CHAPTER 10

Gender Equality in Crisis

Emerging Challenges for Women's Participation

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1 Introduction

The whole process of institutionalising the emergency regime has attracted severe criticism for its lack of a gender lens and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes. A case in point was the Emergency Committee on COVID-19 set up by the World Health Organization (WHO), in which women accounted for less than 20% of the membership. This imbalance was also evident in the all-men emergency task forces established at domestic level, which defined the institutional face of a ‘mandemic response’.

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1 This Chapter draws upon the article Elisa Fornalé and Chiara Germano, 'La parità di genere nell'emergenza: un'analisi del carattere democratico-rappresentativo delle “Task Forces” alla luce del diritto internazionale' (2021) 1 Gruppo di Pisa 342. Elisa Fornalé was responsible for writing parts 1, 2, and 4 and Chiara Germano wrote part 3.

2 Coscieme L, et al. ‘Women in Power: Female Leadership and Public Health Outcomes During the COVID-19 Pandemic’, MedRxiv (2020). United Nations (UN), Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, 9 April 2020; World Bank (WB), Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Policy Note, 16 April 2020; Alon et al., ‘The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Gender Equality’ (Voxeu, 19 April 2020) <https://voxeu.org/article/impact-coronavirus-pandemic-gender-equality> accessed 5 November 2021; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted: “It is inconceivable that we can address the most discriminatory crisis we have ever experienced without full engagement of women” [...] “At the moment, men have given themselves the impossible task of making the right decisions about women without the benefit of women’s insights. This needs to be set right without delay so we can work together on a future that is equitable, gender-responsive and greener.” UN Women Executive Director. UN Women ‘Women’s Absence from COVID-19 Task Forces will Perpetuate Gender Divide’, statement made on 22 March 2021.


4 The USA, for example, established the “White House Coronavirus Task Force” with the purpose of monitoring, preventing and mitigating the spread of the coronavirus. The task force was replaced in January 2021 with the “COVID-19 Advisory Board” of which seven out of sixteen members are women. In addition, a so-called “COVID-19 Health Equity Taskforce” has been created to include members from disadvantaged groups (e.g. immigrants, LGBTQ+,...
The available data highlighted that only 3.5% of the task forces created in 87 countries ensured gender parity.\textsuperscript{5}

This imbalance in decision-making power affects the degree to which the specific circumstances of women are taken into consideration, by not allowing them 'to make the decisions that affect their lives'.\textsuperscript{6} In the words of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General 'when women are not consulted or included in decision-making on issues that have a direct impact on their lives, such as education, health, economic development and conflict resolution, policy outcomes are likely to be harmful and ineffective and to lead to the violation of women’s rights'.\textsuperscript{7}

Now that the recovery and response phase is being planned, the chapter aims to reflect on the critical issues raised by the pandemic emergency in relation to women’s participation. Specifically, the analysis focuses on how the creation of temporary decision-making bodies, such as task forces, at international and domestic level has revealed that the adoption of the ‘usual modus operandi’ could reinforce gender inequality by severely limiting women’s participation.\textsuperscript{8}

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Gender Equality and Participation

Participation, as ‘an essential principle of governance’, is vital for the functioning of democratic processes and for fostering coherent responses.\textsuperscript{9} As recently stated by the UN Secretary-General ‘the key to reinvigorated and reimagined
governance lies with truly meaningful participation of people and civil society in the decisions that affect their lives.\textsuperscript{10}

In international law, participatory rights relating to women’s equality are set out in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (\textit{cedaw}).\textsuperscript{11} Two provisions are particularly relevant. The first is article 7,\textsuperscript{12} which defines the internal dimension of participatory rights and includes States’ obligations to ensure women’s rights to access to decision-making together with the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and in its implementation (article 7a). Article 7 includes the right to hold public office and to perform all public functions at all levels of government (article 7b), and the principle of non-discrimination with regard to the right to participate in non-governmental organisations and public life (article 7c).\textsuperscript{13} The scope of the provision is very broad and it requires that women are not only part of decision-making bodies, but also ‘that women be given the opportunity to have a real and viable input in all decision-making processes’ by preventing future discrimination (‘meaningful presence’).\textsuperscript{14}

