

INTERNATIONAL  
**GENDER CHAMPIONS**  
ANNUAL REPORT

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INTERNATIONAL  
**GENDER**  
CHAMPIONS





## FOREWORD

2025 was a year of reflection and renewal. Celebrating landmark anniversaries for gender equality, alongside the International Gender Champions' (IGC) own 10-year anniversary, gave us space to honour what this network has achieved while taking an honest look at persistent gender gaps and the realities of a changing political environment. We asked difficult questions about our impact, value proposition and direction - and gained clarity about what to strengthen and what to let go of.

Gender equality as a universally endorsed goal is under deliberate and sustained attack. This pushback is coordinated and underpinned by decades of targeted funding designed to influence policy, restrict rights, and reshape narratives. Shrinking civic space, polarised discourse, and financial pressures are now converging to erode hard-won gains for gender equality and inclusion.

Against this backdrop, the relevance of the IGC has never been more evident. For over a decade, this network has demonstrated that when leaders take personal responsibility, prioritise gender equality in their own institutions, act collectively and hold themselves accountable, progress is possible - even in difficult contexts. This report is both a record of what we achieved in 2025 and a reminder of what lies ahead.

Champions continued to translate conviction into action by advancing close to 500 personal commitments, 73% of which were successfully accomplished and 26% partially accomplished. 81% of Champions spoke up publicly or privately against sexism, and 55% of Champions evoked the Panel Parity Pledge to request organisers to improve gender balance on panels. Across hubs, Champion-led initiatives brought leaders, focal points, and experts together to strategise and act. In Nairobi, leaders gathered to strengthen rule-of-law responses to Gender-Based Violence. Hague-based Champions continued to drive advocacy for inclusive justice institutions. The New York Hub convened leaders at the highest political level to mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Our Impact Groups remained a powerful engine for impact, sustaining and advancing momentum on key thematic areas. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Impact Group's *#HearHerCall* campaign brought the voices of women peacebuilders from the frontlines to the heart of Geneva Peace Week. Over 70 Champions across hubs issued a joint appeal for gender balance in climate leadership. And the Digital Impact Group ensured that the gender-digital nexus remained high on the agenda during key forums.

The IGC's 10-year anniversary was a moment of renewal for the network. Celebrated across hubs, it was a pivotal milestone for the IGC to launch its first-ever five-year strategic plan: The *IGC Lighthouse Strategy (2026-2030)*. Co-created through extensive consultations with Champions and their teams, the strategy provides orientation in turbulent waters. It sharpens our mission and value proposition while remaining faithful to what makes the IGC distinctive: leadership where decisions are made, peer accountability, and a commitment to concrete action.

A lighthouse can offer direction, but it cannot move ships. The IGC's strength lies not in its structures, but in the courage and commitment of its members. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our Champions, focal points and partners for your dedication and support, and to our growing alumni community, with key members now becoming Patrons of the IGC. I also wish to recognise the dedication of the small IGC Secretariat team, whose focus and sustained efforts have ensured continuity and cohesion despite considerable challenges. I am especially grateful to the Government of Switzerland, whose core funding made it possible for the Secretariat to coordinate the network during a period of significant resource constraints.

The year ahead will demand that we use our collective voice wisely, act strategically, and support one another. In a climate where taking an active stance for gender equality can carry political cost, bold leadership and collective action matter profoundly. Let us stand firmly for gender equality, together.

**Martin Chungong**

Secretary General  
Inter-Parliamentary Union  
Chair of the IGC Global Board



# THE IGC GLOBAL BOARD AND GOVERNANCE

In 2025, the Global Board was delighted to welcome several new members, reflecting the IGC's diverse constituency: Ambassador Claudia Fuentes Julio of Chile to the United Nations (UN) and other International Organisations in Geneva, Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis of the Delegation of the European Union to the UN in New York, and Akinyi Roselyn Walender, Africa Director of Practical Action in Nairobi. Nahla Haidar, Chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also joined the Global Board as an advisory member.

The tenures of Rafael Mariano Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Phil Lynch of the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), and Ambassador Matthew Wilson of Barbados to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva were renewed. The tenure of Martin Chungong, Chair of the IGC Global Board and Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), was extended until his retirement in spring 2026. Meanwhile, the terms of Ambassador Hugh Adsett, Audrey Azoulay, and Roger Yates came to an end. The Board extends its thanks to them for their dedicated engagement. In the new year, we look forward to filling several vacant board seats, namely for Champions based in Paris and The Hague, and to welcoming a new Chair of the Global Board.

The Chair and members of the IGC Global Board work in close collaboration with the IGC Secretariat based in Geneva. Since 2019, the Secretariat has been hosted by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) with the long-standing support of the Swiss Federal Department of

Foreign Affairs (FDFA). In 2025, the IGC secured funding from a private foundation to support the Secretariat's functions in 2026. It also received event-related financial support from the Canton of Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva and the IPU, as well as numerous in-kind contributions to events and governance. A grant from the UN Foundation, supporting the coordination of the Nairobi Hub, has come to an end in summer 2025. The Global Board and Secretariat are actively exploring alternative funding sources to ensure the continued sustainability of the network in times of budget cuts and growing resource constraints.

During an extraordinary meeting in March, the Global Board agreed to a Chair's Statement, reaffirming the network's commitment to break down gender barriers and promote gender equality and diversity. The statement was later opened for Champion endorsement and publicly signed by over 30 Champions.



**Martin Chungong**  
Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Chair of the IGC Global Board

In October, the Global Board agreed to adopt the *IGC Lighthouse Strategy*, a five-year strategic framework to guide the IGC's work in the 2026-2030 period. From 2026 onwards, this new strategy replaces the IGC's previous strategic objectives of strengthening the climate-gender nexus, implementing the Gender-Based Violence Pledge, diversifying the network across regions and sectors, and leveraging digital and new emerging technologies for gender equality.

**It focuses the IGC's work on three core priorities:**

- Enabling Champions to implement their commitments;
- Diversifying the IGC network; and
- Countering the anti-gender pushback.

The Global Board also agreed to develop a new Code of Conduct for Champions to better define expectations of conduct, and to clarify procedures for managing accusations of misconduct.



**Doreen Bogdan-Martin**  
Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)



**Rafael Mariano Grossi**  
Director-General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)



**Nahla Haidar**  
Chair, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - Advisory



**Claudia Fuentes Julio**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva



**Stavros Lambrinidis**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the UN



**Jürg Lauber**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva



**Phil Lynch**  
Director, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)



**Caitlin Kraft-Buchman**  
CEO / Founder, Women@TheTable



**Akinyi Roselyn Walender**  
Africa Director, Practical Action



**Matthew Wilson**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva

# OUR NETWORK

**328** united by our commitment  
to break down gender barriers  
**CHAMPIONS**

a unique network of leaders from over 60 countries



 **NEW YORK 51**

 **PARIS 10**

 **THE HAGUE 37**

 **VIENNA 48**

 **GENEVA 156**

 **NAIROBI 21**

**INTERNATIONAL  
CHAMPIONS 5**

# IGC'S THEORY OF CHANGE

If influential leaders embed gender equality into the policies they shape and into the priorities, operations, and culture of the institutions they guide, then global systems evolve toward fairness and inclusion. The IGC accelerates this shift by **transforming personal commitment into institutional practice**.

Champions adopt **specific, measurable commitments** that reshape policies, decision-making norms, and representation. Their actions become visible examples that inspire peers, reinforce public accountability, and normalise gender-responsive leadership in multilateral spaces. Persistent engagement at the highest levels creates **cumulative change that cascades through organisations**, across sectors, and into multilateral agendas. Structural transformation becomes attainable when gender equality is no longer an optional advocacy topic, but a routine expectation of multilateral leadership.

This collective momentum strengthens a community of practice where leaders exchange strategies, celebrate progress, and confront persistent barriers. With its unique tripartite membership across governments, international organisations and civil society and more sustained outreach to the private sector, the **IGC breaks down silos**. Through bridging diverse perspectives, Champions uncover gender-blind spots, identify how systems can function more effectively, and seize openings to drive systemic change. Coming together as a network enables members to leverage **shared political will, momentum, and collective intelligence** to advance gender equality more powerfully than any single institution could achieve alone.

