

Sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly
Item 28, Advancement of women

Introductory statement

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Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address the Third Committee of the General Assembly on the advancement of women. I congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, as well as other Bureau members on your election, and I assure you of the full support of UN Women. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Hussein Haniff of Malaysia and members of the outgoing bureau for guiding the deliberations of this Committee during the 66th session.

Mr. Chairperson,

This Committee meets at a time of great promise and opportunity for women and girls around the world, but also at a time of disappointment with the persistent challenges and slow progress towards the full realization of rights and empowerment of women and girls.

Today, all regions of the world have achieved – or are close to achieve – parity in enrolment of girls and boys in primary school. In secondary education too, the gender gap is closing. Today, more women are exercising leadership in politics and business than at any time in history. Today, more women survive childbirth and can plan their families. And an increasing number of countries have adopted laws and national plans to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Last year, this Committee adopted a landmark resolution on women and political participation and we are making progress in this area. From Algeria to Libya, more women serve as representatives in their national parliaments. In Senegal, a record number of women were sworn in this August in the National Assembly, nearly doubling the proportion of women in parliament. The number of countries reaching the 30 per cent mark of women in parliament has risen from 27 to 33.

Follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Mr. Chairperson,

A strong intergovernmental normative basis has greatly contributed to these strides ahead. Building on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, intergovernmental processes continue to provide opportunities to strengthen and deepen the global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment and to accelerate its implementation.

This is done through resolutions dedicated to gender equality issues – such as the resolutions you adopted last year on women and political participation, improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, women in development and other resolutions. This is also done through mainstreaming a gender perspective into resolutions dealing with other questions.

But today, only close to one third of General Assembly resolutions during the 66th session included a gender perspective. And this number is even lower for the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions. More needs to be done to ensure that gender perspectives are systematically reflected in the work of intergovernmental bodies.

Mainstreaming gender considerations is particularly important in areas where least progress was observed, such as disarmament, international security issues, administrative and budgetary issues and international legal matters. Gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to all three pillars of work of the United Nations – peace and security, development, and human rights. We cannot afford it to be overlooked in the work of any intergovernmental body.

And it is not enough to just fold in a reference to women and girls among other target groups. The importance of gender equality and women's empowerment must be substantively and meaningfully emphasized as key beneficiary and enabler of all such endeavors.

UN Women is actively engaged at multiple levels, and in partnership with other UN agencies, to support Member States in this process. At Rio+20, we have seen what can be achieved through sustained efforts by all stakeholders. The Rio+20 Outcome reaffirms the centrality of gender equality and the importance of women's vital role, participation and leadership in all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental. And while gender equality and women's empowerment constitutes a priority area in itself, it is also reflected as a cross-cutting issue. As a result, twelve priority areas contain gender-specific references. The engagement of UN Women proved critical in catalyzing political will among Governments and in building partnerships towards this outcome.

The Rio+20 Outcome paves the way for future steps. As you consider the development of Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, I urge you to keep gender equality and women's empowerment front and center in any new framework.

Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and Trafficking in women and girls

Mr. Chairperson,

Our common achievements for gender equality and women's empowerment will be negated if we allow violence against women to persist.

Last week, fourteen-year-old Malala Yousufzai of Pakistan was in a school bus when a gunman walked up to her and shot her in the head. Her offense? Speaking out on the rights of girls to education and to live free of violence. The rights that Malala was fighting for were not just Malala's rights; they are the rights of all women and girls, the rights of our daughters, our sisters, our mothers and grandmothers. They are human rights.

And, while Malala's case has shocked the world by its brutality and cowardice, violence against women can be witnessed every day, in every country and every region. As many as 7 in 10 women around the world report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime.

From sexual harassment to rape, from honor killings to child marriage, many forms of violence against women exist. But the most pervasive form of violence is intimate partner violence. In the form of domestic violence, it often happens behind the walls of the home, in the kitchen and in the bedroom, and it is hidden under a cloak of silence and impunity. It leads to serious physical injuries and psychological consequences, and often results in death.

Violence against women constitutes the most severe expression of discrimination and disempowerment of women and girls. It is a threat to democracy, peace and security, an obstacle to sustainable development and an appalling human rights violation. It weakens social cohesion, foregoes social justice, and constitutes a heavy burden on national economies, with some countries estimating the annual cost of such violence to 33 billion.