The second of the provisions is in article 8, which concerns the participation and representation of women in international positions (the external dimension of participatory rights) and the \textit{cedaw} became the first international instrument to address explicitly the issue of women’s participation at

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{11} The \textit{cedaw} entered into force on 3 September 1981 (1249 UNTS 13), and it has 189 States parties. Hilary Charlesworth and Christine Chinkin, ‘Between the Margins and the Mainstream: The Case of Women’s Rights’, in Fassbender Bardo and Traisbach Knut (eds), \textit{The Limits of Human Rights} (Oxford University Press, 2019) 205–222.
\bibitem{12} Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180) states: “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country”.
\bibitem{13} Wittkopp Sarah, ‘Article 7’, in Marsha Freeman et al. (eds), \textit{The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women} (Oxford University Press 2012) 198.
\bibitem{14} Marsha Freeman et al. (eds), \textit{The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women} (Oxford University Press 2012) 198.
\end{thebibliography}
international level’. It requires State Parties to ‘take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations’ (article 8).

The duty to ensure gender equality covers the right of women to be appointed to positions that represent Member States in international organisations, such as diplomats, ambassadors, members of international tribunals and international organisations such as the UN, and that play ‘key roles in developing international law and human rights’. Member States are required to ensure equal participation through a two-fold approach: first, by guaranteeing that processes of appointment to international positions comply with gender equality criteria, and, second, by adopting at domestic level transparent selection processes to ensure equal opportunities for women, particularly if states nominate candidates for those positions. By ensuring the opportunity to participate at international level, the articles reinforce women’s right to non-discrimination.

As clearly outlined in the above provisions, ‘participation is not just to vote’, participation requires having influence and a continuous interaction between women and political power at the domestic and international levels to contribute to the way political power decides. That is what makes articles 7 and 8 ‘powerful tools’ for women specifically, in line with the two general recommendations (No. 23 and 25) adopted by the CEDAW Committee to guide Member States on implementing these provisions.

15 ibid.
16 Article 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
19 “The appointment of women to international bodies is a prerequisite for women to influence, formulate, and implement international policy”, ibid. para 24.
20 Commission on the Status of Women (n 5).
In General Recommendation No. 23, the CEDAW Committee explained that the political and public life of a country is a broad concept and can refer to the exercise of political power, in particular legislative, judicial, executive and administrative powers, all aspects of public administration and the formulation and implementation of policy at all levels.\footnote{Wittkopp Sarah, ‘Article 8’, in Marsha Freeman et al. (eds), \textit{The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women} (Oxford University Press 2012) 198.} In General Recommendation No. 25, the CEDAW Committee endorsed a mandatory nature of ‘temporary special measures’ for the fulfilment of \textit{de jure} and \textit{de facto} women’s rights to participation in line with articles 7 and 8.\footnote{Ruth Rubio-Marín, ‘Women’s Participation in the Public Domain Under Human Rights Law: Towards a Participatory Equality Paradigm Shift’, in Rubio-Marín R and Kymlicka W (eds), \textit{Gender Parity and Multicultural Feminism, Towards a New Synthesis} (Oxford 2018) 66–96.} The Committee recommends a complementary reading of both provisions with article 4 that legitimates affirmative action.\footnote{Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180) states: “1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating \textit{de facto} equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved. 2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory”. Frances Raday, ‘Article 4’, in Marsha Freeman et al. (eds), \textit{The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women} (Oxford University Press 2012) 198.}

The question of how the COVID-19 emergency could influence the full implementation of women’s rights became pressing. In particular, could an emergency situation limit women’s right to access and to participate in decision-making bodies? To answer this question, the next section will explore how women’s political participation and representation has been addressed during the pandemic.

