The Women in Public Service Project (WPSP) at the Wilson Center aims to have 50% of government leadership positions filled by women by 2050. The reality today is that we are at about 22% globally.

In this vein, the WPSP and Women@theTable hosted an international summit to determine as a network what is working in increasing women’s participation; what are barriers to the realization of legislation, laws and commitments; and what commitments and actions women in office can take to realize gender parity in the public sector. The conversation also emphasized the importance of leveraging data and research for action.

Women from 24 countries worked toward three overarching outcomes:
• Building the platform and network of women in office;
• Determining how women in office can work together and use power effectively across sectors, governments and countries; and
• Leveraging commitments and tools to turn solutions into action.

The room was full of energy as we looked out on Mont Blanc and Lac du Geneve, fitting scenery for a goal of gender equality in government.

The full day of engagement included presentations of the latest research on where women are in government, how laws and legislation both promote and hinder women’s power, and how to advance women’s labor force participation. Breakout groups and plenaries allowed the women executives, legislators and judges to work with their peers, discussing the research, realities and concrete actions to move forward toward gender parity.

The day ended with a public panel with experienced women leaders Ambassador Melanne Verveer, Hon. Hina Jilani and H.E. Dr. Joyce Banda. The panelists talked about the progress that has been made toward parity and how and where to keep pushing forward. The discussion focused not only on the tools to equip current and emerging leaders, but also substantive actions that can be taken to foster political will and build an evidence base to advocate for women’s leadership globally.

Through conversations spanning sectors and regions, summit participants developed actionable solutions to critical barriers to leadership and built a transnational network of women leaders at the forefront of the effort toward global gender parity.
Key Outcomes
Stakeholder Perspectives

Laws, Legislation, Implementation: Accelerating Equality

Dr. Jeni Klugman, Managing Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and Fellow, Kennedy School of Government Women in Public Policy Program at Harvard University
Manuela Tomei, Director, Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Gender equality in societies and economies is linked to human development

- Women undertake three times as much unpaid work.
- In paid work, women often work in stereotyped jobs such as domestic work, and remain underpaid compared to men for similar work.
- Systemic restraints, such as social norms and legal structures, impede economic empowerment.

Violence and harassment in the workforce is a critical barrier to participation

- Women are more likely to experience physical and verbal attacks in the workplace, while commuting, or online.
- Harassment leads to losses in productivity and profitability, as well as discouragement to continue to work.
- Workplaces should implement more inclusive standards and ensure protection of women employees.

Laws are a reflection of society’s expectations

- Protection for women, especially survivors of abuse, remains a harmful gap in the legal field.
- As social norms and public perceptions change, so will the legal landscape.
- Open dialogue, breaking stereotypes, and working with the media can accelerate legal reform.

Legislation should address barriers to leadership

- Governments must eliminate discriminatory laws.
- Civil society should play an active role in the legislative process.
- Policymakers can utilize data to determine where the barriers are and how to address them.
Gender-sensitive parliaments can accelerate progress toward parity

- As of 2017, 19.1% of parliamentary speakers are female
- The average increase in female parliamentarians is 0.6%
- Quotas are the main measures used to facilitate women’s political participation
- Electoral systems, political parties, political will and cultural norms affect the number of women in parliaments

Implicit and explicit biases must be overcome to achieve parity

- Institutions are not neutral, and systemic bias remains a barrier
- Harassment and stereotyping hinder women’s participation
- 44% of female parliamentarians report being threatened, and 65% have received sexist remarks (IPU toolkit)

Public administration is an important aspect of parity

- Less than 10% of countries have gender parity in decision-making processes
- Civil service is generally viewed as an acceptable career path for women
- Gender equality must be pursued at all levels of public administration

Pursue local solutions for global impact

- Progress can be driven from the local grassroots level up to global stage
- Access to role models and information sharing are crucial tools for women pursuing political careers
- We must change the way we talk about women in politics
Catalyzing Reform Within Sectors

Executive Sector: Building Coalitions for Effective Systems

Facilitated by H.E. Dr. Joyce Banda, Former President of Malawi and Current Distinguished Fellow, The Wilson Center

Participants: Commissioner Adenrele Adesina (Nigeria); Laura Alonso (Argentina); H.E. Ambassador Suraya Dalil (Afghanistan); Hanane Ennadir (Morrocco); Hon. Mayor Mimoza Kusari-Lila (Kosovo); Professor Ndioro Ndiaye (Senegal); Naomi Barry-Perez (United States)

Visibility matters: Where are the women in government?