For all these reasons, the elimination of violence against women must be part of any target and indicator on gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development framework or in a new generation or enhanced Millennium Development Goal or Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Violence against women perpetuates the vicious cycle of inequality, exclusion, and marginalization. Instead, we must create a virtuous cycle by changing mindsets and stereotypes that are at the root of violence. We must provide women with access to economic opportunities, ensure their equal participation in public and political life, repeal laws and practices that continue to discriminate against women, and ensure that environments are safe for women and girls, including in the streets and in schools. This constitutes the basis of a comprehensive prevention strategy.

In fact, prevention is one of the Secretary-General's generational imperatives and opportunities to be applied in the elimination of violence against women, too.

We have seen some progress in recent years. Member States have taken a number of actions, passed new laws, adopted action plans, and developed successful programmes to prevent and respond to violence. But more needs to be done.

Every State should adopt a coordinated and systematic approach based on human rights and gender equality principles. A strong political commitment is needed at all levels for the adoption of comprehensive laws and multisectoral national action plans. These plans must be funded, implemented, and monitored.

There is an urgent need for more awareness-raising campaigns, education, and for the engagement of all stakeholders, including civil society, women's and youth organizations, men and boys, as well as religious and community leaders, to inculcate respectful, violence-free gender relations.

More also needs to be done for the provision of integrated and coordinated support and response services to survivors. They need shelter and safe housing, safety and gender-sensitive protection. They should receive health care, crisis counseling, referrals, and legal and social assistance.

This is also true about prevention and response to trafficking – an area that deserves particular focus. Trafficking is one of the fastest growing, lucrative and high impact crimes. And women and girls are particularly affected with more than half of all victims of forced labor and 98 percent of all victims of sexual exploitation being female.

While trafficking is very much a human rights issue, it must be simultaneously framed within a sustainable development agenda that promotes employment and decent work. Particular attention must be paid to migration, given that trafficking can occur in this context and is exacerbated by restrictive immigration laws, poor migration governance, and inadequate labour laws.

Prevention and response to trafficking is particularly complex given its links to organized crime. It requires concerted governmental and intergovernmental action and agreements at regional and global levels. Specialized and gender-sensitive approaches and strategies are critical for prevention, combatting and response. Prevention should target the root causes of trafficking, such as feminized poverty, lack of opportunities, education, and access to information.

Only this holistic approach, linking prevention and response and addressing the root causes of the problem will bear fruit in our efforts to end trafficking in women and girls and eliminate violence against women.

Mr. Chairperson,

To end violence against women is one of UN Women priorities. Our entity coordinates the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women which, by the end of 2011, was supporting 96 active projects valued at over 61 million. In the past 2 years, UN Women, along with other UN agencies, supported the development, revision and implementation of laws, national action plans and improved service-delivery standards in more than 30 countries.

Together with UNICEF and UN-Habitat, UN Women also supports the Safe Cities programme in 14 cities to prevent and reduce violence in urban public spaces. In India, UN Women assisted the Ministry of Housing Utilities and Urban Development to adopt women's safety audits for urban areas.

Through the Secretary-General's campaign UNITE to End Violence against Women and our online platform "Say NO-UNiTE", we have mobilized and obtained the commitment of Heads of States, Ministers and parliamentarians from over 70 countries to do more to eliminate violence against women.

UN Women is also committed to working with Governments in preventing trafficking, prosecuting traffickers, and protecting and providing services to survivors. In Nepal and Indonesia, UN Women and other UN agencies supported an initiative aimed at tracking women who have lost contact with families, collecting unpaid wages, providing emotional support and rehabilitation, and blacklisting unscrupulous recruiting agents.

None of these critical programmes would have been possible without your support for which we are extremely thankful. But I would also like to urge you to continue and increase this support, in political and financial terms, and help us scale up and expand our activities.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system

Mr. Chairperson,

As a primary standard-setting organization, the United Nations has a particular responsibility to lead by example, including by demonstrating gender parity at all levels. Yet progress has been mixed across levels and UN entities.

On the positive side, over the last two years, we have seen progress at the level of the UN top leadership. At the level of Under-Secretary-Generals, an increase of more than 6 percent has

been achieved now reaching 29 percent. The Secretary-General has done more than has ever been done before to promote women to senior positions and this reflects his personal and strong commitment to this agenda.