# CHAPTER I

# COMMITMENTS

## CORE PLEDGES

### Panel Parity Pledge

By adhering to the Panel Parity Pledge, Champions commit to refrain from participating as speakers or moderators in single-gender panels – both in-person and online – and to promote gender balance in the panels they organise. **In 2025, 79% of Champions reported successfully adhering to the Panel Parity Pledge.** While this marks an improvement compared to 2024 (77%), it remains below the adherence rate of 2021 (89%). 11% of respondents reported declining to participate in a panel because it was men- or women-only. 55% evoked the Panel Parity Pledge to request panel organisers to improve gender balance. Of those Champions who did evoke the Pledge, 35% responded that the request helped improve the gender balance of the panel, either always or very often, and 12% that it sometimes helped improve gender balance. This data indicates that the Pledge continues to be an effective tool in motivating panel organisers to enhance gender balance.

Throughout the year, 14% of respondents participated in three or fewer single-gender panels, 1% participated in up to five, and another 6% participated in more than five single-gender panels. Champions cited various reasons for participating in single-gender panels, including challenges regarding other panellists dropping out late, the intentional decision to amplify women's voices and experiences in a women-only space, the lack of available diverse experts within certain geographic areas, and lack of influence over the composition of panels that needed to be attended for professional and networking reasons.

While a greater share of these panels were women-only (57%) rather than men-only (43%), the proportion of men-only panels increased markedly from 27% in 2024. Breaking single-gender panels down by thematic focus areas<sup>1</sup> reveals a gendered pattern: 92% of respondents selecting *Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion* were women, while men predominantly selected *Policy and Governance* (54%) and *Technology and Innovation* (54%).

The Panel Parity Pledge sits at the centre of Champions' commitment. As discussions shaping global policy, governance, and innovation become dominated by those who hold power, it is more important than ever that Champions actively work to demonstrate that gender equality concerns us all and ensure panels equitably reflect the diversity of the societies they serve. To strengthen implementation of the Pledge, the IGC Secretariat will provide more tailored support to Champions and their teams and release updated guidance.

### Share of men-only and women-only panels among reported single-gender panels



<sup>1</sup>Multiple answers were possible.

### Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Pledge

Under the GBV Pledge, Champions commit to stand for zero-tolerance of all forms of GBV, sexist attitudes, and behaviours. **In 2025, 81% of Champions stated that they had spoken up publicly or privately against GBV and sexism;** 58% reported having initiated activities to create and maintain safe and respectful workplaces; 50% strengthened support and accountability mechanisms in their workplace and 46% applied an intersectional approach to their work.



### Personal Commitments

To join the IGC network, Champions are required to develop two personal commitments aimed at advancing gender equality, which can be aligned with their programmatic work or executive management. These commitments must ideally be completed within one calendar year and should follow the S.M.A.R.T. criteria: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Time-bound. To support Champions in this process, the IGC Secretariat provides regular updates to a comprehensive Commitments Guide, which includes examples and best practices. **In 2025, Champions collectively developed 498 commitments.**

**I SAY NO  
TO SEXISM**  
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

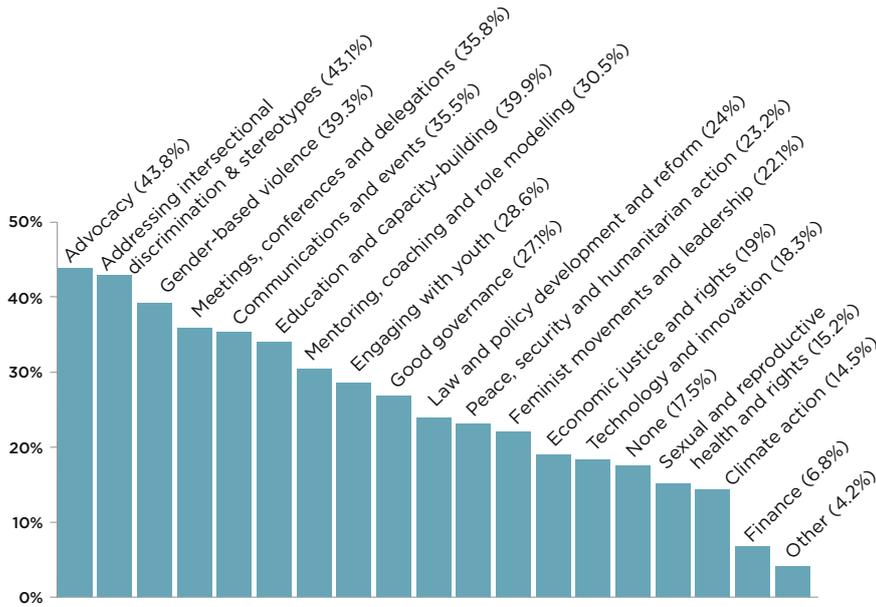
**81%**

**of CHAMPIONS**

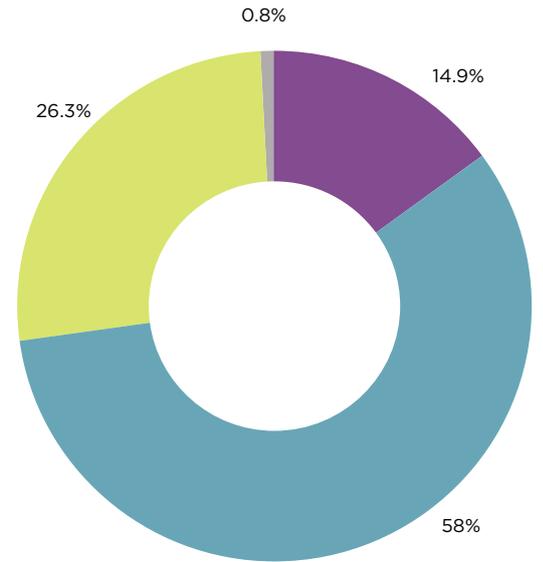
spoke up publicly or privately  
against GBV and sexism

## Commitments related to executive management

(each commitment can touch upon multiple areas)



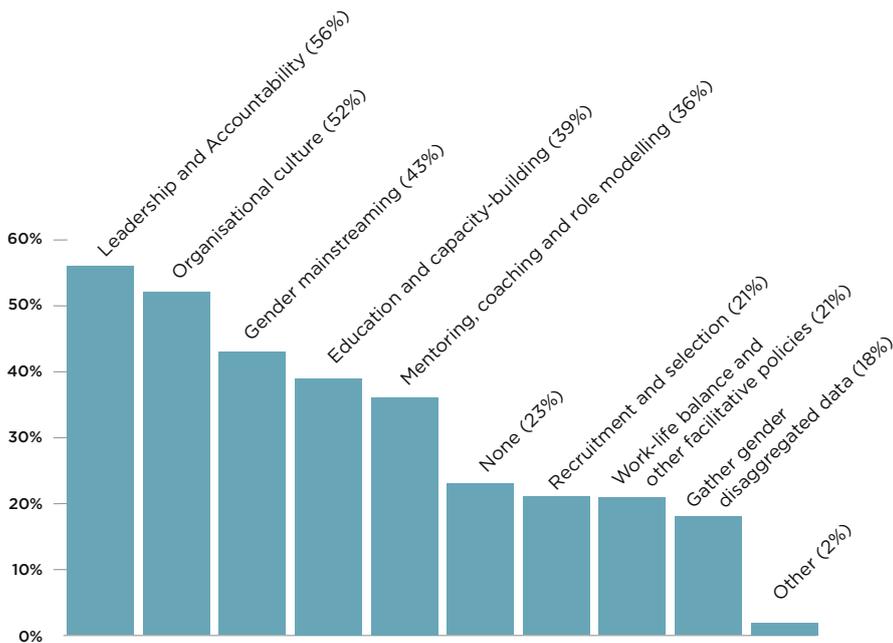
## 2025 Commitments Level of Achievement



- 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

## Commitments related to programmatic work

(each commitment can touch upon multiple areas)



# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF 2025 COMMITMENTS

Each year, Champions are asked to take stock of progress towards fulfilling their commitments, sharing important insights into both accomplishments and challenges of implementation. This review is conducted through the IGC Annual Survey, which serves as the network's main accountability tool. Beyond capturing key priorities for 2025, the survey helps surface trends over time, allowing for a more nuanced view of progress made and issues that may require additional focus.

