

# XV<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION



## CSW

### STUDY GUIDE

**Political rights & legal equality: minimum standards  
treaty vs. recommendations  
Labour rights and equal pay norms, education access &  
discriminatory legislation reform**

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## Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HASMUN'26 our 15th year of leadership, growth, and unforgettable moments.

For fifteen years, HASMUN has been more than just a conference. It has been a place where ideas are challenged, voices are discovered, and individuals grow into leaders. And now, you are a part of that legacy.

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This year marks our 15th edition. And that means something.

It means tradition.

It means excellence.

It means responsibility.

And now, it means you.

I look forward to witnessing your journey, your growth, and the impact you will create.

Welcome home.

Nazrin Sadigova

Secretary General

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## Letter from the Committee Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In this historical committee, you will be placed in the early years of the United Nations, navigating the complex and formative period between 1946 and 1950.

This study guide has been prepared to support your understanding of the agenda item, focusing on political rights and legal equality, including the debate between a minimum standards treaty and recommendations, as well as labor rights, equal pay, access to education, and discriminatory legislation. As delegates, you are expected to approach these issues from the perspective of the time, taking into account the post-war context and the evolving nature of international human rights discussions.

We encourage you to engage critically with the material, represent your assigned country's position accurately, and contribute constructively to the committee's work. Remember that this is a period in which many of the principles we consider fundamental today were still being debated and shaped.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to our Academic Assistants, Defne Su Topbaş and Alper Akdağ, for their valuable support and contributions throughout the preparation of this study guide.

We look forward to your participation and to the insightful debates that will emerge from this committee.

Sincerely,

İl Deniz Ezgi Bayca

Asmin Nupel AKINCI

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## **I. INTRODUCTION TO COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

### **1. Establishment of CSW and the San Francisco Conference**

The formal development of international women's rights reached an important turning point during the United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO), held in San Francisco in 1945. Although the main aim of the conference was to create a new international system to prevent future global conflicts, it also became a key moment for recognizing gender equality in law. Before this point, international law generally viewed women's issues as domestic concerns or social welfare matters, rather than as basic human rights.

An important part of this period was the continuous effort of female delegates, mainly from Latin American countries. These pioneers understood that the early drafts of the UN Charter were unclear about discrimination based on sex. Despite strong opposition from several major powers, who saw "women's issues" less important than security concerns, these delegates successfully pushed to include the principle of gender equality in the Charter's Preamble. As a result of their efforts, the UN Charter became the first international agreement to affirm the "equal rights of men and women." Specifically, Article 8 of the Charter stipulated that the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs. This legal milestone provided the necessary mandate for the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946.

Without the "San Francisco Moment," the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) would not have had the legal authority within the UN system to challenge discriminatory laws and promote the political rights that shaped its early work (1946–1950).

## 2. Function and Mandate

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations, dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, under the auspices of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). CSW was established by the ECOSOC Resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946. CSW emerged in the aftermath of World War II and was inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt's call for women's participation in peace and reconstruction. The initial idea behind the establishment was to identify global barriers affecting women. Over time, CSW's functions were expanded and the Commission tackled issues such as developing policies, monitoring implementation and engaging in international agreements advancing women's equality. The Commission even went on to be a key element in the drafting and advancement processes in international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Resolution states the commission's function as follows:

*“The functions of the Commission shall be to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields. The Commission shall also make recommendations to the Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Commission is effectively involved in tackling discrimination against women; identifying challenges and monitoring global challenges that women face. In 1996, ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 expanded the mandate of the Commission. However, in this committee; the years between 1946 and 1950 will be simulated.

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<sup>1</sup> (2025). Un.org. [h.ps://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/11\(II\)](https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/11(II))

### 3. Membership

The Commission is composed of member states which are selected to represent different regions of the world. In the early years of its existence (1946-1950) membership was fairly limited and primarily consisted of countries which were actively involved in reshaping the world after World War II. Representatives are chosen by their respective governments. They are typically experts or diplomats with experience in legal, social and human rights.

