



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

84th plenary meeting
Monday, 20 June 2022, noon
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 12 noon.

A/76/L.66, which proclaims 24 June as the International Day of Women in Diplomacy.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to draft resolution A/76/L.66, which has been distributed in connection with agenda item 29, entitled “Advancement of women”.

Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 29 at its 61st plenary meeting, on 15 March 2022. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution before it today, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 29.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided (decision 76/506B).

Agenda item 29 (continued)

Advancement of women

Draft resolution (A/76/L.66)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives to introduce draft resolution A/76/L.66.

Ms. Hussain (Maldives): It is my honour to introduce to the General Assembly draft resolution

Momentum has been building on this important issue across the global community in recent years. Women’s participation in decision-making is absolutely vital, and that is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, despite that progress, far too often we still see situations in which, as women climb within the diplomatic ranks, they remain outnumbered by their male peers. Here at Headquarters, where we call for and work towards equality every day, only one fifth of Permanent Representatives are women.

By establishing an International Day of Women in Diplomacy, the draft resolution will provide a springboard for the United Nations, national Governments, foreign ministries, civil society, the private sector, schools, universities and other actors to raise awareness on the issue. It also presents an annual opportunity to reflect on the advances that we have made, the challenges we face as women diplomats and the actions that can be taken at various levels as we strive for the goal of achieving women’s full equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in diplomacy.

I would like to thank you, Sir, for making gender equality one of your priorities and for your instrumental leadership in championing the issue as President of the General Assembly, as well as in your capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of my own country, the Republic of Maldives. I also want to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for making gender equality a

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top priority as well. I further acknowledge the presence of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed at today's meeting.

We welcome the overwhelming and broad cross-regional support that the draft resolution has received. At a time when multilateralism is under intense strain, it is heartening that the draft resolution has been sponsored by more than 187 members. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of El Salvador, Eritrea, Grenada, Guyana, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Malta, Qatar, Saint Lucia and South Africa as the core team that worked diligently with Maldives to garner support for the draft resolution. I must add that it was not at all difficult for countries across regions to come together and support this initiative. It is a testimony to our collective commitment to achieving gender equality at all levels and in all fields.

Today marks an important day. It is my sincere hope that the draft resolution and its far-reaching support will provide inspiration and optimism to women diplomats and young girls aspiring to careers in diplomacy. It is truly heartening that we will be taking the opportunity to reflect on the role of women in diplomacy every year. I look forward to continuing to work together to overcome the challenges to realizing women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in diplomacy and beyond.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/76/L.66, entitled "International Day of Women in Diplomacy".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda: (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/76/L.66, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoros, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Germany, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, the Niger, Norway, Papua New Guinea,

Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tonga, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/76/L.66?

Draft resolution A/76/L.66 was adopted (resolution 76/269).

The President: It is a great privilege to have presided over and witnessed the adoption of resolution 76/269, on the International Day of Women in Diplomacy, henceforth to be celebrated on 24 June every year.

In February, during a Holhuashi dialogue that I held with women experts from all six committees, there was a call to recognize the indispensable role of women in diplomacy through the observance of such a day. I thank the Member States that have carried this conversation forward, and I am overjoyed that, in just four months, their vision has come to fruition. I thank all sponsors and Member States that supported this initiative.

Women working in diplomacy have made critical contributions to shaping the multilateral system we have inherited today. For example, women diplomats played an essential role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first treaty to articulate the fundamental human rights that should be universally protected.

Yet, despite the evident contributions of women to diplomacy and multilateral decision-making, they continue to be underrepresented in senior diplomatic positions, and they still suffer the deep-rooted legacies of sexism, which has hindered their professional advancement and obscure their contributions and achievements. These facts underscore the importance of this resolution being adopted. Now we have a day specifically devoted to celebrating women in diplomacy who have blazed trails, negotiated peace, strengthened international relations, survived hardships and danger, and facilitated intercultural linkages. With resolution 76/269, we open the door to discuss the challenges women in diplomacy face. With this celebration of women in diplomacy, we inspire the next generation.