In 2025, **more than half of internal organisational commitments<sup>2</sup> addressed leadership and accountability (56%) and organisational culture (52%)**. Gender mainstreaming (43%), education and capacity-building (39%), and mentoring, coaching and role modelling (36%) also featured prominently. By contrast, work-life balance policies (21%), recruitment and selection (21%), and the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data (18%) were addressed less frequently. These priorities are consistent with results from previous years.

**Commitments relating to programmatic work<sup>3</sup> primarily focused on advocacy (44%) and addressing intersectional discrimination and stereotypes (43%)**. GBV (39%), communications and events (36%), education and capacity-building (34%) and youth engagement (29%) also featured prominently. Technology and innovation (18%), climate action (15%), and finance (7%) remained among the least frequently addressed areas.

Overall, **73% (versus 74% previously) of commitments reported in the 2025 Annual Survey were successfully accomplished**, either with plans for continuation (58%) or replacement through new commitments (15%). 26% of commitments (versus 23% previously) were partially accomplished and will continue to be addressed to establish long-term success. Overall, these results point to sustained momentum across the network, with the vast majority of actions either completed or actively progressing toward long-term impact. Notably, the proportion of commitments deemed too difficult to pursue has fallen from 3% to less than 1%, indicating steady improvement in feasibility and follow-through.

Respondents identified several factors<sup>4</sup> that contributed to the successful accomplishment of their commitments, most commonly: Personal political will (94% agree or strongly agree), organisational buy-in (92%), and alignment with organisational strategy (92%). High levels of agreement were also reported for expertise and technical knowledge (83%) and partnerships (78%), underscoring the **importance of institutional alignment, leadership engagement, and staff capacity in supporting implementation**.

Among respondents who did not fully achieve their commitments, insufficient time (60% agree or strongly agree) emerged as the most significant barrier. This was followed closely by insufficient resources (52%). Other potential obstacles such as lack of political support, limited authority to establish new policies or programmes, or insufficient management buy-in were not reported as a frequent problem. In line with 2024 results, these findings suggest that, while commitments generally benefit from strong institutional and political support, **practical constraints related to time and resources remain primary barriers to implementation**.

Overall, the 2025 survey results demonstrate consistent trends over recent years when considering thematic priorities as well as enabling factors and barriers to implementation. Although the IGC's strategic objectives in 2025 included strengthening the climate-gender nexus and leveraging digital and new and emerging technologies for gender equality, these topics were under-represented in commitments. This suggests that integration of gender-responsive climate and technology considerations into organisational policies and programmes requires further work. It may also indicate an opportunity for network members to more proactively reach out to institutions with climate or digital technologies at their core, in order to strengthen expertise and capacity in these areas.

<sup>2</sup> Multiple answers were possible.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

# COMMITMENTS IN ACTION



## Gilbert F. Hougbo

Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)

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In 2025 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched South4Care: Strengthening South - South and Triangular Cooperation for the Care Economy. The online platform and Learning Hub connects governments, employers, workers and partners. It showcases concrete practices and builds capacity to design and implement integrated care policies aligned with international labour standards and the ILO 5R Framework for decent care work. Recent activities, including the inaugural online Hub session and the high-level launch in September 2025 in Doha (Qatar), have highlighted how care policies create decent jobs, advance gender equality and support recovery in crisis and displacement settings. The ILO has strengthened the gender equality focus of its research agenda, including through its flagship State of Social Justice 2025 Report, which contains specific sections on gender gaps in employment, in unpaid care work, in labour force participation, in education, and in wages. Further, the Care to Compete Report, underlines the business case for gender-responsive and disability-inclusive care policies, whilst the Care Economy Brief Series addresses topics such as closing the gender gap in paid parental leaves, advancing decent work and the care economy: an essential component of social development and employment-intensive investments in the care economy. Together these products marked the 25th anniversary of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

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## Alix Vuillemin

Executive Director, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

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In 2025, WIGJ continued to advance intersectional expertise among international criminal law practitioners while embedding these same principles within the organisation. In October, we co-organized the second Gender Justice in International Criminal Law Conference in The Hague, convening over 100 practitioners, scholars, and advocates to exchange strategies for integrating feminist and intersectional approaches into accountability processes. Earlier in the year, together with Malian and international civil society partners, WIGJ submitted amicus curiae observations in the Al Hassan reparations proceedings before the International Criminal Court, emphasising the gendered and intersectional dimensions of harm and advocating for survivor-centred, community-driven reparations. Furthermore, as part of the Global Initiative Against Impunity, WIGJ leads a gender-participatory process to strengthen justice and accountability strategies for serious human rights violations. Internally, WIGJ continues to institutionalise feminist leadership practices that promote equity, mentorship, and collective care, ensuring that the organisation's internal culture reflects the intersectional principles it advances externally.

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## Ian Biggs

Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN and other International Organisations in Vienna

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In 2025, Australia consistently advocated for gender mainstreaming language during textual negotiations across mandates in the Vienna-based multilateral organisations. Australia has actively participated in the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Office in Vienna (UNOV) Group of Friends of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Group of Friends of Women in Nuclear. Australia supported UNODC's delivery of an interactive gender-sensitive language training session for Vienna-based diplomats. Throughout 2025, I spoke at several gender equality-related side events across the broad spectrum of work undertaken by Vienna-based organisations, including at an IAEA General Conference side event on the success of the Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship and Lise Meitner Programmes (Australia is a key donor). Australia sponsored the WPS 25 -year anniversary breakfast hosted by the UN organisations in Vienna where member states from all regions and UN officials gathered to share best-practices, experiences, and inspiration to advance gender equality initiatives. I believe that Australia has made a meaningful contribution to coordinated efforts to address the ongoing "pushback" on agreed gender language.

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## Zainab Hawa Bangura

Director-General, United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)



This year's commitment aimed to deepen the establishment of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and their capacities related to gender equality. The Associate Gender Affairs Officer at UNON, completed a 5-day virtual Gender Trainer course which equips participants with the theoretical knowledge and practical tools to improve their practice as gender trainers. As a result from the training, a workshop on "How to be an Active Bystander – Sexual Harassment at the Workplace" was developed and attended by all GFPs at UNON. These capacity-building efforts significantly strengthened the knowledge, confidence, and practical skills of UNON GFPs to advance gender equality and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. By equipping key staff with advanced gender training, UNON enhanced its internal ability to translate global standards into actionable plans. As a result, the GFPs are now better positioned to drive informed, system-wide gender mainstreaming across UNON.



## Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu

Secretary-General, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)



Gender equality is a fundamental pillar of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and a precondition for resilient societies and sustainable peace. As an International Gender Champion and Secretary General of the world's largest regional security organization, I am firmly committed to supporting women's inclusion and full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of political and social life. In line with this commitment, in 2025 I signed the United Nations Secretary General's Common Pledge on Women's Participation in Peace Processes and actively supported the inclusion of young women leaders from Central Asia and Afghanistan through the flagship Young Women for Peace Initiative, implemented in partnership with the EU. I also redoubled institutional efforts to combat all forms of violence against women and girls. Ending femicide is among my top priorities. I was glad to co-host with Italy the first-ever OSCE-wide, ministerial-level conference dedicated to ending femicide across the OSCE region and beyond. The conference, which took place in Rome on 21 November 2025, provided a unique and essential platform to strengthen international cooperation, exchange best practices, and define a clear and concrete path toward eradicating femicide.



