



INTERNATIONAL
GENDER
CHAMPIONS

PANEL PARITY PLEDGE GUIDANCE



March 2026

Background

Since the IGC's creation in 2015, the Panel Parity Pledge (PPP) has been at the heart of the IGC's mission and vision, positioning Champions as role models in advancing inclusive practices in discussions that affect the whole of society.

Originally designed to address the under-representation of women speakers (or men in discussions relating to gender equality), a decade later the IGC Global Board decided to expand the scope of the Pledge to reflect a broader understanding of inclusion and meaningful participation. While gender balance remains at its core, the Pledge now also pro-

motes wider diversity and seeks to shift norms so that homogeneous panels become increasingly unacceptable.

The rationale for the PPP is simple: representation and visibility influence outcomes. Diverse and expert voices, across gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background and lived experience, must be included to ensure that public conversations reflect the societies they serve. Inclusive representation generates more sustainable and innovative solutions and strengthens decision-making and accountability.

Key considerations of the updated Panel Parity Pledge include:

- **Intersectionality and diverse representation:** commit to diverse panel compositions that reflect not only gender balance, but a broad spectrum of social identities, including geographic, age and other elements of diversity.
- **Guidelines for Moderators:** provide guidance for moderators to ensure equal and meaningful participation and inclusive and respectful discussions, actively engage underrepresented voices, and speak out against discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.
- **Inclusive language:** Promote the usage of inclusive language in panel discussions to challenge persistent stereotypes and discriminatory norms.
- **Timing:** Committing to organising panel discussions and events within working hours, wherever possible.
- **Civil society engagement:** Providing guidance towards actively including members of local feminist civil society and putting mechanisms in place to allow for the safe participation of human/environmental rights defenders, who often experience reprisals.

Definitions

International Gender Champions

The International Gender Champions (IGC) is a network of international decision-makers who have committed to breaking down gender barriers and making gender equality a working reality within their spheres of influence.

Panel Parity Pledge

Since its creation in 2015, the baseline commitment of the IGC has been the Panel Parity Pledge, which calls on the individual Gender Champion to challenge the absence of diversity, including but not limited to gender balance, by engaging with event organisers on panel composition. It aims to create a positive and proactive mindset for inclusion in all discussions affecting our society.

While it maintains its original focus on gender balance, the Pledge was expanded in 2026 to reflect a more comprehensive understanding of diversity. It underscores that meaningful dialogue and credible policy solutions require panels that, building on gender balance, reflect the diversity of the communities they aim to serve.

Panel

Champions are often invited to speak at events, roundtable discussions, public conferences or other forums. This may be in the capacity of a keynote speaker, a panellist, or as a moderator. In all cases, for the purposes of the Panel Parity Pledge, a “panel” is defined broadly as:

*“**Any speaking engagement** where the Champion is invited as **representative** of their organisation, as a subject matter **expert**, or in their **personal capacity**, whether to deliver welcome remarks; be the keynote speaker; share experiences, practices or knowledge as a panellist; or to facilitate a discussion as the chairperson or moderator.”*

Suggested language

When Champions are invited to speak

Include standard language in correspondence replying to all speaking engagements, for instance:

*[Champion X] is a member of the International Gender Champions (IGC), and has taken the **IGC Panel Parity Pledge**. By taking the pledge, [insert pronoun] has **committed to striving towards gender-balance** at every event to which [insert pronoun] is invited to speak. We are also recording statistics for each event that [Champion X] participates in, to be published in the annual IGC report.*

In addition:

- Request the organisers to confirm who the other panellists/speakers/participants are (if not obvious from the invite), and enquire how gender-balance and diverse representation will be achieved.
- Explain that as a condition of acceptance, the expectation is that there will be both men and women speakers from a variety of backgrounds to ensure inclusive perspectives and insights.
- Offer suggestions for interesting speakers that might round out the panel.

When Champions receive an invitation with a speaker list that is not diverse

Proposed text to adapt in correspondence with the organisers:

*We have noticed that the composition of speakers at [name the event or panel] is **all-male/ all-female / lacks diversity in geographic representation, age, or other**. [Champion X] is a member of the International Gender Champions (IGC), and has taken the **IGC Panel Parity Pledge**.*

*By taking the pledge, [insert pronoun] has **committed to striving towards gender-balance and diversity of representation** at every event on which [insert pronoun] is invited to speak. We are also **recording statistics** for each panel that [Champion X] participates in to be published in the annual IGC report.*

*As a leader, [Champion X] believes [insert pronoun] has a responsibility to walk the talk towards increasing **representation and meaningful participation** of those typically left out of decision-making. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation, and ultimately the **effective implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality**.*

