

Dr. Nilüfer Oral, Member of the United Nations International Law Commission, and member of the Law Faculty of Istanbul Bilgi University.

Gender Equality in the United Nations system: A closer look at the International Law Commission

Friday, 24 May 2019

16.00-18.00

Silva Casa Auditorium, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
Hallerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

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Brief description

The current Secretary General has made achieving gender parity at the United Nations an urgent priority. In 2017 he introduced the UN Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity. In 2018 for the first time in UN history the top level Senior Management Group reached 50/50 parity. While the UN Secretary General has achieved gender parity at the top management level of the United Nations a large gender gap remains in other parts of the United Nations, such as the International Law Commission. During the 70th anniversary commemoration of the International Law Commission held in New York in May 2018 the women members of the ILC and their Missions organized a side-event entitled "7 Women in 70 Years: Achieving Gender Parity in the ILC". The title by itself spoke volumes. In seventy years, of the total 239 members elected to the International Law Commission only seven have been women, with the first woman elected in 2001. For the first time in its history a total of four women out of 34 total members of the Commission are serving at the same time.

The International Law Commission is an organ under the General Assembly with the mandate for the progressive development of international law and its codification. The members, who are to be "persons of recognized competence in international law" are nominated by States and elected by the General Assembly. This deep gender gap raises many questions as to why so few women have been nominated and even fewer have been elected to International Law Commission. And perhaps more importantly, how can this historic imbalance be remedied.

Biography

Nilüfer Oral is a member of the law faculty at Istanbul Bilgi University. She is a member of the United Nations International Law Commission. She was a legal advisor to the Turkish Foreign Ministry on matters related to the law of the sea and served as climate change negotiator between 2009 and 2016. She is a Distinguished Fellow of the Law of the Sea Institute at Berkeley Law (University of California Law Berkeley); a Distinguished Lecturer at the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore; lecturer for the UN Regional Law Courses for International Law; and the Rhodes Academy for the Law of the Sea. She was elected to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Council (2012-2016); served as Co-chair of the IUCN Specialist Group on Oceans, Coasts and Coral Reefs (2006-2018); served as Chair of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law (2014-2017). She is currently a member of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law Steering Committee. Dr. Oral also is a member of the Group of Experts for the Global Pact for the Environment. She is a member of the European Society of International Law and the American Society of International Law.

Dr. Oral is the series editor for the *International Straits of the World* publications (Brill); is on the Board of Editors of the *European Society of International Law Series* and is an Associate Editor of the *Research Perspectives in the Law of the Sea* (Brill). She has published numerous articles and edited several books, and has spoken at numerous international conferences.

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