## Celeste Saulo

Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)



As the first woman and South American Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), I advanced the implementation of the WMO Gender Action Plan by strengthening institutional mechanisms, networks, and overall gender integration across the Secretariat, Members, and Constituent Bodies, towards reaching the 40% gender balance target. I supported the growth of the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Network, now comprising 30 focal points, and its capacity-building activities, enabling gender-responsive weather, climate, and water action supporting our Members. Across Constituent Bodies, I also facilitated the appointment of a Gender Champion to the WMO Executive Council, the Permanent Representative of Canada, and supported the development of a broader Gender Network, including National Gender Focal Points nominated by our Members. This WMO community-wide network provides high-level leadership and accountability for gender mainstreaming in WMO governance, enabling more coordinated GAP implementation and stronger regional engagement, supported by WMO's recently launched online Gender Collaboration Hub.



## CHAPTER II

# IMPACT

# UNITING FOR GENDER EQUALITY: COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR LASTING CHANGE

The IGC Impact Groups tackle systemic barriers that no individual Champion can overcome alone. Collective leadership and voice serve to influence policies and practices within the multilateral system and address persistent gaps. The unique tripartite structure of the IGC enables leaders from member states, International Organisations and civil society to bridge different stakeholders in a collaborative space and build a shared vision and accountability for progress.

## Climate (Geneva)

### Co-chaired by:

**Elise Buckle**, Founder and CEO of Climate Bridges;

**Jagan Chapagain**, Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

**Ambassador Christian Guillermet Fernández**, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva;

**Ambassador Antje Leendertse**, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva.

The Geneva-based Climate Impact Group was launched in 2024. It aims to strengthen the climate-gender nexus in and beyond the Geneva ecosystem through promoting equitable representation, creating synergies between gender, climate and other policy areas, and advocating for gender-responsive climate finance.

Following the launch of the [Geneva Pledge for Gender-Responsive Climate Action](#) in late 2024, signed by close to 80 global leaders, in 2025 the group focused on translating principle into practice amid an increasingly challenging political context. At a time when both gender equality and climate action are contested on the global stage, the Climate Impact Group continued to make the case for **gender-responsive climate action as a fundamental pillar of resilient societies and sustainable development**, bridging multilateral decision-making with lived realities on the ground.



*Panel Discussion on Women and Water:  
A Geneva Perspective, 20 March*



In March, the Permanent Mission of Germany, in partnership with the group's co-chairs, convened a *Climate Talk on Water and Women: A Geneva Perspective*. The event, held on the margins of a UN Water Convention's global workshop, highlighted how women's participation in water governance strengthens climate resilience, particularly in flood- and drought-prone contexts. Speakers from governments, UN entities and civil society reflected on the disproportionate burden borne by women in the context of climate change and degradation of water resources, while showcasing existing practices that promote gender equality in water governance.

The group advanced advocacy at the global level through a **Joint Appeal calling for gender-balanced presidencies in the Conference of Parties (COP) for climate**, which was submitted to the COP30 Presidency. Led by 2050Today, the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica and Climate Bridges, the Appeal was signed by close to 70 Champions across hubs. With only five women having served as COP Presidents to date, the initiative called out persistent structural barriers in global climate governance and urged Parties to ensure gender balance in COP leadership, including by alternating COP presidency by gender.

A major milestone in 2025 was the **launch of a Best Practice Repository, which compiles concrete examples from IGC network members** who are putting the six principles of the Geneva Pledge into practice within institutions, programmes, negotiations, partnerships, and communities. This includes Costa Rica's **Women Ocean Guardians** initiative, a Gender Observatory established during the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Bridges' work on redirecting climate finance to women, and global initiatives such as **Early Warnings for All**. Designed as a practical tool, it supports institutions seeking to move from promise to implementation.



The Best Practice Repository was launched during a final event in December, hosted by the group's four co-chairs. The event celebrated both a decade of the Paris Agreement and the one-year anniversary of the Geneva Pledge. It provided space to reflect on progress and persistent gaps, while demonstrating that gender-responsive climate action is as urgent as it is possible.

*Launch of Best Practice Repository, 12 December*

## Women, Peace and Security

### Co-chaired by:

**Ambassador Thomas Greminger**, Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP);

**Ambassador Claudia Fuentes Julio**, Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva;

**Dr. Amrita Kapur**, Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

The WPS Impact Group entered the anniversary year of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 with ambition to strengthen leadership and renew commitment to advancing gender-responsive peace and security.



Throughout the year, the Impact Group convened diplomats, civil society, researchers, and International Organisations to accelerate implementation of the WPS Agenda and showcase pathways for more sustainable and inclusive peace.

A core component of the group's efforts was **deepening engagement with human rights mechanisms**. Ambassador Fuentes Julio co-organised a high-level panel on Women in Diplomacy with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during the June Human Rights Council session, highlighting women's roles through a peace and security lens. To embed WPS into Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, building on the mechanism's potential to drive systemic change, UPR Info committed to preparing dedicated guidance for diplomats.

Women's voice and participation were the focus of initiatives to mark the 25th anniversary of the WPS Agenda in October, with a *#HearHerCall* campaign **amplifying the voices and demands of women peacebuilders**. Launched with an opinion piece by Ambassador Thomas Greminger and Ambassador Fuentes Julio, the campaign featured eight Champions and eight women peacebuilders and reached global audiences through digital storytelling.

*The WPS Impact Group's  
#HearHerCall Campaign*



A physical installation during Geneva Peace Week enabled visitors to engage directly with the video testimonies, creating space for deeper reflection on women's lived experiences of conflict and peacebuilding and the importance of enabling their leadership.

During Geneva Peace Week, Impact Group members and the IGC Secretariat also co-hosted two events. The first was an interactive exchange, co-organised by GCSP, Berghof Foundation, UN Women, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), and PeaceWomen Across the Globe, on **strategies to advance gender equality amid an increasingly militarised security environment and coordinated pushback**. Bringing together 50 participants, the workshop explored resilience, meaningful participation, coalition-building, and innovative narratives to counter funding cuts and shrinking civic space.

The second event, a panel titled *Beyond Power and Territory: Women, Rights and Systemic Approaches to Sustainable Peace*, brought together diverse perspectives from Ukraine, Mexico, Guatemala, Mozambique, and Libya. It examined whether current securitisation trends are genuinely contributing to safety, with speakers calling for governments and the international community to ground responses to territorial and other disputes in human rights-based approaches that uphold human dignity. A core component to this approach is to listen to human experiences and realities on the ground and understand how power structures can marginalise voices and are gendered in nature.

Closing the year, the group co-hosted, together with DCAF and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a dedicated workshop on the gender pushback in peace and security, reinforcing the collective resolve to safeguard and advance the WPS Agenda.

## Disarmament

### Co-chaired by:

**Dr. Robin Geiss**, Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR);

**Ambassador Clare Walsh**, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN and to the Conference on Disarmament;

**Ambassador Noel White**, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva;

**Ambassador Elvis Toolouta Shiweda**, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva; and

**Ambassador Carlos D. Sorreta**, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva.

The Disarmament Impact Group is an expert forum that seeks to promote dialogue, shared knowledge and the pursuit of concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within disarmament processes.

In 2025, the Impact Group, in collaboration with the broader disarmament community, undertook various initiatives to advance gender equality, inclusion, and diversity across arms control and disarmament forums. The co-chairs continued to disseminate the [Gender & Disarmament Resource Pack](#) in relevant meetings and events. This resource has proven useful to raise awareness about gender-related provisions and obligations in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

A positive development took place at the 11th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), in Geneva. On that occasion, States decided to appoint one or more voluntary gender focal points to promote the systematic integration of gender perspectives across all ATT processes. This strengthens the practice of appointing gender focal points in arms control and disarmament processes, which is already part of the working methods of conventions covering landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons.