- Sexist stereotyping restricts women to “soft” sectors of government, such as health and social development
- Visibility vs. appearance

Collaboration and information sharing will drive change

- Collecting and disseminating data can help stakeholder identify barriers and opportunities
- Civil society and stakeholders must collaborate to drive progress
- Grassroots coalitions and women’s caucuses can work toward substantive change at local and national levels
- Engaging media is key for information sharing and wide-reaching change

Political will is key for improvement and progress

- Gender issues can be silenced if we are not careful
- There must be political will at all levels of government, including cabinets and heads of state
- All spheres of society must work together to foster political will

Public views of politics influence decisions to enter public service

- The image of politics is dirty and debasing, which decreases its attractiveness to women
- Politics needs to be elevated in public opinion to increase attractiveness of public service as a career choice
Catalyzing Reform Within Sectors

Legislative Sector: Working Across the Aisle for Dynamic Change

Facilitated by Hon. Ambassador Melanne Verveer, Former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues and current Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

Participants: Hon. Violet Akurut Adome (Uganda); Elizabeth Cafferty (United States); Rt. Hon. Baroness Lindsay Northover (United Kingdom); Gülseren Onanç (Turkey); Theodora Suter (International Organization for Migration); Carolina Toha (Chile)

The “economic argument” for parity is a launching point for advocacy

- People respond and relate more to economic issues than those perceived as solely “women’s issues”
- While gender parity may be the “right” thing to do, the evidence shows it is also the economically “smart” thing
- A data-driven evidence base is needed to strengthen the economic argument

Workplace equality as a legislative priority can drive parity across sectors

- Gender budgeting promotes parity by enforcing penalties for lack of gender equality in workplaces
- Family leave policies, including paternal leave, benefit society as a whole
- Gender assessment can be implemented in the public sector to encourage accountability

Violence against women must be addressed in order to achieve gender parity

- Women are particularly at risk for harrassment and violence
- Partner violence and domestic violence cost governments billions and prevent many women from realizing their full potential as leaders
- Domestic and partner violence, as well as other forms of violence and harassment against women, should be legislative priorities

“If there is no role for women, how do we sustain peace?”

- Ambassador Melanne Verveer
Catalyzing Reform Within Sectors

Judicial Sector: Leveraging Influence to Address Root Causes

Facilitated by Hon. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan

Participants: Her Ladyship Justice Mabel Agyeman (Ghana); Laura Alonso (Argentina); Hon. Judge Maria Madelena de Oliveira (Brazil); Cornelia Schneider (United Nations); Hon. Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno (Philippines)

Coalitions are key in order to implement legal reform

- Judges can strategize as a group to pursue legal outcomes that protect women and drive gender parity
- Good international and regional female judiciary coalitions must be created
- Civil society plays an important role in driving legal norms

Law exists within social systems

- Legal actors should interact with civil society through associations
- Social consciousness must be considered alongside legal contexts
- Laws should coincide with principles and values of the societies in which they are enacted

Women’s voices should be involved in implementing and upholding laws

- Judicial appointments should be based on merit, giving qualified women a voice in legal decision-making
- Upheavals due to shifts in leadership positions should be reduced

Legal change occurs at the institutional level

- Political will is necessary to implement laws that protect women
- Effective monitoring systems must accompany laws aimed at protecting and enabling women
- Legal strategies to protect women should be institutionalized

“Today is not just a sharing of experience, but also plans on where we are going” - Hon. Hina Jilani
Global Action Plan
A 7-Point Roadmap to Drive Progress toward Gender Parity

The collaboration and information-sharing during the daylong conversation yielded concrete action points to further gender parity at the local, national, and international level across regions and sectors. Participants identified key tools to pursue social and political change, as well as specific action items for leveraging them.