ECOSOC is responsible for choosing which countries will be represented in CSW, which means the committee is responsible for electing the member states. These representatives usually serve a four-year fixed term, after which they may be re-elected. The voting rights within the Commission is limited to member states however non-member states such as specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may participate as observers and contribute to the discussions made within the official sessions. This structure allows for a broader input while protecting the authority of the member states with voting rights.

## **II. POST-WORLD WAR II**

### 1. Impact of World War II on Women

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 significant economic and social changes were observed, particularly for women. The main reason of the dramatic shift in the dynamics were due to men being sent to military during the war, and women having to take the responsibilities of men in their countries. For example, after men left for the war, women took on roles in factories, agriculture and public services. Since women were tasked with filling in labor shortages, their social and economic status changed drastically. In the United Kingdom, United States and the Soviet Union women worked in factories to produce weapons, vehicles and other

wartime supplies as well as working in transportation and administration. Before the war, women's status and roles were more limited and often confined to only domestic responsibilities.

The role of women reached a broader scope, and not just economically. Women also had an increased workload in their household and communities. They were tasked with managing finances, raising families under difficult conditions, supporting local war efforts and much more. While trying to manage all this, they also had to endure hardships such as the loss of family members and severe economic problems. This further highlighted the resilience and the strength of women during times of crisis.

Despite the aforementioned effort of women, the situation right after the war ended changed the power dynamics once again. When the war ended, so did the extraordinary job opportunities for women. When men came back from war, they wanted their jobs back. But women wanted to keep their jobs. The US Women's Bureau took a survey of women in 1944 during the war, and according to the survey: “ *In ten war production centers around the nation found that 75 percent of them planned to keep working in the postwar period. Moreover, 84 percent of the women employed in manufacturing wanted to keep their factory jobs* ”<sup>2</sup> Surveys conducted within other organizations and countries concluded that an overwhelming majority of women wanted to keep working and to stay in the same line of work. Although women wanted to keep their jobs, men returning home did not have the same ideology. The same propaganda agencies who begged women to work during wartime were now protesting for them to leave their jobs to men so that they had jobs when they returned home to work. After a year the World War II

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<sup>2</sup> DeVault, I. A. (1988). [Review of *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II*, by R. Milkman]. *ILR Review*, 41(2), 331–333. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2523662>

ended, three and a half million women had been robbed of their jobs, whether voluntarily or by force.<sup>3</sup>

Although there was a decline in the number of women actively participating in workforce around the world after the war, women had showed that they were more than capable of achieving economic success and this helped reconstruct social norms. Long standing assumptions regarding women's capabilities and adequacy were now out of the question. As a result, the post-war era witnessed a push for equal rights, equal access to employment, fair wages, education and active political participation. All of these demands combined contributed directly to the emergence of an important international agenda: Women's rights. This global crisis facilitated the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women. World War II was an undeniable catalyst for change for women all around the world.

## 2. Emergence of Human Rights Discussions

In the aftermath of the war, human rights in general was a crucial topic of discussion. While the world was in ruins due to destruction caused by war, loss of life and violations of basic freedoms; it created a strong consensus that a new set of rules must be put in place to create order and re-establish authority. Therefore, the concept of establishing general 'human rights' began and started to evolve quickly. The urgency of the situation pushed the world to view this issue as less of a domestic concern but more of an international responsibility.

The key to the resolution of this issue was the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. The

United Nations Charter clearly underlined the importance of promoting fundamental human rights by stating: “ *Wethepeoples ofthe United Nationsdeterminedto savesucceeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to*

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<sup>3</sup> Williams, R., Briggs, R. and Coleman, P. (1995) Carerrated personality changes associated with senile demenXa. InternaXonal Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 10, 231 236. doi:10.1002/gps.930100309



solutions according to them. The main goal was to improve women's rights within a broader light.

