



Interactive expert panel

Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers

Monday, 16 March 2026, 10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Background

The Commission on the Status of Women will convene an interactive expert panel on the priority theme: *Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers* (see report of the Secretary-General [E/CN.6/2026/3](#)).

Access to justice is essential for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the full and equal enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, discriminatory laws, and structural barriers continue to deny many women and girls equal protection and remedies. Limited legal literacy, economic dependency, and systemic gender bias in legal and judicial processes hinder women's ability to claim their rights. Strengthening access to justice promotes accountability, challenges discriminatory norms, and builds inclusive institutions, which ultimately are key to achieve gender equality and build a more just and equitable society.

Objective

The interactive expert panel is an opportunity for an exchange of views, experiences, and new insights from experts on access to justice for women and girls, including promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers. The panel will bring together diverse experts who will make short presentations followed by a moderated discussion and questions and comments from the floor.

Format and participation

The interactive expert panel will be moderated by a Vice-Chair of the CSW Bureau and will feature six-minute presentations by up to six experts representing diverse backgrounds and regions. The presentations will be followed by comments, questions, and contributions from Member States and other stakeholders addressed to the panelists. Member States will participate in the dialogue on a voluntary basis. No speakers' list will be kept.

UN-Women will facilitate an online application process for representatives of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. The list of NGOs proposed for participation in the event will be distributed to Member States through respective Bureau members.

Guiding questions

The set of suggested questions below are intended to support the discussion.

1. How can justice institutions strengthen accountability for non-implementation of gender equality laws and policies?
2. How can reforms of traditional justice mechanisms be structured to prevent discriminatory outcomes and reinforce substantive equality in practice?
3. In what ways can justice sector reforms confront the deeper structural drivers — including unequal power relations, discriminatory norms and economic dependency — that inhibit women's and girls' ability to seek and sustain justice claims?
4. What lessons can be drawn from successful reforms of discriminatory laws in contexts where resistance has been significant?
5. What policy and financing frameworks are needed to ensure that legal aid services remain sustainable, scalable and accessible to all women and girls, including those facing compounded barriers such as women in detention, in rural areas, or in displacement contexts?

Outcome

The outcome of the interactive expert panel on the priority theme will be in the form of a Chair's summary, prepared in consultation with the regional groups through the members of the Bureau.