On the other hand, the overall representation of women in the UN system only grew marginally from 39.9 percent to 40.7 per cent. In addition, the range of representation of women remains uneven, spanning from a high of approximately 60 percent at the P-2 level to a low of 27 percent at the D-2 level.

There is also a need to increase women's representation in fields that are traditionally male-dominated, such as political affairs or peacekeeping, while men tend to be underrepresented in some other entities and departments. This mirrors the situation in the labour market outside of the UN System and calls for strong measures to break gender stereotypes associated with particular fields of work.

Inspired by article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, special measures need to be put in place with the aim of reversing the relationship between rank and representation. Women's representation at the highest level does not necessarily result in increases at lower levels. Therefore, different approaches and policies must be developed, implemented and monitored until gender parity is sustained over time.

An enabling environment must also be created through policies that facilitate work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, as well as effective grievance redress systems and systematic tools to assess and address organizational culture. Annual staff surveys and exit surveys are such examples.

I am confident that the System Wide Action Plan on gender equality and women's empowerment, developed by UN Women and endorsed by the Chief Executives Board in April, will pave the way for greater progress. The Action Plan is an accountability framework that includes performance standards and indicators pertinent to the equal representation of women, in addition to improving gender mainstreaming overall. With this framework, senior managers hold themselves accountable.

There is also the absolutely essential, and perhaps the most important, need for consistent and persistent championing and support for gender parity from the highest levels, including from you, Member States. Without this support, progress not only risks to slow, but to completely stall.

Mr. Chairperson,

As this Committee prepares to examine the reports under this item on the advancement of women, I would like to urge you to use this opportunity to strengthen the global agenda for gender equality and for women and girls. In particular, progress on the elimination of violence against women is urgently needed.

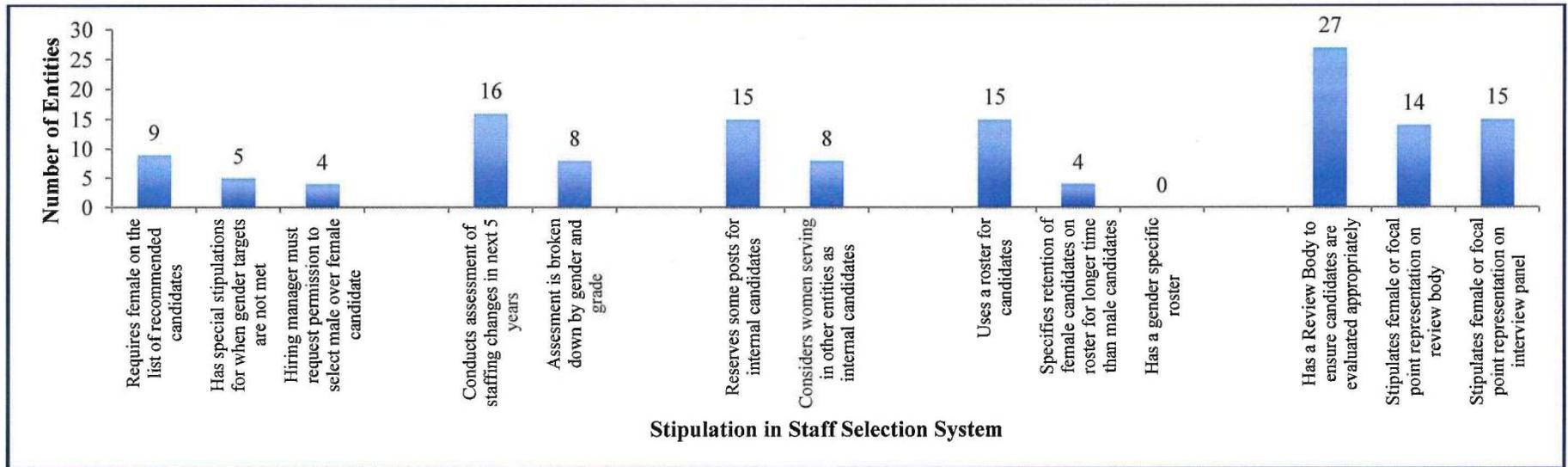
Less than two years after its creation, UN Women has catalyzed action on multiple fronts and recorded significant achievements on the ground and globally, in close partnership with Governments, civil society, the UN system, the private sector and others. But numerous challenges remain and your support is critical.