Between the years 1946-1950 discussions were mainly centered on transforming human rights principles into law. It was clear that more steps needed to be taken on a legal basis in order to enforce these principles, so the creation of international binding agreements came into question. But the principles the Commission wanted to enforce were not completely accepted by the world, therefore it was hard to come to a consensus. The Commission's main goals during its early period mainly focused on consensus building and tackling social challenges.

### 3. Development of Political and Legal Rights

One of the main focuses of the CSW during the 1946–1950 period was the advancement of women's political rights. At the time, women in many countries were either denied the right to vote or faced significant barriers to political participation. Even in countries where suffrage had been granted, women often lacked equal opportunities to run for office or influence policy decisions.

The CSW worked actively to standardize political rights for women at the international level. These efforts eventually contributed to the adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which became the first international treaty specifically guaranteeing women's rights to vote, to be eligible for election, and to hold public office. Beyond political participation, the commission also addressed broader issues of legal inequality. In many societies, women were legally dependent on male family members, limiting their rights in areas such as marriage, divorce, property ownership, and nationality. These discriminatory legal frameworks not only restricted women's autonomy but also reinforced economic and social inequalities.

The CSW encouraged member states to review and reform such laws, promoting the principle that women should have equal legal status and rights in all aspects of life. This marked an

important shift toward recognizing gender equality as a fundamental component of justice and human rights.

### **III. CORE ISSUES REGARDING THE AGENDA ITEM**

#### **1. Minimum Standards Treaty vs. Recommendations Debate**

The single most important debate during this era was the discussion of establishing a minimum standards treaty. This meant that the international community would come together to work on a binding treaty on women's rights, instead of relying on non-binding recommendations.

The pro-treaty side included women's rights activists and some progressive states, such as those who were eager to expand those rights early. Having a treaty would mean that women's basic rights would be protected under political and legal law. This step would most definitely be a milestone in the advancement of women worldwide. Supporters of the treaty believed that progress would be slow and inconsistent without a legal basis, and some governments may choose to ignore the growing issue. They believed that if there were no legal grounds, opposers would take advantage and delay implementing new reforms. A treaty would be a clear international standard in order to ensure accountability.

On the other hand, several groups argued that a treaty was not needed and that recommendations or declarations made to the states would be enough. In their view, making recommendations provided states with enough flexibility to come up with their own laws in light of their own social, cultural and legal standings. Furthermore, after World War II, states were particularly cautious about any limitations threatening their sovereignty in vulnerable areas such as family law, political rights and labor regulations.

Another issue regarding this debate was the feasibility of enforcement. For example, even if the world agreed on an international, binding treaty, what would be the consequences of not following the agreement? How would the states be held accountable if they failed to uphold

their commitments? How would their progress be monitored? These questions supported the idea that recommendations may be a better idea as opposed to a legally binding treaty because it would be easier to follow in legal terms, while still influencing national policies over time. Furthermore, each member state had diverse legal systems and social norms which made it difficult to come up with a single international standard. For instance, while some of the countries had already begun to advance women's rights within their own state, others maintained legal frameworks that restricted equality. This issue also raised concerns over the establishment of a single treaty.

## 2. Labor Rights and Equal Pay

In the aftermath of World War II, the issue of labor rights and equal pay became important. It was one of the central concerns of the Commission on the Status of Women. During the war, women entered the workforce in extraordinary numbers and took on the roles in several different industries such as agriculture and public services. But women came to the realization that although they had the same workload as men, their wages were significantly lower compared to men. Furthermore, women were employed under less secure conditions.