All too often women and their stories are edited out of history. Those “her-stories” must be told to inform our broader efforts to advance gender equality. We cannot foster the level of diplomatic, engagement and global solidarity needed to overcome today’s challenges, from climate change to pandemics to human rights violations to economic uncertainty, unless we not only give women a seat at the table, but also facilitate their ability to take on leadership roles, including in diplomacy. To reverse that injustice, we must empower women to pursue careers in diplomacy, support and recognize women who are already involved in diplomacy, and shatter the glass ceilings that hindered them from serving at the top levels of diplomacy.

Adopting this resolution is just the first step. We must continue to think about what more we can do and what more we should do. The Assembly can rest assured that I will continue to do all that I can in my power to provide the necessary support.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It is a real pleasure to be in the General Assembly Hall today for the adoption of the resolution on the International Day of Women in Diplomacy (resolution 76/269). I am so excited about this, and I welcome and applaud the leadership of Maldives and the core group of countries and their amazing women — El Salvador, Eritrea, Grenada, Guyana, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Maldives, Malta, Qatar, Saint Lucia and South Africa. I congratulate them on enabling this resolution, and I congratulate the sponsors for the resolution’s really broad cross-regional support.

In 2022, women represent slightly over a third of the Security Council’s Permanent Representatives. However, this is far higher than the average. It is still not enough; like Olivia Twists, we ask for more. Evidence has shown us that women’s representation has not always been linear, with numbers dependent on women trailblazers, as we all know. As Ghanaian barrister, politician and former Minister Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, the current Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, has said, “very often, this is a path that you walk alone”. But I dare say today there are many of us walking this path together.

As the Secretary-General often reminds us, gender equality is essentially a question of power, and, historically, power has been mostly in the hands of our men. Gender equality and women’s equal leadership are fundamental prerequisites for a safe, peaceful and sustainable world for all, and we must all do everything possible to ensure that women are at the table, our voices are heard, and our contributions are valued.

Women bring immense benefits to diplomacy, as the President of the General Assembly has said. Women’s leadership styles, their expertise, their lived experiences and priorities broaden the breadth of issues under consideration and the quality of outcomes by making decisions more durable and much more inclusive. Our research shows that when women participate in peace negotiations, they are more sustainable, and when women serve in cabinets and parliaments, they pass laws and policies that are better for ordinary people, children, the environment and social cohesion.

Advancing positive, proactive measures to increase women’s participation in peace and political processes is vital to achieving women’s de facto equality and sustainable peace in the context of entrenched discrimination. Addressing violence against women is also critical to protecting their ongoing participation and preventing their voices from being silenced.

The United Nations is leading by example and continues to demonstrate its commitment to women’s equal rights and empowerment within our Organization and around the world. At the most senior level, we achieved gender parity early last year among heads and deputy heads of mission and resident coordinators in the field, and we are working to maintain that. In Iraq, the political messaging of the United Nations to boost women’s participation and counter gender-based violence and hate speech targeting women candidates contributed to the election of almost 30 per cent of women to the Council of Representatives in October 2021. That was a historic achievement. The Peacebuilding Fund is also investing in initiatives that address violence against women in politics and promote peaceful and credible political processes, including in Guinea-Bissau, Colombia and Sierra Leone.

From the socioeconomic impacts of the coronavirus disease pandemic to the devastating global effects of the war in Ukraine, the global challenges facing our world are many and multidimensional. Achieving peace and sustainable development requires that we mobilize

the abilities and potential of everyone in our human family. We can never succeed without the best efforts of half the population. This means taking bold action to fast-track women's leadership and participation. I therefore welcome the adoption of resolution 76/269, on the International Day of Women in Diplomacy.

I encourage all to see this day as an annual opportunity to reflect on the successes of women who have paved the way, on whose shoulders we have stood, and to commit the United Nations women's leadership — 50 per cent of our management — to doing everything in our power to promote the cause of women diplomats until we achieve parity in every United Nations organization, including the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Finally, I would like to express deep appreciation to the Feminist-in-Chief in the Hall today, our President of the General Assembly, who has helped us to usher in this day.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

We will now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution.