Last year, this Committee adopted a resolution urging States to increase funding for UN Women. We are grateful for the positive responses to this call, but our funding remains below target and, more than ever, we need additional financial contributions to deliver on our mandate.

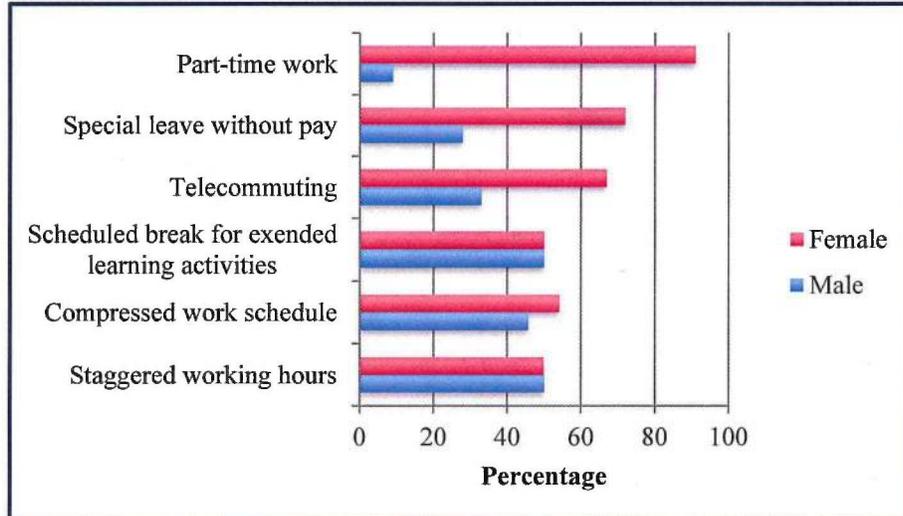
We also need your political support and your commitment at the highest level to accelerate implementation of the gender equality agenda. This agenda is at the center of the goals of the United Nations and, together, we must do more to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Thank you.

Policies, Practices and Accountability in the United Nations System

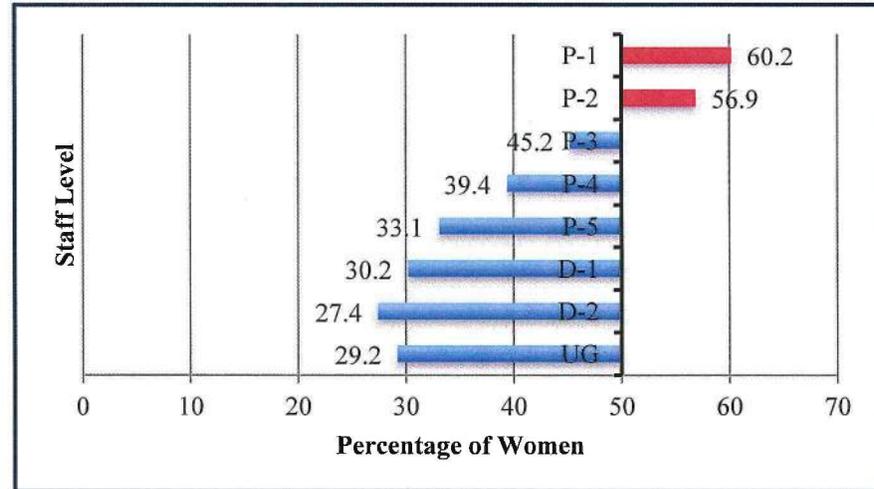
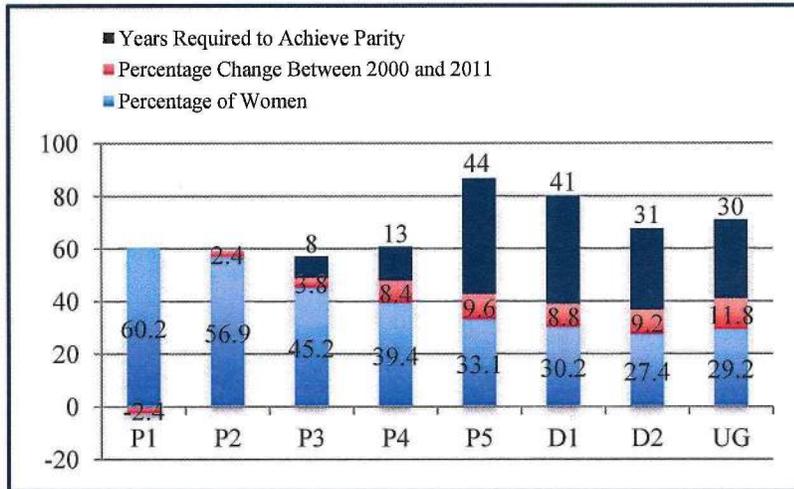