3 \textbf{The Impact of the Regulatory and Institutional Framework of Lockdown: The Composition of ‘Task Forces’}

As the lockdown became more globalised at the beginning of the pandemic, several governments assumed emergency powers. Women’s participation have been curtailed for two main reasons: on the one hand an ongoing limitation of...
human rights, such as freedom of movement and association, which placed an ever-increasing workload and the burden of family care on women, and, on the other, a gradual and progressive reduction of women’s active participation in managing the crisis and the subsequent reconstruction phase.

Against this background, our analysis attempts to clarify to what extent the creation of the new ‘emergency’ institutional set-up interfered with the exercise of the above-mentioned safeguards set out in CEDAW. Specifically, we focus on the establishment of the institutional mechanisms, the so-called ‘task forces’, in relation to their gender dimension. The involvement of these task forces is not an absolute institutional novelty, since in the past, ad hoc\textsuperscript{25} bodies have been established during emergencies such as earthquakes or natural disasters, or to facilitate the achievement of specific goals.

Unsurprisingly, starting from February 2020, when the first signs of the Coronavirus emergency appeared, and even more so during the full-blown epidemic, multiple task forces were hastily set up with experts called to assist government bodies, both centrally and locally. These task forces were somewhat undefined and flexible, as confirmed by the names they were given: e.g. technical committees, study groups, working groups and control room, among others\textsuperscript{26}.

3.1 \textit{At International Level}

Data relating to the creation and composition of COVID-19 task forces by international institutions and organisations are rather limited and not easily accessible. Noteworthy among them is the task force created by WHO. At the beginning of 2020, WHO set up the ‘Emergency Committee’ to deal with the pandemic emergency implementing the International Health Regulations (a binding international law instrument adopted by WHO Member States in 2005). Initially 20\% of the members of the Committee were women. This was contrary to the resolution adopted by the Executive Committee on 8 February

\textsuperscript{25} For instance, the Global Health Crises Task Force established by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2016 to support and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises; the Italian Education Ministry’s task forces established in 2016 and in 2017 following the 2016 earthquakes in Abruzzo, the Latium, Umbria and the Marches (Decree n. 667/2016) or in 2017 following an earthquake on the island of Ischia.

\textsuperscript{26} We adopt the definition formulated by the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker “A COVID-19 task force is any executive branch (temporary or permanent) created by a national government in response to COVID-19” and we extend this definition to international and/or subnational task forces (COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, ‘Women Remain Absent: COVID-19 Task Force Participation’, 2021).
which was only partly implemented, clearly urging Member States to ‘take action to engage and involve women in all stages of preparedness processes, including in decision-making, and mainstream gender perspective in preparedness planning and emergency response’. Similarly, among the 25 members of the WHO–China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019, which met in February 2020, less than 20% were women. Moreover, the first and second WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee had (5 women and 16 men out of a total of 21 members, i.e. 23.8%). Women’s participation has improved, reaching the threshold of 37.5%, in the third IHR Committee, which had 32 members 12 of whom were women.

Of the members of the Africa Task Force for Novel Coronavirus established by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to oversee, at the continental level, preparedness and response to the epidemic, just over 10% were women (2 women out of a total of 16 members).

The European Commission also created a specific task force on 16 March 2020 to assist in the implementation of existing European Union legislation, programmes and policies. Named the Commission’s Advisory Panel on COVID-19, the task force comprised ten experts ‘appointed by the President of the Commission on the basis of their acknowledged expertise’ in specific fields set out by the Commission: 20% of the appointed members were women.