*UNIDIR's immersive art installation on violence against women at the Palais des Nations, 8 December*

UNIDIR continued to update its **Gender and Disarmament Online Hub** by incorporating the latest resources and data on gender balance and gender perspectives in arms control and disarmament processes. Additionally, UNIDIR launched a [Youth and Disarmament Online Hub](#), which serves as a gateway to youth-led and youth-empowering actions in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

## Digital and New Emerging Technologies

### Co-chaired by:

**Doreen Bogdan-Martin**, Secretary General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU);

**Caitlin Kraft-Buchman**, CEO/Founder, Women At The Table and the A+ Alliance for Inclusive Algorithms;

**Ambassador Francisca E. Méndez Escobar**, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva;

**Ambassador Simon Manley**, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the UN and other International Organisations in Geneva.



Side Event at WSIS+20, 7 July

Launched in Geneva in 2024, this Impact Group ensures gender equality remains central to global digital governance, from the Global Digital Compact and Beijing+30 to WSIS+20 and the Commission on the Status of Women.

At **CSW69** in March 2025, the group convened International Organisations, governments, academia, and civil society to examine how AI and emerging technologies impact women differently. Beyond documenting persistent gaps in representation, digital literacy, and safety online the session surfaced concrete strategies for inclusive digital transformation. The event was co-convened by the IGC, ITU, the Permanent Missions of Switzerland and the United Kingdom, and UNDP.

At **WSIS+20** in July 2025, the group shifted focus to embedding gender perspectives directly into digital governance architecture. The session, chaired by Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, featured the ITU and the Permanent Missions of the UK and South Africa, emphasizing women's leadership not just as technology users but as creators and decision-makers shaping digital futures.

The Impact Group will continue advancing gender-responsive approaches in multilateral digital governance, ensuring women's expertise and perspectives shape the technologies transforming our world.

## Climate (Nairobi)

### Co-chaired by:

**Inger Andersen**, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

**Mamadou Dian Balde**, Regional Director, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);

**Etleva Kadilli**, Regional Director Eastern and Southern Africa, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);

**Leshan Kereto**, Executive Director, Tareto Africa;

**Hajir Maalim**, Regional Director Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa, Plan International; and

**Akinyi Roselyn Walender**, Africa Director, Practical Action.

Launched in 2024, the Nairobi-based Climate Impact Group aims to **integrate intersectional and social inclusion perspectives into climate action**, with a focus on encouraging and investing in women-led solutions as catalysts for change and a just transition.

In 2025, the group maintained dialogue and coordination among members, while setting the course for 2026 and beyond. Discussions explored the potential of gender-responsive budgeting at the national level as a means to advance gender equality and social inclusion, particularly within the energy and agriculture sectors.



# LIGHTHOUSE STRATEGY

## New Horizons: Launch of the IGC Lighthouse Strategy (2026–2030)

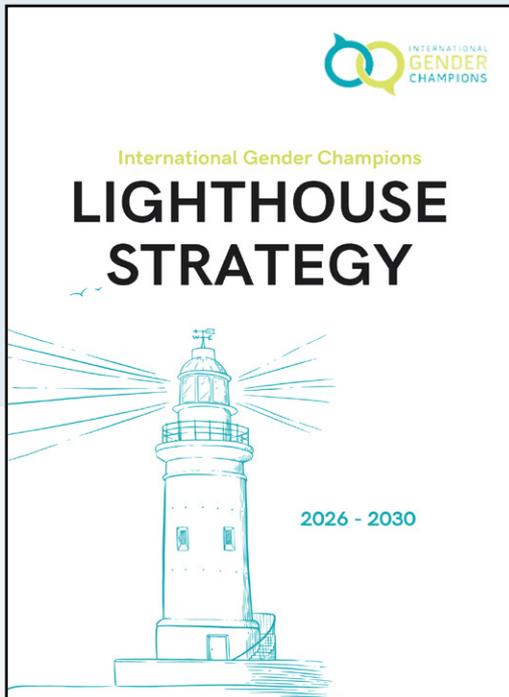
As the IGC enters its second decade of action, it launched its new *Lighthouse Strategy* in December 2025. Born from a participatory process of reflection and visioning, the *Lighthouse Strategy* is a five-year plan (2026-2030) rooted in resilience and oriented towards possibility. It brings coherence to IGC's work by refining the network's value proposition, aligning priorities across hubs and sharpening focus for coordinated, high-impact action.

**The strategy articulates how IGC mobilises leaders as a unique driver of systemic change for gender equality**, offering clarity to network members, partners, funders and the wider ecosystem. It will be operationalised through annual plans that translate the strategic framework into specific targets, activities, and measurable indicators.

To balance depth with agility, the Secretariat will allocate 80% of resources to strengthening core priorities, while reserving 20% to respond to emerging challenges and support Champion-led thematic initiatives along the thematic focus areas of climate, digital and new emerging technologies, WPS, and engaging men for gender equality.



*Lighthouse Strategy Consultation with Geneva Champions, 28 August*



#### The new core priorities include:

- **Enabling Champions** to implement their core commitments through tailored support, stronger governance and strategic communications;
- **Diversifying the IGC network**, including through greater geographic representation from underrepresented regions and the careful expansion of IGC membership to the private sector;
- **Countering the anti-gender pushback**, by more systematically equipping Champions with evidence, space for coordination and politically informed strategies to safeguard gender equality gains and respond collectively where resistance is strongest.

All IGC activities will be designed, implemented and evaluated through **four conceptual anchors: systems change, parity of representation, intersectionality and data-driven approaches.**

The Lighthouse Strategy affirms IGC's collective resolve to hold the line on progress made, to learn from experience, and to move forward together: stronger, more united, and better equipped to advance gender equality in turbulent times.

## STRUCTURAL ENABLERS FOR DELIVERY

With guidance from the Global Board and hub-specific Steering Groups, the IGC Secretariat facilitates Champions' engagement by providing quality assurance, coordination, and support, and by connecting Champions across hubs and sectors to enhance the network's overall impact. Its capacity to achieve this target and effectively deliver on the *Lighthouse Strategy* depends on the following structural enablers, which we are committed to strengthening:

- **Diversified funding:** In partnership with Champions and network members, mobilising additional resources to secure long-term, core funding. Funding decisions will be guided by due diligence principles.
- **Secretariat and hub coordination capacity:** Expanding and strengthening the operational capacity of the Secretariat to structurally support IGC hubs, ensuring sustainable resourcing of hub coordination, and fostering effective knowledge flow between hubs.
- **Governance mechanisms and procedures:** Reinforcing governance mechanisms to enhance accountability, transparency, and coherence across hubs, supporting the Secretariat's role in ensuring quality assurance and coordinated delivery.
- **Champion ownership:** Leveraging Champions' active engagement and leadership in initiating, co-designing, and driving network priorities and collaborative projects.
- **Partnerships and strategic collaboration:** Leveraging partnerships, consortia, and pro bono expertise to enhance efficiency, reduce duplication, and maximise the impact of coordinated action.

# AMPLIFYING INSIGHTS

## Communications & social media

Throughout 2025, communication tools and social media platforms played an important role in showcasing Champions' engagement and promoting positive narratives for gender equality.

The IGC Secretariat consolidated its social media channels and **grew its online community through consistent, impact-focused content**. On LinkedIn, engagement was high with a follower growth rate of 29%, reaching close to 9000 followers by year-end. Instagram continued to build momentum with a growth rate of 38%, reaching 522 followers (an increase of approximately 200 over the year). At the beginning of the year, the Secretariat transitioned from X to establish an initial presence on Bluesky.

**As the IGC celebrated a decade of transformative leadership and collective action**, around 30 Champions submitted video messages congratulating the network on its achievements as part of the *#IGC10Years* anniversary series. Towards the end of the year, the Secretariat launched its *10 Years of IGC - 10 Stories of Impact* series. Each story highlights a different Champion who has turned commitment into tangible change, from policy reforms to inclusive leadership. Participants included the three IGC co-founders Michael Møller, Pamela Hamatoto, and Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, former IGC Chair Arancha Gonzáles, as well as current and former Champions Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Paul Bekkers, Elise Buckle, Sameer Chauhan, Lilian Dodzo, and Michèle Taylor.