Number of entities with gender-related stipulations in their staff selection systems, 2011

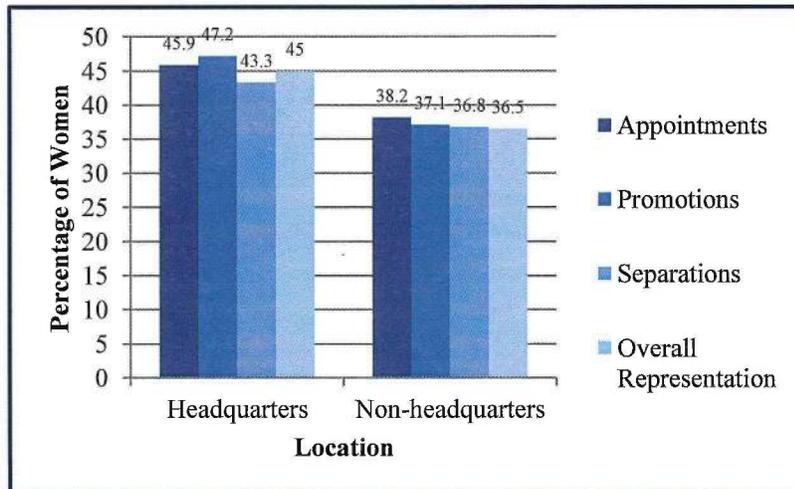


Gendered usage of flexible work arrangements across the UN system, 2011

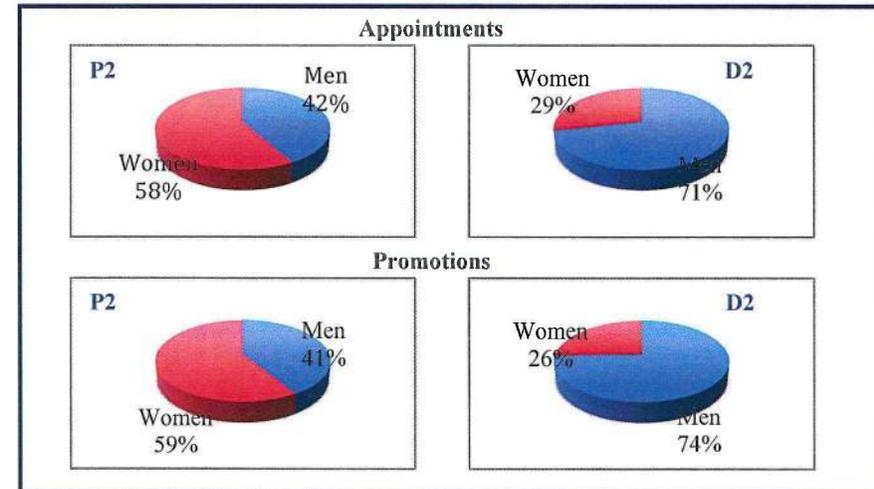
Representation of Women in the United Nations System



Estimated years to reach parity at average annual rate of change 2000-2011/ Proportion of women by staff level in relation to gender parity, 2011
 Representation of women as of 31 December 2011