In contrast, the Corona Response Teams launched at the beginning of March 2020 by the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von Der Leyen, to encourage a coherent approach to the situation from all 27 Member States and the European Union, had a majority of women (four of the six members), but this is the only known instance of female overrepresentation.
Remarkable is also the initiative of CERN, which created a task force with the aim of ensuring an effective and well-coordinated response to the emergency. The task force was called CERN against COVID-19 and composed of 21 members only three of whom were women.\(^{33}\)

Despite the limited information relating to the international task forces and the gender of their members, there was clearly a significant absence of women in the bodies created to manage the pandemic at supranational level.\(^{34}\) As early as April 2020, the UN had underlined, in its Policy Brief related to the first impact of COVID-19, the risk that this absence could affect the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response plans. It identified, as one of the three cross-cutting priorities, the urgent need to involve women in the decision-making process related to the pandemic and to ‘ensure women’s equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making’,\(^{35}\) an exhortation which so far, however, does not seem to have been heeded.

### 3.2 At Domestic Level

The lack of women in all the COVID-19 task forces is also a concern at the domestic level. The recent mapping exercise undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh, shows that only 24% of members of COVID-19 task forces were women and that only in 19% of the women held a leadership role.\(^{36}\)

The percentage of women in COVID-19 task forces varies significantly by region, with a higher level of participation in ‘Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (32%)’ than in Latin America and the Caribbean (29%) and sub-Saharan Africa (20%).\(^{37}\)

Considerable differences are also seen within regions, for example in Europe, 73% of members of the Albanian task forces are women and 63% of Estonian task force members are women. By comparison, in the Hungarian task forces the level of women’s participation is only 7% and in the Belarusian

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34 Van Daalen et al. (n 3).


37 ibid.
task forces it is 9%. Also, the average for female participation in the Italian COVID-19 task forces appears to be among the lowest in Europe (19%), a not encouraging finding, considering that Italy is apparently among the states with one of the largest numbers of COVID-19 task forces.38

We now turn our focus to the specific case of Italy to look more closely at the formation of some of the main COVID-19 task forces set up in its ministries during the emergency.39

3.2.1 Italy

Italy represents a significant example of the proliferation of task forces during the pandemic. The Head of Civil Protection started this trend on 3 February 2020 by creating one of the first COVID-19 task forces in Italy, which was composed entirely of men.40 Faced with the urgent requests to explain the total absence of women, the Head of Civil Protection justified the situation as merely a consequence of the lack of women in the top positions in public administration.41 It was not until May 2020 that six female experts joined the Committee.42

The Presidency of the Council of Ministers set up its own task force in April 2020 chaired by Dr Colao. Only four of the nineteen members, drawn from

38 ibid.
39 The list of COVID-19 task forces is by no means exhaustive.
40 The ‘Operational Committee on the Coronavirus for Civil Protection’ was in charge of ensuring the full coordination of actions to be taken during the COVID-19 pandemic. Article 2 of the Decree n°371/2020 states that ‘the Committee consists of the following members: Coordinator of the Office for the promotion and integration of the National Civil Protection Service of the Civil Protection Department; Secretary General of the Ministry of Health; Director General of Health Prevention of the Ministry of Health; Director of the Office for the Coordination of Maritime, Air and Border Health Offices of the Ministry of Health; Scientific Director of the National Institute for Infectious Diseases “Lazzaro Spallanzani”; President of the National Institute of Health’; article 3 also provides for the possibility of calling upon ‘qualified experts’ to attend meetings, selected in special cases at the discretion of the Head of the Civil Protection Department or at the proposal of the Coordinator of the Committee or its members’.
43 The experts of the ‘Task Force for Reconstruction’ were appointed by the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 10 April 2020. The overall aim of the task force was to identify a ‘catalogue’ of solutions (the so-called Colao Plan) for the post-COVID-19 emergency and gradual recovery of the country. The Task Force created a sub-group to deal with ‘Individuals and Families’ which had the merit of advancing the debate on inequalities and identifying specific measures to promote gender equality and social sustainability (e.g. the adoption of the Gender Impact Evaluation, to strengthen inclusive welfare, and to improve education and employment opportunities for women).
professional and academic fields, were women. Five additional members, all women, were later appointed to the Committee because of the uproar following the blatant underrepresentation of women.\textsuperscript{44}