If your Champion and Focal Point have ideas for more diverse experts to speak, you can include the following language:

*We are mindful that it can be a challenge to ensure a gender-balanced, diverse panel, and to this end [Champion X] would be **pleased to propose** [Name and affiliation of proposed candidate] [to take their place] [be invited to speak]. This would be a great opportunity for [Name proposed candidate] and would **ensure inclusive perspectives and insights** on the topic. We can put you in touch with [Name] if you do not have another panelist in mind.*

When Champions unexpectedly find themselves about to participate on a panel lacking diversity

For Champions finding themselves on a non-diverse panel without prior notice or due to last minute changes, the following wording can be adopted:

*As a Gender Champion, I have signed the **IGC Panel Parity Pledge** that challenges all of us to **take a stand against single-gender panels and actively promote diversity of speakers**. The International Gender Champions (IGC) is a network of international decision-makers who have committed to breaking down gender barriers and making gender equality a working reality within their spheres of influence.*

*We need to **actively promote the participation and influence of women** (or men on women's issues) from diverse backgrounds to achieve inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation.*

*There are many brilliant women, I find it **hard to believe that one could not be found to join us** on this panel.*

***It will take all of us** working together to bring the inclusive perspectives, insights and innovation that we and the world so badly need.*

Additional strategies can include:

- **Only take questions from women and members** of the audience who are **not represented** on the panel, if only men have had a chance to speak
- **Challenge stereotypes** you hear in the panel conversation, and make sure to **use inclusive language** in your remarks
- **Recruit** an expert you know **from the audience**
- Add an **empty chair**
- **Leave** the room

When Champions are invited to moderate a panel lacking diversity

When the Champion is approached to moderate an event, consider asking the following questions:

- **Who are the participants** of this panel?
- Do they **represent a diverse cross-section** of the expert community on this topic?
- Are there any voices **not represented** on the panel who should be?
- Can we **engage members of the audience** to balance any under-representation of key voices?
- How can we make sure to **incorporate the diverse perspectives** of this panel within our discussion? Central to this, how can we ensure that all panellists have relatively **equal time to contribute**?

When moderating the panel itself, the Champion's role will be to create an inclusive, respectful, and engaging environment for all participants, while being mindful to avoid tokenistic engagement. Some tips to consider include:

- **Set the tone** by highlighting that each panellist has a valuable contribution to make (to encourage equal voice), and the objective is to have a conversation (to encourage active listening and dialogue) before the discussion begins.
- **Inform participants** that you may intervene if necessary to **manage time** and ensure that everyone has a chance to meaningfully contribute their views.
- **Ensure equal participation** by encouraging all panellists to contribute and suggesting a time for responses. For those who have not spoken much, ask open-ended questions like "What are your thoughts on this?" rather than putting them on the spot.
- Invite members of underrepresented communities to speak on topics in a way that **respects their professional and thematic expertise**, rather than centering their identity, so that they do not feel obligated to speak "on behalf" of their community.
- If someone uses disrespectful language, politely remind them to **keep the conversation** respectful. Address the issue privately if necessary, and involve event organisers if the behaviour persists.

Additional Considerations

In addition to the core principles of the Pledge, the following considerations can help ensure a more inclusive and thoughtful approach to panel participation and organisation.

- **Individual and Collective Ownership:** Champions are encouraged to reflect upon their own spheres of influence and collaborate proactively with organisers, peers and civil society to promote inclusive panels.
- **Moderator Support:** Effective moderation is central to creating inclusive discussions. Moderators are encouraged to establish ground rules, model respectful language, manage participation equitably, and intervene when discriminatory behaviour arises. This ensures that panels embody inclusion in practice.
- **Accessible and Safe Events:** Leaders are encouraged to advocate for event formats that are physically, linguistically, and technologically accessible. Where possible and appropriate, Panels should provide translation services, hybrid attendance options, and safe spaces for civil society actors, particularly human rights defenders, to participate without fear of reprisal. Communicating expectations for panellists in advance of their participation, as well as taking into account virtual safeguarding best practices should be considered. Further measures can be found in the [WECF's/WEDO's Planning Virtual Meetings toolkit](#).

Existing resources

Leaders are encouraged to use existing resources, such as the [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity](#), the [Human Rights Council Resolution on Discrimination against Women and Girls \(2024\)](#), and practical toolkits like Plan International's [#LanguageMatters Guidance](#), to guide inclusive panel design and planning. We also invite Champions to consult our [IGC Gender-Responsive Assemblies Toolkit](#) for effective best practices throughout the network.

Get in touch

If you have any suggestions, language or best practices you would like to share with the network, please contact: admin@genderchampions.com.