateral forums can limit the ability of staff to accommodate caring responsibilities and achieve a work-life balance.
- Many organisations lack the political support, budget or operational structures (e.g. rosters) needed to implement progressive **parental-leave policies**.
- Consultants and contractors often fall outside the scope of organisational policies, and need protection.

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**Recruitment and talent-development policies** should be more inclusive and address in-built biases in the language of advertisements and selection processes. Specifically, they should address outdated modes of recruitment and educational/experience criteria and allow transition between G and P roles in the UN System.

**Domestic violence** is increasingly seen as an employer responsibility, and best practices are still emerging.

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Practices

- **Communication** top down, bottom up, and across the organisation so policies do not ‘get lost on the way down’.
- Dedicated **gender focal points** enable ongoing discussion, prioritisation and awareness raising.
- Publicly available **data/dashboards** show progress towards equality and enhance credibility.
- **Psychological safety** is essential to enable colleagues to speak up on a range of topics:
  - Create space for all staff members to speak up about their needs and any harassment/discrimination or bullying they experience;
  - address the fears of men who think they may lose out as a result of progressive gender-parity policies;
  - expose new ideas, insights, opportunities, and mistakes or problems from across the organisation; and
  - support career aspirations, performance upskilling and talent development.
- **Managers** are critical in role modelling healthy behaviours and creating a space to speak up. Include diversity and inclusion indicators in performance appraisals.
- **Mentoring and career coaching** helps to build relationships, break down silos, and support career-development.
- Continuous research and evolution: what worked last year will not necessarily work this year, especially as the workforce changes.
- It can be difficult to meet different needs and preferences within a team.
- Gender equality is still seen to be a **women’s issue** and dominated by women.
- **Parity** is not being achieved at senior levels and recruitment in field offices is particularly difficult.
- **More men** at the table who are engaged and committed.
- Enhanced communication between HR departments and hiring managers.
- **More synergies** between gender and other inclusion-related work.
Behaviours

✓ **Strong leadership and role modelling** are key. Leaders should aim to be the change they want to see - consider the Champions of Change ‘leadership shadow’: how I act, what I say, what I prioritise, what I measure.

✓ **Address everyday sexism and acts of micro-aggression** against women and men. Listen to the people affected, since they are the best judges of what they consider to be offensive or inconsiderate:

✓ Encourage people to be **allies** to others who are underrepresented;

✓ **Giving and receiving effective feedback and having courageous conversations** are core skills to ensure that good behaviours become the norm.

✓ **Deep listening** helps individuals to have more meaningful conversations and move beyond their own experiences in order to understand different perspectives and possibilities.

✓ **Be curious and accountable** and strengthen a positive, nurturing environment for all people.

✓ **Consistency is key**: emphasise positive changes and celebrate progress.

+++ More workshops and awareness training helps staff to initiate conversations;

+++ More counter-stereotypical role model support individual choices.

+++ More awareness, policies and practices to support non-binary people and give them the ability to self-identify outside the female-male spectrum.

“Leaders need to be able to ask difficult questions and be prepared to listen to the answers. At the Australian Mission in Geneva, remote working has been normalised and a more robust conversation on caring responsibilities and work-life balance has opened up.”

Ambassador Sally Mansfield
Australian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva (top left)

“We need to be ‘on the game every day’, calling out discriminatory or sexist behaviours and creating safe and enabling workplaces whereby each person is treated with respect and fairness.”

Mr Michael Møller
IGC Co-founder and former Director of the UN Office at Geneva (top left)

Elizabeth Broderick
Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls and Founder of Male Champions of Change, Australia. (top right)

Sunita Sehmi, Founder of Walk the Talk

More details and further best policies and practices are available on the Gender Champions Challenge Trello platform. Please also see the Representation Impact Group ‘How to’ Checklist for International Gender Champions. This is a process of continuous evolution as research develops and the workforce changes.
Bringing together Champions across the IGC’s six multi-lateral Hubs and Alumni Champions globally, five days of virtual events, podcasts and online exchanges allowed Champions to reflect on the journey to create IGC’s unique platform of action and accountability which has inspired Champions to ‘go faster and further together’.

A transformative Panel Parity Pledge, over 2,000 personal Commitments and meaningful collaboration amongst members have delivered sustained results. Small and strong groups of leaders have taken targeted and specific actions to influence systems and deliver change through eight Impact Groups in trade, disarmament, nuclear, change management, justice, representation and standards.

Going forward Martin Chungong affirmed the need to “truly live up to IGC’s core values” of treating every person with respect and fairness, valuing diversity, creating safe workplaces and working together in a spirit of openness and transparency. The challenge to change laws and policies, culture, mindsets and every-day practices to advance gender equality and inclusion of all to overcome sexism, racism and all forms of discrimination, is more important now than ever.
THE WAY FORWARD

2021: Becoming more resilient and responsive – gender responsive.

As highlighted by our COVID-19 webinar series, in order to ‘Build Back Better’ and develop more effective organisations to address the complex and pressing global challenges we face, we need to ‘live up to the challenge’ as leaders. In this time of uncertainty and instability, the challenge is immense.

Unless we unlock the potential of all people in all their diversity, we will be addressing existential issues with one arm tied behind our backs. The climate crisis will not wait and, as Generation Equality makes clear, we need to work with and for young people to ensure that we leave behind us a legacy that is better than the one we ourselves inherited. Overcoming deepening gendered divides and ensuring equitable access to physical, economic, social and technical resources are the first steps to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have the knowledge and means to build the resilient and responsive organisations and societies we need. The change starts with each of us: each one of us has to make more ambitious and deeper personal commitments. In 2021 the IGC will be sharing toolkits and offering workshops to assist Champions to apply an intersectional lens to our commitments, and will be undertaking broader work to ensure that we really do protect the most vulnerable and leave no one behind.

The IGC’s unique platform across six multilateral Hubs allows us to share ‘what works’ in our organisations and programmatic work and build international cooperation to overcome more systemic barriers. We will use the opportunity presented by virtual gatherings to facilitate cross-Hub exchanges among Champions and Focal Points, focusing on Impact Groups, Generation Equality Action Coalition themes, and areas where Champions have shared commitments, such as advancing parity and building inclusive cultures in organisations.

Generation Equality provides a framework for more global collective action. The IGC is a strategic network where, as highlighted in this report, members are already advancing critical work on gender-based violence, economic justice and rights, bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights, feminist action for climate justice, technology and innovation for gender equality, feminist movements and leadership, and the WPS Agenda and humanitarian action. Some of you are formally leading Action Coalitions; however, many more members will have valuable contributions to make. We look forward to engaging our Alumni Champions and members of the ‘Nest’ to build the global leadership we need.

Let’s make the next five years even more transformative than the last five. Let’s ensure that men and women of all ages and backgrounds have equitable visibility and voice to shape inclusive decisions and actions that will ensure meaningful and lasting change. Our children and grandchildren are depending on us.
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Executive Director, AFLA

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Director-General, OPCW

Sabra Bano
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Irakli Beridze
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Kathryne Bomberger
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