The Ministry of Innovation, with the agreement of the Ministry of Health, established one of the largest Italian task forces. It comprised a multidisciplinary group of 76 experts from institutional and professional fields, with the task of analysing and studying socio-economic and health data relating to the impact of the epidemic: only 16 of the members were women.\textsuperscript{45} The selection procedure was strongly criticised for a lack of information about the criteria adopted to identify the candidates.\textsuperscript{46}

The Ministry of Economy and Finance together with other institutions operating in the financial sector ‘informally’ set up a task force to ensure the swift and efficient use of the cash support measures adopted by the government. The criteria for appointment to the task force – called upon to operate with ‘informal methods and means, with a variable organisation and make up’\textsuperscript{47} – were not disclosed.

The Ministry of Education set up two task forces. The first, which was established to deal with the educational emergency, seems to have had more than one hundred members, although there are no official data on their exact number and gender. The second, which was tasked with drafting ideas and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{44} Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 12 May 2020.
\bibitem{45} The ‘Anti-COVID-19 Technology Task Force’ identifies, proposes and evaluates solutions ‘for the management of the health, economic and social emergency’ linked to COVID-19. This task force has promoted the development of a COVID-19 tracking application.
\bibitem{46} The question was raised in front of the Senate on 6 April 2020: the Minister was asked to clarify what procedures had been followed to select the experts and to guarantee the appropriate degree of impartiality, transparency and competence. In reply, the Minister merely repeated that ‘Members, indeed, were identified precisely in consideration of the possession of the specific professional skills and qualifications required to carry out the activities assigned within the work group’. This appeared insufficient to clarify the issue: Senate of the Republic, ‘Interrogazione sulla costituzione della task force dati per l’emergenza COVID-19. Risposta’ (‘Question on the establishment of the data task force for the COVID-19 emergency. Reply’, authors’ translation) (16 April 2021) <www.infoparlamento.it/tematiche/interrogazioni-interpellanze-risoluzioni-mozioni/senato-della-repubblica-40394-interrogazione-sulla-costituzione-della-task-force-dati-per-l-emergenza-covid9-risposta> accessed 29 November 2021.
\bibitem{47} Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Banking and Financial System, ‘Iniziative della Task Force per assicurare l’efficiente e rapido utilizzo delle misure di supporto alla liquidità adottate dal Governo’ (‘Initiatives of the Task Force to ensure the efficient and rapid use of the liquidity support measures adopted by the Government’, authors’ translation) (29 April 2021).

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proposals for the start of the new school year, had 18 members of whom eight were women.

The Undersecretary of State at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers set up a (more balanced) Monitoring Unit aimed to counteract the spread of ‘fake news’ on COVID-19, comprising 11 members, five of whom were women.48

In contrast, the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family appointed a task force called ‘Women for the New Renaissance’ composed of 12 experts, all women, with the mandate to develop proposals ‘to increase the percentage of women in all areas of work, to overcome the barriers to progress in career paths’49 The outcome of its work, submitted on 25 May 2020,50 was not unanimously accepted due to the significant absence of a long-term perspective on improving gender equality beyond the emergency situation.51

Interestingly, in May 2020, the issue of women’s underrepresentation in the various task forces gave rise to a heated debate in Parliament, ending with the tabling of a motion in which the Italian Government was asked, among other things, to make transparent and available the criteria adopted to nominate the members of these bodies and to guarantee the gender balance without necessarily increasing the overall number of members appointed.52 This request was not accepted.

3.3 Main Challenges
This brief overview identifies some specific challenges facing women’s participatory rights in the specific context of the emergency task forces.

