



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-fifth session

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by World Jewish Congress, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Empowering women in faith communities, and in our Jewish communities, is not a matter of choice, it is a duty and a necessity. A female voice in Jewish institutions and female representation on various levels of community life creates a modern and sustainable organization. Jewish organizations should strive to be a role model for inclusion and diversity of women worldwide and step up against injustice and violence so many women in the world still suffer from.

Data shows that women are less likely to serve on the boards of Jewish organizations. Recent polls have shown that women are also less likely than men to see themselves as “Jewish leaders,” indicating both a lack of opportunity for advancement as well as a culture that demands more sacrifice from women, making a healthy work-life balance difficult to achieve. It is clear that Jewish organizations have not done enough to help develop female leaders in their midst.

A systemic shift is required which includes commitments from current Jewish leaders to take steps to implement an equitable workplace culture such as formulating work-family policies that allow parental leave and flexibility for both men and women, and ensuring gender parity on hiring committees.

The Jewish non-profit sector must understand that it can only continue to be strong and relevant if it ensures equal gender representation that reflects the population it serves.

The World Jewish Congress Jewish Diplomatic Corps, the flagship program of the World Jewish Congress, under the vision and leadership of World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder, is taking steps to ensure gender equality. This program empowers the new generations of outstanding Jewish leaders, with a worldwide network of over 300 Jewish young professionals from 50 countries.

The Jewish Diplomatic Corps Action Plan for Gender Equality states that “a key objective of the World Jewish Congress Jewish Diplomatic Corps is to herald in a renewal of Jewish leadership around the world by engaging and empowering the incoming generation of leaders. A central value in this process is to ensure equal gender representation in all Jewish Diplomatic Corps activities.”

A key to gaining support on this issue within our organization will be to build alliances with community leaders around the world, and garner support for the idea of gender quotas.

Gender quotas are defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality as a “positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria”. This tool would allow commitments and discussions on Gender Equality to be put into concrete action. It provides an objective measurement instrument for progress on women’s representation within the organization.

This is one, but not the only tool to use in reaching gender equality in faith organizations and Jewish community organizations. Others include the adoption of a “panel pledge policy”, stating that the meaningful participation of women on a panel must be a condition of participation of a member of the World Jewish Congress Jewish Diplomatic Corps; data monitoring, regular measurement and analysis of the progress of female representation and communications about this ratio, and more.

We aim for our activities to serve as models for other communities, especially religious and faith-based organizations, and are looking forward to engaging with the Commission on the Status of Women and other United Nations partners to promote gender equality.