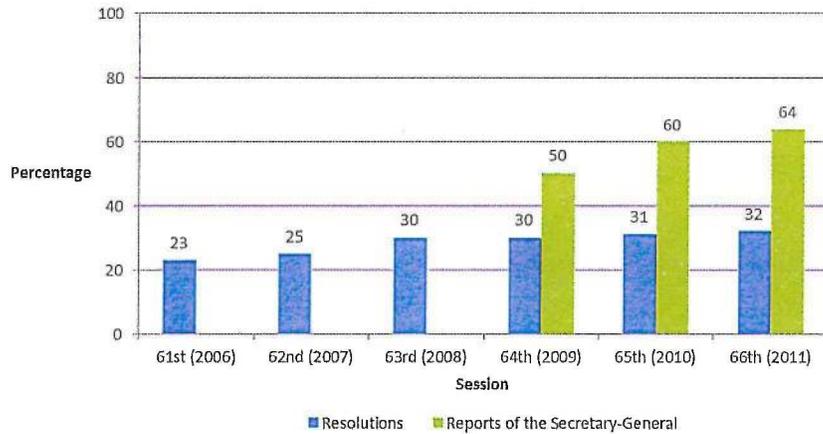


Representation of women in appointments, promotions and separations by location, 2010 - 2011

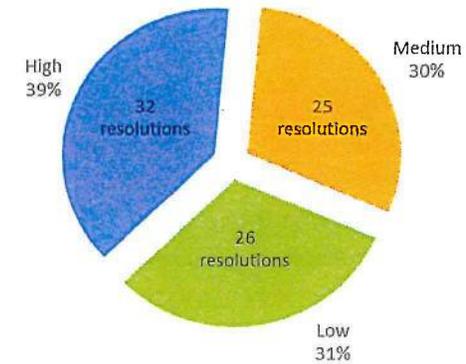


Gender distribution of appointments and promotions at the P2 and D2 levels 2010 - 2011

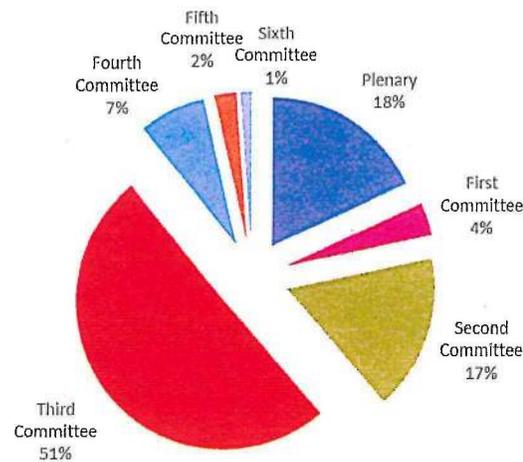
Integration of a gender perspective in the work of the General Assembly



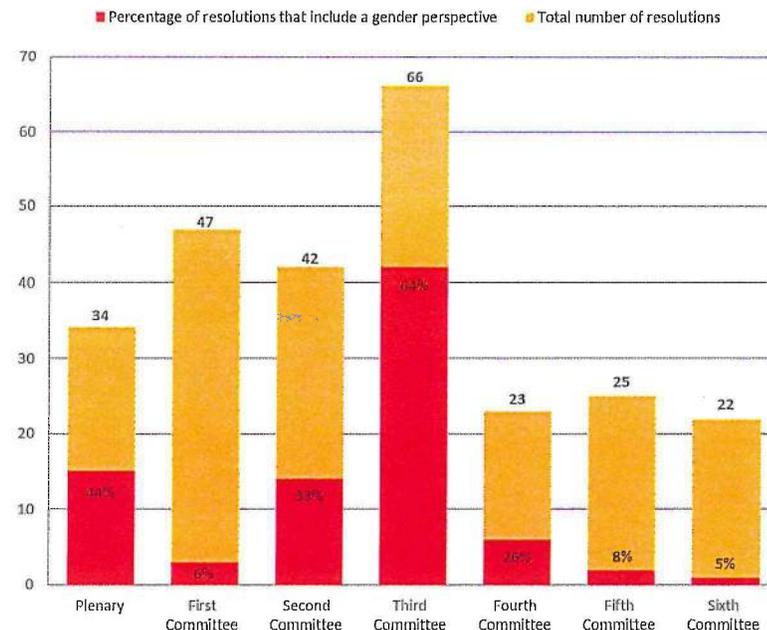
Trends in the percentage of General Assembly documents that include a gender perspective



Extent of focus on gender equality issues in General Assembly resolutions that include a gender perspective (66th session, 2011)



Origin of all General Assembly resolutions that reflect a gender perspective (66th session, 2011)



Number and percentage distribution of resolutions of the General Assembly and its Main Committees that include a gender perspective (66th session, 2011)

Information based on the Report of the Secretary-General: Measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/67/185)