First, the creation of temporary decision-making mechanisms both at international and domestic level has had serious implications for the fulfilment of the right to non-discrimination and equal participation in all public spheres. The lack of formal channels for participation, in particular due to the lack of transparent public appointment procedures and objective criteria for recruitment to these bodies, has affected respect for the obligations arising from articles 7 and 8 of the CEDAW.53 Most of the task forces were created through political expediency justified by the urgency of the situation, instead of adopting

48 Decree of the Undersecretary of the Council of Ministers of 4 April 2020.
49 Decree of the Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family of 10 April 2020.
53 UN Human Rights Council (n 18).
consistent and formal nomination procedures for the selection of candidates. In several cases, the selection procedure was not even public; this also makes it possible to avoid disclosing the identities of candidates before the nomination. Interestingly, the so-called ‘co-option method’ was a prominent strategic choice and, as Dr Colao had warned, this method mostly favoured men. The creation of an opaque environment within which nomination procedures disregarded the gender balance could not be explained away by invoking the ‘emergency situation’ created by the pandemic. In fact, the CEDAW ‘doesn’t allow for derogation in time of public emergency, nor is the commitment to women’s equality made subject to such “claw-backs” as protection of national security, public order, public health, morals or the rights of freedom of others’.54

The second concern relates to the effectiveness of measures adopted by these bodies. These bodies were created to respond to the crisis and should have reflected society as a whole, guaranteeing an equal and balanced presence of males and females as an expression of democratic representation.55 This underrepresentation could not be explained by the argument that there was a ‘limited pool of candidates available’, because women were evidently precluded from having an equal opportunity to gain access to the selection procedures.56 The lack of women playing an active role in the development of policies could affect the implementation of measures adopted at domestic and international level by undermining the democratic legitimacy of the COVID-19 closed-door governance.57

To face these challenges, and to make gender parity a priority both at the international and domestic levels, new mechanisms and changes to the normative frameworks will be necessary. As a possible way to implement successive changes, some scholars suggest the adoption of temporary measures, such as quotas, to strengthen a gender-balanced approach to the nomination

54 Freeman (n 14) 28.
55 Commission on the Status of Women (n 5), para 22.
56 ‘Claiming to not find any qualified women in global health is ultimately an unjustifiably poor excuse for excluding diverse perspective’, Van Daalen et al., 14.
57 As highlighted by the UN Women Expert Group Meeting, the ‘lack of social diversity and inclusion may undermine the perceived legitimacy of decision-making processes by elected and appointed bodies’ from a general point of view. UN Women Expert Group Meeting, The State of Women’s Participation and Empowerment: New Challenges to Gender Equality; Background Paper prepared by Pippa Norris (EGM/CSW/2021/BP1); UN Human Rights Council, Current Levels of Representation of Women in Human Rights Organs and Mechanisms: Ensuring Gender Balance. Report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (A/HRC/47/51).
of candidates. Better access to information about available vacancies is also needed. The identification of ‘appropriate measures’ to reduce the persisting barriers that prevent women from being nominated could also include possible ‘sanctions’, such as the rejection of the whole list of candidates if it is not gender balanced.58

4 Conclusion

The COVID crisis has unquestionably demonstrated how the full enjoyment of women’s rights continues to encounter obstacles and has highlighted that gender inequalities are still a global phenomenon. As recalled by Henn ‘globally, women and girls face discrimination in every social and legal system. It is only the extent and multidimensionality of the discrimination, and its intersection with other grounds of discrimination such race and class that differ’.59

It is absolutely essential to continue to strengthen collective efforts to make visible the gender limits that persist in the institutional set-up.60 In this sense, the composition of task forces offers an emblematic example of how certain established practices, such as co-option, may undermine effective participation of women and equal leadership opportunities at all levels of decision-making in political and public life.

To end on a positive note, the key critical issues in this contribution may provide fertile ground upon which to build ‘gender-responsive institutions’ at all levels. Institutions are called upon first to become aware of the need for women’s participation in positions and places of power and, second, to actively encourage equal opportunities, starting with the adoption of transparent methods of appointment. As noted by the UN Secretary-General ‘good governance and democracy require inclusive leadership and representation’.61


60 It is important to underline how global mobilisation, for instance, had a significant impact on changing the membership of several bodies.

61 Commission on the Status of Women (n 5) para 5.
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