The Secretariat also published six IGC podcasts with Champions and occasional guest speakers, who shared their insights on topics ranging from localised approaches to feminist policies to the role of women as architects of peace. Due to funding cuts, the IGC podcast was discontinued.

### 2025 Podcasts

- **From Local Roots and Global Reach: Implementing Feminist Policies** - A podcast with Ambassador Nadia Theodore, Permanent Representative of Canada to the WTO, UNCTAD, ITC and WIPO, and Nohra Alejandra Quinguntar, IGC Youth Champion and Indigenous woman leader from Colombia.
- **Empower and Uphold: A Human Rights Approach to Gender Equality** - A podcast with Mona M'Bikay, Director of UPR Info, and Seth Nimwesiga, IGC Youth Champion and Ugandan human rights advocate.
- **The Missing Link: Menstrual Health and the Agenda 2030** - A podcast with Dominic O'Neill, Executive Director of the UN's Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, and Dr. Ally Zlatar, IGC Youth Champion and feminist artist, scholar, and activist.
- **Holding the Line: Defending Gender Equality in a Changing World** - A podcast with Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU and Chair of the IGC Global Board.
- **Changing the Script: How to Bring the WPS Agenda to Life** - A podcast with Nathalie Chuard, Director of DCAF
- **Resilience Starts at Home: Women as Architects of Peace** - A podcast with Edit Schlaffer, Founder and Chair of Women Without Borders.



# HIGHLIGHTING BEST PRACTICES: SECOND EDITION OF THE *GENDER-RESPONSIVE ASSEMBLIES TOOLKIT*

In September 2025, the IPU, Women at the Table, and the IGC released the second edition of the *Gender-Responsive Assemblies Toolkit*. First published in 2018, the updated Toolkit reflects recent advances across international organisations and in global standards, including the 2024 adoption of CEDAW General Recommendation 40 on women's equal participation in decision-making systems.

Launched during the IPU parliamentary event at the opening of the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in New York, the Toolkit supports organisations in making assemblies more inclusive, legitimate and effective.

It provides practical guidance and examples to help ensure diverse participation and gender-responsive deliberations and decisions, before, during and after assemblies. Inputs and best practices were provided by a number of IGC network members: ILO, IPU, ITU, IUCN, OHCHR, UNDRR, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNOG, WHO, WIPO, and WMO.

The Geneva launch of the toolkit took place at the IPU Assembly in October 2025, with the presence of Martin Chungong, IGC Global Board Chair and IPU Secretary General, as well as Ambassador Claudia Fuentes Julio of Chile, who is also a member of the Global Board.

Geneva launch of the updated Gender-Responsive Assemblies Toolkit at the 151st IPU Assembly, 22 October



## CHAPTER III

# OUR HUBS

### Geneva

In 2025, the Geneva Hub sustained its role as a key space for coordinated advocacy across the IGC network. From high-level meetings and global campaigns to expert workshops and flagship series, Geneva-based Champions continued to demonstrate their commitment to intersectional, inclusive, and forward-looking approaches to gender equality.

The year began with a **Geneva Champions Meeting** on 28 January, with hosts Ambassador Nadia Theodore and Ambassador Peter MacDougall bringing together over 40 Champions at the Permanent Mission of Canada to align on 2025 priorities. A second Champions Meeting was held by Ambassador Heidi Schroderus-Fox at the Finnish Residence on 5 December. This meeting provided a space for reflection and strategising amidst global pushback on gender equality and marked the official launch of the IGC *Lighthouse Strategy*, which was developed through direct consultations with Champions across the network, including a series of bilateral consultations, collective consultations during hub-specific Champion meetings and a high-level workshop in Geneva on 28 August.



10 Year Anniversary  
Celebration, 3 July

A true 2025 highlight was the IGC's 10-Year Anniversary celebration on 3 July at the Palais des Nations, the network's original birthplace. The event honoured a decade of gender-responsive leadership across the network with a panel including its three co-founders, Pamela Hamamoto, Caitlin Kraft-Buchman and Michael Møller, and a keynote by former IGC Chair Arancha González. Over 100 current and former Champions and partners from across institutional, governmental and civil society sectors joined the celebration.

The hub followed its tradition of marking **International Women's Day** with the annual *Geneva Gender Debate*, held in partnership with the Geneva Graduate Institute. Bringing together four speakers from the IGC network to argue for or

Geneva Gender Debate, 6 March



against the motion, the 2025 edition examined the potential of digital technologies to act as accelerators for gender equality. The full debate recording is available on [Youtube](#).

**Advancing equity in the digital era** remained a key focus for the Geneva Hub in 2025. In March, the IGC Secretariat co-hosted *Visualising Deep Data to Advance Gender Equality* in partnership with Dangle, showcasing innovative approaches in data visualisation for bridging silos and gender gaps. On 24 April, the hub marked International Girls in ICT Day in collaboration with ITU, drawing attention to persistent barriers and opportunities to strengthen the participation of girls and women in science and technology. At the end of the year, the IGC Secretariat organised a *Lunch and Learn* on gender mainstreaming in standards development for new emerging technologies.

The Geneva Hub also sought to better **equip Champions and their teams with practical tools to promote gender equality** internally and externally. This included co-hosting an interactive workshop on gender mainstreaming with DCAF, a *Lunch and Learn* on the menstrual health gap, and a workshop on responding to the anti-gender pushback, co-organised with DCAF and ODI Europe.

The theme of **gender and diplomacy** also featured prominently among activities, with events such as an interactive high-level workshop on women in diplomacy in partnership with the London School of Economics (LSE) and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, a seminar on gendered dynamics in international relations in partnership with the Geneva Graduate Institute, and a Breakfast for Ambassadors of member states with a Feminist Foreign Policy, hosted at the Chilean residence.

At a time of increasing insecurity for many communities and countries, several events were convened to address **justice, inclusion and**

**participation in peacebuilding.** On 12 March, a roundtable discussion featured women's human rights defender Maimouna Ba, and brought together activists, policymakers and civil society actors to reflect on the ongoing fight for the right to education of women and children displaced across the Sahel. Many members engaged with the WPS Impact Group's activities during Geneva Peace Week, from 13 to 17 October, including the *#HearHerCall* campaign, which amplified the voices of women peacebuilders (see WPS Impact Group). And on 30 October, the Permanent Mission of Canada in Geneva, together with the IGC and a number of other partners, hosted a screening of the film *The Sharp Edge of Peace*, followed by a panel discussion with Afghan women activists and international experts on the challenges and possibilities for gender-responsive transitional justice.

## Nairobi

The Nairobi Hub started the year with a Steering Group meeting to reflect on progress made to date and provide strategic guidance for the hub's 2025 activities. This meeting also served to review key achievements delivered under the UN Foundation-funded project *Strengthening Engagement, Advocacy, and Feminist Action in the IGC Nairobi Hub*, which intended to boost the hub's **multilateral engagement, advocacy efforts, and regional leadership** in promoting gender equality.

Throughout the 16-month funding period, the hub recorded notable progress, including increased engagement through regular Steering Group, Champions' and focal point meetings, strengthened collaboration with local civil society actors, establishment of the Nairobi-based Climate Impact Group and delivery of high-level events focused on gender equality and the prevention of GBV. In addition, more frequent communications and closer coordination with the IGC Secretariat enhanced the visibility and influence of Nairobi-based initiatives. With the UN Foundation grant having come to an end, the hub is now seeking to mobilise new funding sources to secure long-term sustainability and impact.

In April, the IGC, in partnership with the Austrian Embassy, convened a breakfast briefing themed *Good Laws - Challenges in Implementation*. The event brought together members of the international community, civil society, government representatives, law enforcement experts, and diplomatic missions to discuss the **role of legal frameworks in GBV prevention** and the challenges of enforcement. Discussions highlighted GBV as a global crisis and human rights violation requiring community-led and government-supported solutions. Speakers acknowledged Kenya's legal frameworks, including the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act and the FGM Act, and the critical role of civil society in awareness-raising, trust-building, and survivor

support. They raised the link between education and reduction of harmful practices, alongside the need for stronger action to empower girls to raise their voices and challenge GBV. The discussions emphasized the complexity of GBV prevention and the need for integrated action to bridge gaps in law enforcement and translate legal frameworks into meaningful change, including through community-based approaches, localised multi-stakeholder strategies, economic empowerment of girls and women and public-private partnerships.