Ms. McGuire (Grenada): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the core group of delegations that spearheaded the initiative to establish 24 June as the International Day of Women in Diplomacy, namely, El Salvador, Eritrea, Grenada, Guyana, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Maldives, Malta, Qatar, Saint Lucia and South Africa.

At the outset, we would like to thank the 85 Member States that agreed to be main sponsors of resolution 76/269, just adopted, as well as the membership, for the overwhelming and historic support of 191 co-sponsoring Member States — near unanimity. Such resolute support is a further testament to our collective commitment to achieving gender parity at all levels, including in diplomacy.

Permit us to also thank you, Mr. President, for making gender parity a priority. We recognize your success in achieving parity in your team, including at the level of senior management. We also recognize and welcome with gratitude here today the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General and thank her for her inspiring words and call to action. We further commend the Secretary-General for also making gender parity a top priority, as he made clear in his oath of office.

We are at a seminal moment for multilateralism. Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls for women's equal participation in decision-making, and, as the growing evidence establishes, political decision-making processes are improved by women's leadership. Yet between 1992 and 2019, women were on average just 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide.

About seven of every 10 peace processes did not include any women mediators or women signatories. In 2020, women represented only 23 per cent of conflict-party delegations in United Nations-supported peace processes, a share that would have been even lower without persistent measures by the United Nations. In our community of nations, at United Nations Headquarters, only 21.7 per cent of Permanent Representatives are women.

Simply put, change is necessary. As set forth in resolution 76/269, systemic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is crucial. We must empower all women and girls to foster the invaluable contribution that will surely follow to make progress on all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Indeed, the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making is essential. Women and girls are vital agents for sustainable development. This newly established International Day of Women in Diplomacy allows the United Nations, national Governments, civil society, the private sector, schools, universities and other actors to use the International Day not only as a springboard for awareness-raising but also for critical action.

It provides an annual opportunity to reflect on advances on women in diplomacy and on the actions that have been and can be taken at various levels to recognize and advance women in diplomacy.

As we anticipate our first commemoration, on 24 June, let us continue to strengthen and amplify our efforts to achieve gender parity in all spheres of society and have this Day serve as a catalyst to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer.

Ms. Popan (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its

member States. The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

In the 76 years since the foundation of the United Nations, the Organization has never had a woman Secretary-General. Outside of this Hall, the wall of pictures of the past 75 Presidents of the General Assembly includes only four women. And of the 193 Member States of the United Nations, less than 30 per cent are represented by women Ambassadors in New York.

All United Nations bodies have adopted ambitious commitments on gender equality, but the fact is that we are not living up to our own expectations. What is true in diplomacy is true in all sectors of society. Gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and negative social norms continue to hamper women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership.

Last year, the Commission on the Status of Women agreed on a series of concrete recommendations to ensure women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation and leadership in public life, including the adoption of special measures. We have a shared understanding of challenges. We have the tools to achieve our objectives. All we need now is implementation.

That can be done. Through his System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, the Secretary-General achieved gender parity in leadership positions in record time, and he is set to achieve gender parity at all levels of the United Nations by 2028. For gender parity to become reality, we must also create safe and enabling environments for all women and girls. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations in that regard, notably the adoption of a United Nations Code of Conduct on sexual harassment.

Women's full, equal, effective and meaningful participation is essential in all areas and at all levels of diplomacy, including in security issues. We pay tribute to the contributions of all women in diplomacy, including women diplomats, women civil-society leaders, women human rights defenders and women mediators.

We understand the technical nature of this resolution, which does not constitute a precedent to alter language and standards otherwise set by the Assembly. We would have also wished to have more consultations.

The establishment of this new International Day is a call on all of us to do better and to lead by example. The European Union can be counted on to do its part.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 29?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.