When the war ended, women were mostly forced out of the workforce in order to make space for men returning from war. The women remaining in the workforce still faced unfair wages as well as discrimination in their workplace. This halted the advancement of women rights because they were not being equally treated as men. Traditional views on women kept them from advancing and undervalued women's labor.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was already addressing labor related issues at the time, including issues such as working conditions and fair wages. But again, no universally binding agreements guaranteed that there would be pay gaps among men and women. As a

result of this absence, many women continued to face unfair wages although they were doing the same work as men at the time.

The debate within the Commission mainly focused on whether states could and should commit to minimum standards established for labor. This would ensure fair wages and equal opportunities regardless of gender. While some member states advocated for stronger legal frameworks, others remained unsure, emphasizing socio-economic constraints. So in this period, gender equality and equal pay raised important questions. It was up to governments to choose to what extent they were willing to advance in order to tackle this issue on a national level. Structural inequalities in the workforce remained.

### 3. Political Rights and Legal Equality

In the aftermath of World War II, many countries had still not granted women full political liberty. This was also one of the main agendas of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Political rights such as the right to vote and run for office were not yet universally granted to women. Although some states had already given suffrage to women, other countries still restricted women's abilities and eligibility. Even in the countries where women were granted the right to vote, their participation to political institutions remained limited due to social norms, lack of representation and other structural barriers.

Legal inequality for women was an international issue during this period. Women not participating in legal systems was widespread. Women were not granted rights such as property ownership and employment as opposed to men. In many countries women's rights were tied to their nationality or marriage status. Women's authority, again, remained limited to their husband's rights in many cases. This fostered an environment where discrimination was rampant both in private and public life.

However, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed equal rights for all individuals regardless of their gender and was as a significant step taken in the right direction. But then again, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was not a legally binding document. It largely depended on the mercy of the member states to reform their own national laws.

#### 4. Discrimination and Gender Equality

The gains made during the Second World War proved transitory as women were demobilized from 'men's work' to make way for the returning servicemen, as had happened following the First World War. However, unlike the 1920s, the late 1940s and 50s were periods of sustained economic growth. The post-war reconstruction effort made the need for an expanded labor force urgent. In the late 1940s, the government launched campaigns to encourage women to enter or stay in the labor market, and encouraged the migration of workers from (former) British colonies to fill the labor shortages. The welfare state created many job opportunities in what was seen as 'women's work'. Jobs were available in the newly created National Health Service for nurses, midwives, cleaners and clerical staff. Banking, textile and light industries such as electronics also expanded during this period and provided women with opportunities in clerical, secretarial and assembly work. Jobs were still strictly segregated by gender and routine repetitive work was categorized as women's work for women's (lower) wages.

Women were still considered to be 'secondary workers'. Women's wages were not considered central to families' income, instead it was thought that women's wages were for 'extras' such as holidays or new consumer durables. Mothers of young children were once again discouraged from working and most of the state funded nurseries set up during World War II were closed by the post-war Labour government. Welfare payments for families were based on the assumption that a man's income supported his wife and children who were his dependents (the 'family wage'). The benefit rates for married women were set at a lower level than those for married men.

## 5. Barriers to Equal Education Access

Primarily, the problem of lack of accessibility was created due to discrimination legislation. Regardless of whether we talk about developed countries or less advanced nations, the family money is spent primarily on the education of boys since males are seen as future primary sources of income generation. For that reason, the education of females becomes associated with unnecessary costs that cannot be afforded or are seen as investments. Although females gain access to basic levels of schooling, they have to study subjects that are different from those chosen by boys. The educational system practices the principle of "domestic tracking" – a concept that involves making girls study only home economics, sewing, and childcare, whereas boys get educated on more technical, vocational, and STEM disciplines. Additionally, cultural aspects like early and child marriages end girls' education prematurely. Moreover, there is also the problem of exclusion of pregnant girls from school and even prohibition for girls giving birth to attend any type of educational institutions on the pretext of protecting the morals of the community. In addition, many prestigious universities have strict limits on how many women can enroll into certain majors like law, medical, engineering or sciences.