*Nairobi Champions Meeting, 18 September*

In recognition of the IGC's 10th anniversary, the Swiss Ambassador hosted a **celebratory luncheon and Nairobi Champions Meeting** in September. Champions reflected on the network's achievements over the past decade, celebrated key milestones, and renewed their shared commitment to advancing gender equality. They also shared their personal stories of impact around advancing gender equality within their spheres of influence and mandates. Further, the group discussed the IGC *Lighthouse Strategy*, with Champions providing personal insights and Nairobi perspectives.

## New York

With the commemoration of 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 25 years since UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the UN's 80th anniversary, 2025 was a year filled with promise and historic milestones in New York. But despite these notable highlights, it was also a challenging year for gender equality at the UN.

Throughout 2025, the New York Hub continued to grow in membership. In February, the hub welcomed the President of the 79th General Assembly, H.E. Philemon Yang, among the International Gender Champions. Through his dedication to gender equality and women's empowerment, he remained committed to integrating these principles into all aspects of the General Assembly's work. Later in the year, his successor joined the IGC network and the New York Hub welcomed H.E. Annalena Baerbock, President of the 80th General Assembly. Having started her new duty in September, she has since been driving gender equality at the highest level of multilateral diplomacy and will play a key role in the election process for the next UN Secretary General in 2026.



*High-Level Event on the Eve of CSW69, 9 March*

On 9 March, just before the start of CSW69, Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland – in its role as IGC member – convened **high-level representatives of over 40 member states** on Roosevelt Island to celebrate 30 years of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The event was especially meaningful as it brought together all Presidents of the UN organs, high-level UN Officials and around 15 ministers from different countries to enable last minute talks and decisions on the eve of CSW69.

From 10–21 March 2025, CSW69 then gathered Member States, UN entities, and civil society organisations at UN Headquarters in New York. Participants, including a large number of Gender Champions, reaffirmed global commitments to the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action, while also confronting contemporary challeng-

es: From (technology-facilitated) sexual and Gender-Based Violence and women's underrepresentation in leadership to the future of work and the digital gender divide. Member States at CSW69 adopted – by consensus – a Political Declaration reasserting commitment to the rights, equality, and empowerment of women and girls worldwide.



*Welcoming UNGA President Annalena Baerbock to the IGC*

To accelerate the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly under the lead of its President and Gender Champion H.E. Annalena Baerbock was held in September during high-level week to celebrate Beijing+30.

In October, **commemorating 25 years of the WPS agenda and Security Council Resolution 1325**, Switzerland led a coalition of states with the support of the Secretary-General to renew the Common Pledge for women's participation in peace processes and multiply efforts to keep supporting women mediators worldwide, recognising that only inclusive mediation leads to durable peace.

Throughout the year, the New York Hub has witnessed increasing attacks by Member States against language that promotes gender equality in resolutions of the UN General Assembly and its committees as well as in the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). For the community of Gender Champions, the events and trends unfolding in 2025 offer both **validation and a renewed mandate as well as a reminder that joint advocacy remains more important than ever**. The gains inside the UN system prove that bold institutional commitments can lead to meaningful change.

It is critical to note that while Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 30 years, the gap between policy and action is widening. The 2025 Gender Snapshot, released in September by UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), is a sobering reminder that gender inequalities remain deep and will not be overcome without persistent global and local efforts.

## Paris

Activities of the Paris Hub encountered significant challenges in 2025 due to budget constraints and changes in leadership across a number of organisations and embassies. However, Champions continued to advance commitments via their personal and institutional work to promote women's leadership and empowerment.

In line with its Global Priority Gender Equality, UNESCO has translated its commitments into action in education, social and human sciences, natural sciences, culture, and communication and information. Through policy support, capacity development, and mentorship, UNESCO has addressed gender disparities across its mandate, from reducing barriers that limit girls' access to and completion of quality learning to strengthening the role, careers and leadership of women in science. Addressing GBV, discrimination and harmful stereotypes has remained central to UNESCO's work, especially in and through media, including gaming, sports and culture, and with the proactive engagement of men and boys with the Transforming MEN'talities Programme. Aligned with the IGC's priority to **address gender inequalities in the world of AI**, UNESCO has continued its efforts to close the digital gender divide by promoting digital skills, equitable access to technology and ethical standards for emerging technologies, including with a new Recommendation on the Ethics of Neurotechnology and with a global network on Women 4 Ethical AI.

On 7 March, UNESCO dedicated International Women's Day 2025 to Afghan women, hosting a high-level conference in Paris. The event brought together Afghan activists, artists, and international experts, spotlighting the millions of girls and women barred from education and amplifying voices silenced at home. Extensive consultations with women's rights groups led to the publication of *Banned from Education: A review of the right to education in Afghanistan*, guiding pilot initiatives led by Afghan women's organisations.

Other **network members continued to advance gender equality through training, advocacy, and community engagement**. The Embassy of Mexico in France, in line with Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy, led workshops such as *No Revictimisation*, which strengthened consular staff capacity to provide empathetic, ethical, and safe care to women facing violence abroad, avoiding revictimising practices and reinforcing an institutional response centred on dignity, human rights and emotional well-being of survivors of violence. It also engaged in the *Gender in AI Fellowship* with UNIDIR to counter the underrepresentation of women in international security processes, equipping women diplomats with the

expertise to explore the latest and emerging AI applications from a policy, legal and technical lens. Moreover, Ambassador Blanca Jiménez Cisneros created and presided the *Chapter France for the 50+1 International Collective*, an initiative of Mexican women leaders seeking to support and promote mechanisms for women's empowerment and active participation in decision-making spaces.



*Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women with the Latin-American Women Diplomat Network in France*

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2025, Ambassadors and diplomats from 40 countries gathered at the Arc de Triomphe to publicly share their dedication to combat GBV, in an event organised by the Latin-American Women Diplomat Network in France, founded by the Embassy of Mexico and currently under the presidency of the Embassy of Panama.

## The Hague

In January, the Embassy of Switzerland opened the year with the New Year's Champions Breakfast at the Swiss Residence, gathering members and prospective members of the Hague Hub. Swiss Ambassador Corinne Cicéron Bühler marked the anniversaries of Beijing+30 and UNSCR 1325 as key opportunities to renew commitment to gender equality. In his keynote, Ambassador Peter Derrek Hof, the Netherlands' Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, reflected on The Hague's legacy of peace and women's leadership while calling for unity against anti-gender movements.

Later in March, the Embassy of Colombia convened a high-level event to foster dialogue on paragraph 18 of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's (PCA) 125th Anniversary Resolution, which encourages Contracting Parties and the PCA to **promote inclusiveness, diversity and gender equality** within the institution. Supported by 19 co-sponsoring states, the event brought together members of the court and state representatives to reflect on key elements of the resolution, including: Promoting the designation of more women within National Groups, strengthening women's participation in the International Bureau, and supporting efforts to increase the nomination of women as arbitrators.

In May, the Embassy of Canada hosted a screening of *The Sharp Edge of Peace* for the diplomatic community at the Canadian Residence, followed by an expert panel on Afghanistan. The event provided insights on **Afghan women peacebuilders and contemporary challenges**, human rights and justice issues in Afghanistan, including stories of resilience.

Film Screening and Panel Discussion of *The Sharp Edge of Peace*, 27 May



Complementing these Champion-level events, the hub also strengthened its internal network through two **focal points networking breakfasts**. The two meetings allowed Hague-based focal points to connect and discuss around the main challenges women face in diplomacy and multilateralism, and on ways to support women's equal leadership. Antônia Pereira de Sousa, ICC Chief of Office to the Registrar, and Ambassador Ana Cristina Rodríguez Pineda de Guatemala, spoke about structural barriers and pathways to women's equal representation in diplomacy and multilateralism. Discussions surfaced the need for equal representation, male allyship, data-driven accountability, mentorship, and transparent recruitment and promotion policies, reinforcing the focal points' commitment to collaboration across diplomatic and international institutions.