1 Accountability

- Break down “glass walls” and ensure women have a voice across issue areas
- Monitor gender parity in public sector through certification and assessment
- Utilize tactics such as sanctions to ensure institutional accountability
- Leverage data to promote institutional transparency

2 Coalitions

- Empower emerging women leaders through sponsorship and mentorship
- Leverage grassroots advocacy and engagement
- Establish and foster women’s caucuses
- Pursue private-sector partnerships toward mutual goals of gender parity

3 Data

- Implement gender monitoring and budgeting policies to measure progress
- Demonstrate the social, political and economic benefits of women in government
- Address and monitor the true cost of violence to gender parity

4 Civil Society

- Engage with communities and stakeholders to pursue substantive reform
- Include press as well as new media in advocacy efforts
Accelerating Access and Influence

5 Political & Individual Will

• Demand gender sensitivity in resource allocations by the government
• Invest in the next generation of leaders and influencers
• Pursue policies beyond quotas to ensure sustained progress toward gender parity

6 Culture & Values

• Elevate the status of women in public consciousness
• Encourage media to positively influence perceptions of women
• Foster principles and values that empower women to lead

7 Legislation

• Eliminate discriminatory laws
• Enact legislation to combat all forms of violence against women
• Pursue family leave policies to give women more flexible opportunities

“Gender parity must be a global effort. When we collaborate across regions and sectors, ideas can become actionable change.”

- Gwen K. Young
  Director, The Women in Public Service Project
Expert Resources on Global Gender Parity

The conference included thematic presentation sessions featuring experts in various aspects of the global effort toward gender parity. In an effort to build out the evidence platform for this effort and make tools as accessible as possible, the resources presented at the summit are available online to use for further action and engagement.

Laws, Legislation, and Implementation: Accelerating Equality

“Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment”
UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment; Presented by Jeni Klugman

“Background Paper for Discussion at the Meeting of Experts on Violence Against Women and Men in the World of Work (3-6 October 2016)”
International Labour Organization, Conditions of Work and Equality Department; Presented by Manuela Tomei

From Local to Global: A Data Snapshot of Women in Power

“Sexism, Harassment and Violence Against Women Parliamentarians”
Inter-Parliamentary Union; Presented by Kareen Jabre

“Evaluating the Gender Sensitivity of Parliaments: A Self-Assessment Toolkit”
Inter-Parliamentary Union; Presented by Kareen Jabre

“Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA)”
United Nations Development Program Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) Initiative; Presented by Ciara Lee

“Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Public Administration: Bangladesh Case Study”
United Nations Development Program Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) Initiative; Presented by Ciara Lee

“GEPA Project Brief”
United Nations Development Program Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) Initiative; Presented by Ciara Lee

“Strategies for Increased Participation of Women in Leadership Across the Commonwealth”
The Commonwealth Secretariat; Presented by Dr. Shaheena Janjuha-Jivraj
Organizations Represented

Organizations in the Movement toward Global Gender Parity

In addition to women currently in office, the conference welcomed leaders and representatives from the organizations at the forefront of the global effort toward gender parity. These organizations serve as resources and advocates for global women’s leadership and the foremost issues impacting paths to public service careers, from workplace equality to human rights.

Summit Organizers

The Women in Public Service Project
The Wilson Center
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Research Institutions

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About the Women@TheTable

Women@theTable makes women visible on the global stage + women leaders a point of reference in cultural conversations extending past ‘women’s issues’ into the larger debate on the economy, governance, technology, sustainability, and peace. We make space on mainstream platforms, and invent new platforms when there are few opportunities for women to be visible and have their voices heard. Women@theTable is one of the three co-founders of the International Gender Champions movement, a leadership network that brings together female and male decision-makers to break down gender barriers. Learn more at www.womenatthetable.net.
About the Women in Public Service Project

Part of the Global Women’s Leadership Initiative at the Wilson Center, the Women in Public Service Project (WPSP) will accelerate global progress towards women’s equal participation in policy and political leadership to create more dynamic and inclusive institutions that leverage the full potential of the world’s population to change the way global solutions are forged. Through groundbreaking research, innovative partnerships, and global conversations, the WPSP is pursuing the ambitious goal of “50 by 50”: 50% representation of women in policy and political leadership around the world by 2050. Learn more at www.50x50movement.org.