## 6. Discriminatory Legislation

The main barrier to gender equality, according to the Commission on the Status of Women in the 1946-1950 mandate, was not just the lack of protective laws but the implementation of the discriminatory legislation through civil codes in Member States, which legally subordinated women to be considered as dependents. Under the existing laws of many countries, marriage to a citizen of another country is enough reason for automatic loss of citizenship, forcing women to adopt their new husbands' citizenships. This would leave women without a status when they are divorced, leaving them without any form of diplomatic protection. Moreover, marriage leaves women with civil death. Civil codes discriminate against women by stipulating that wives have no right to own assets individually, enter into any contract, keep a bank account, or

get employed without prior written consent from their husbands. Additionally, family laws place all legal rights over the children in the hands of the fathers. They often do not have legal rights over the education, medical care, and custody of their children in cases of marital conflict.

#### **IV. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND AGREEMENTS**

##### **1. Existing Treaties and Conventions**

Efforts to include women in daily life and provide them with the basic rights such as the right to vote or work in a safe environment started out in the late 1910s. During that time women were accepted as vulnerable and in need of protection which consequently showed in the treaties and conventions.

First attempts started with conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 1919 conventions no. 3 and 4 ‘‘Maternity Protection Convention provided basic protection by entitling women to 12 weeks’ maternity leave with cash benefits to ensure continuity of income, daily breaks for nursing, and protection against dismissal during leave.(1)’’ and ‘‘Night Work prohibited employment of women during night shifts.’’. (2)

Apart from work place, main issues concerning women were far too serious. Women were abused by trafficking and forced to prostitution. In 1904 International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic was signed in order to prevent European women. (3) With the League of Nations established, universal treaties started to form. International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children - 1921 was the first to be formed in order to create a format for legislation and regulations for countries to apply. The convention provided a legal base for punishments for human trafficking and abuse of all women and gave them a safer means of travel and migration.

Even though ILO and League of Nations are the most inclusive multinational entities, the first attempt to give fundamental constitutional equity rights to women such as political and civil

rights was the Organization of American States. Inter-American Conventions on nationality on women and granting political rights and civil rights to women are the first ever agreements to give these rights to women thus makes a great example for future references. Notably the 1933 Montevideo Convention and the 1948 Bogota agreements, marked a revolutionary shift in international law by establishing legally binding gender equality. These regional treaties served as a vital blueprint for the United Nations, proving to the international community that binding agreements on women's civil and political rights were fundamentally achievable on a global scale.

## 2. Gaps in Implementation

Problems arising in implementation are various. Firstly, the place for reservations is creating major problems. Member states opt out of clauses by citing local laws or religious excuses. Eventually creating the need for a legally binding treaty for all member states to fully embrace. Even when the governments fully align with the outcome, problems with getting the public to embrace it is another challenge. Challenges can be divided into two: first social problems arising from general notion, second lack of regulation. Social problems can be categorized as women's role in the household and overall lack of participation in labour. On paper women are free citizens with the right to vote, have education and work; in reality not so much. They are still seen as their father or husband's property. So it can be said that de facto equality is not what is written on the paper. Overcoming this problem relies solely on education.

On the other hand, problems with the regulations are far more serious. Women who work are facing unequal pay. Women working for the public or for large scale companies can be regulated via union work and binding laws. However, labor is not only desk duty. Especially occupations with piece-rate labor such as agricultural and domestic areas are unregulated and are problematic.

Lastly, for regulatory purposes the outcomes are the most important data for improvement. However, lack of data differentiation and collecting are not enough. As a result the problematic sides cannot be seen. Data collection should be further improved and implied to even the small businesses and rural areas.

## V. MAIN ACTORS

There are 4 main blocs divided by general differences due to the political climate. Firstly the Eastern bloc which was influenced by communism. Therefore their approach on equity is strict and more pro-feminist.