Gender Justice in International Criminal Law Conference, 29-30 September

Momentum continued in September with the **Gender Justice and International Criminal Law Conference**, co-organised by Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ), Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), the Gender Justice Practitioner Hub, and the International Institute of Social Studies. The event, supported by the IGC and other partners, built on the success of its first edition held in 2024 and brought together over 200 legal practitioners, scholars, activists, survivors, and policymakers to examine current and emerging challenges at the intersection of gender and international criminal law. Participants shared strategies for strengthening feminist, intersectional, and survivor-led approaches to accountability and building more inclusive, effective frameworks for justice.

In early October, the Canadian Residence again served as a meeting point for Champions and prospective Champions, featuring exchanges and **reflections on Champions' commitments in the context of Beijing+30**. To mark the 16 Days of Activism against GBV in November, the Canadian Embassy also organised an expert-led roundtable with IGC focal points on the topic of technology-facilitated GBV.

Earlier that month, the Swiss Embassy brought the Hub together around a powerful narrative of women's resilience through a screening of *Free to Run*, a documentary on the democratisation of distance running and the long struggle - particularly by women - to claim their place in the sport. The event gathered members of the diplomatic community, government representatives, international organisations, and civil society partners. A post-screening exchange offered deeper insights into the documentary's themes, reflecting on the evolution of **women's participation in sport** and the ongoing work needed to dismantle structural barriers.

The year concluded with renewed multilateral engagement, as WIGJ partnered with other civil society organisations and States Parties to continue advancing a *transformative and feminist dialogue on gender justice* at the margins of the 24th session of the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Discussions focused on conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, workplace culture and accountability at the ICC, and gender justice within the Crimes Against Humanity Treaty Initiative—the latter co-organised with the Embassy of Colombia, a fellow Steering Committee member of the Hague Hub.

## Vienna

The Vienna Hub was coordinated by the IAEA for the first half of 2025, enhancing cooperation among key stakeholders, fostering the exchange of best practices and exploring new opportunities for collaboration. In July, the Vienna Hub **marked the IGC's 10th anniversary with a biannual Champions meeting**, chaired by Ambassador Olga Marta Sauma Uribe of Costa Rica. The meeting brought together more than 50 Gender Champions and Focal Points and spotlighted Champions' success stories. IGC Chair Martin Chungong presented on IGC's plans to develop a *Lighthouse Strategy* and encouraged Champions to continue cross-hub collaboration and advocacy.

In the second half of the year, the IPU Office in Vienna, under the leadership of Ambassador Brigitte Brenner, assumed hub coordination, working to revitalise engagement among Champions, Steering Group Members and Focal Points. A



Vienna Champions Meeting, 10 Jul

Steering Group meeting in October served as an important opportunity to reconnect and discuss emerging priorities such as the next Vienna Hub coordination.

The hub also organised an online Vienna Focal Points meeting in December, allowing participants to review progress and prepare for the next biannual Champions meeting in early 2026.

The IPU Vienna Office further continued to **strengthen the Vienna Hub's visibility and engagement** through welcoming new Champions and promoting events organised by Vienna-based partners, such as the film screening and panel discussion of *The Last Ambassador*, featuring fellow Gender Champion and Ambassador of Afghanistan in Vienna, H.E. Manizha Bakhtari.

The IGC Vienna Hub continues to explore avenues to secure sustainable resources for a more permanent Hub Coordinator position. Ambassador Brenner conducted outreach to Vienna-based Permanent Missions and UN agencies to identify a future Hub coordinator. The consultations have not yielded confirmed candidates thus far, reflecting capacity constraints and institutional challenges.

# CHAPTER IV

# LOOKING FORWARD:

# RESILIENCE AND RESOLVE:

# SHAPING 2026 WITH PURPOSE

As we look to 2026, the International Gender Champions enters its next decade with a commitment to hold the line on what has been achieved, while setting our sights firmly on the horizon. Progress towards gender equality in 2025 offered both encouragement and warning.

The UN system (comprising the UN Secretariat, funds and programmes, and specialised agencies)<sup>5</sup> reached a historic first with women representing 50.4% of staff at “Professional and higher” categories, yet reform-driven job cuts risk having a disproportionate effect on women. At senior operational levels, representation continues to lag and according to Global Women Voices, out of 2,800 Permanent Representatives in the history of the UN in New York, only a mere 7% have been women.

Globally, the 2025 *Gender Snapshot* provides a sobering report on the state of gender equality across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, reminding us of the scale of the challenge ahead. Without course correction and robust commitment, for instance, 351 million women and girls may still be living in extreme poverty by 2030. As the 2030 deadline draws closer, it is clear that the SDGs must be seen as a checkpoint rather than a finish line. Goals will slip further away if we do not develop a strategic response to the anti-gender movement, annual funding for which more than doubled in Europe to reach a total of \$1.18 billion over the period of 2018 to 2022<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, the disengagement of some UN Member States from key gender equality mechanisms, including UN Women, raises serious concern and threatens critical resources and capacities at a pivotal moment.

**An alternative trajectory remains within reach, but it requires deep reflection, innovative approaches and tactical foresight** to put in place the pieces to ensure that gender equality remains central to the next global development framework rather than relegated to unfinished business. UN Women highlights, for instance, that targeted investment in a single, concrete measure - closing the gender digital divide - could benefit 343.5 million women and girls

worldwide, lift 30 million out of poverty by 2050, and add an estimated \$1.5 trillion to global GDP by 2030<sup>7</sup>. We must resolve the paradox of increasing demand for funding for gender equality and human rights amidst declining resources.

The IGC is well placed to meet the challenge: Our *Lighthouse Strategy* provides sharper priorities, more tactical interventions, and clearer pathways to impact. **We will tackle the gender pushback strategically, not defensively, grounding our work in evidence, coalition-building and principled leadership.** We refuse to make the case for gender equality with our backs to the wall; instead, we must set the agenda proactively, articulate a positive and compelling vision, and demonstrate that gender equality is integral to effective leadership, sustainable institutions and resilient societies. **Communications will be a key driver of visibility and influence**, helping us amplify good practices, shift narratives and inspire action both within and beyond our community.

To sustain and strengthen the network, we will continue to diversify IGC’s membership and perspectives, while reinforcing the foundations that enable trust and credibility. This includes **strengthening governance**, notably through the development of a Code of Conduct for Champions, and engaging our alumni community more strategically as IGC ambassadors, advisors and connectors. We will design accessible but high-impact interventions tailored to Champions’ needs, ensuring that commitment translates into meaningful change. We will also work to **broaden and stabilise our resource base** in a thoughtful and responsible manner, safeguarding IGC’s independence while enabling long-term impact and sustainability.

With resilience as our anchor and resolve as our compass, 2026 will be about leading forward. Thank you for joining us as we continue to shine our collective light for gender equality, providing clarity, direction and steady leadership in times of complexity and change.

<sup>5</sup> Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General (25 July 2025)

<sup>6</sup> Datta, Neil, 2025. The Next Wave: How Religious Extremism Is Reclaiming Power. Brussels: European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, 2025: The Gender Snapshot 2025

# LIST OF CHAMPIONS

## GENEVA

### Adam Day

Head of Geneva Office, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research

### Agi Veres

Director, UNDP Geneva Office

### Alain Déléroz

General Director, Geneva Call

### Alejandro Bonilla Garcia

Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva), NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva) & Representative to the United Nations of the International Federation on Ageing

### Alex Conte

Executive Director, Child Rights Connect

### Alexander Kmentt

Permanent Representative, Austria

### Alexandra Bilak

Director, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

### Amanda Gorely

Permanent Representative, Australia

### Amy E. Pope

Director General, IOM

### Anders Gautschi

CEO, Biovision

### Aniela Unguresan

Co-Founder, EDGE Certified Foundation

### Anita Pipan

Permanent Representative, Slovenia

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