**Albania:** Even though Albania is a Balkan country and has more patriarchal views as to the place of women in society, they gave fundamental rights to women in 1945. They had much opposition from people in rural areas. For them women were property which they could sell, force to marry and to have children. The government followed strict policies in order to prevent these occurrences. Efforts were quite successful in some ways. Communist influence on policies that dictate equity helped in this strict approach.

**USSR:** Between 1946 and 1950, the Soviet Union leveraged its constitutionally guaranteed gender equality to position itself as the global vanguard of women's rights. Driven by the catastrophic demographic losses of World War II, the Soviet state heavily integrated women into the industrial, agricultural, and political workforce. They believe in a strict approach on binding treaties and are highly against Western nations for their capitalist limitations.

Secondly the Western Powers even the women have fundamental rights in these countries women are pushed to the housewife ideal. They have more of an individualist approach and are against the treaties meddling with their laws and internal affairs.

**USA:** In the post-war era, the United States championed political and civil liberties for women globally, yet simultaneously experienced a domestic cultural shift that pressured American

women to return to traditional, family-oriented roles following their wartime industrial mobilization. The United States advocated for flexible, non-binding declarations and educational recommendations.

**UK:** United Kingdom has a highly cautious and legally conservative approach toward international women's rights legislation. They are also highly against the binding treaties and believe their domestic issues should not be intervened. Controversially, they insist on allowing metropolitan powers to exempt their non-self-governing and trust territories from the obligations of universal women's rights conventions.

Moreover Latin America and post-colonial countries have other approaches. Latin American countries which have already gathered on OAS and have feminist treaties. This is the most progressive and revolutionary bloc due to their already existing pro-feminist approach. Countries like India and Lebanon have yet recovered from colonial forces and are fundamentally underdeveloped. Their lack of access to education and basically cancellation of discriminatory laws.

## **VI. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND POLICY APPROACHES**

To effectively resolve the systemic gender disparities outlined, instead of issuing another non-binding declaration, the Commission must focus on formulating a rigorous, legally binding convention. Drafting a universal, legally binding convention that explicitly prohibits Member States from placing "reservations" on core articles regarding political participation and civil equity. Establishing a strict ratification threshold for the treaty to enter into force. Creating an oversight mechanism, such as an annual reporting requirement to ECOSOC, where Member States must submit empirical evidence of their compliance with the treaty. Collaborating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to establish a strict, universal legal definition of "Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value.". Expanding its protections to cover every sector.

Furthermore, dismantling educational barriers is important. Calling for the immediate removal of all gender-based enrollment caps and explicit bans in higher education institutions, particularly in specialized faculties such as STEM, Law, and Medicine. Establishing a UN-backed educational initiative or funding mechanism specifically designed to provide primary schooling and basic literacy programs for women and girls in war-torn and rural territories.

In addition, loopholes must be addressed. Explicitly forbidding the inclusion of "Colonial Clauses" in future UN conventions. Ensuring that any political, social, or economic rights recognized by a metropolitan power are unequivocally and automatically extended to the women residing in its non-self-governing, colonial, and trust territories.

## **VII. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**

1. How can the international community make sure women have the right to vote on equal terms with men and what can be done to overcome the legislative barriers?
2. What international mechanisms are needed to ensure women are equally eligible for election to bodies without facing unfair treatment?
3. Should the outcome of this committee be a set of recommendations to Member States or a legally binding international agreement with strict compliance expectations?
4. If considered a legally binding document what can be done to overcome member states that do not comply fully or if they should have the right to have reservations?
5. How can the Commission on the Status of Women balance enforcing political rights with the principle of national sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction?
6. How will the proposed political rights and legal equities apply to women living in colonies, trust territories or non-self-governing regions?

7. What actions must Member States take to change or abolish existing discriminatory laws that contradict the principles of equal political and administrative rights?
8. What role should the Commission on the Status of Women play in monitoring and reporting on Member States implementation of these rights?

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