



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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parliamentarians

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To all IPU Members

Geneva, 25 November 2019

**Office of the  
Secretary General**

Dear Madam President,  
Dear Mr. President,

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, commemorated on 25 November, I am pleased to send you our latest publication: [Guidelines on combating sexual harassment and violence against women in parliament](#). The guidelines offer advice and practical information on how to transform parliament into a gender-sensitive environment free from sexism and abuse. They contain numerous examples of good practice from parliaments around the world.

The guidelines follow the IPU's groundbreaking research in 2016 and 2018, which revealed widespread abuse against women in parliament. In 2016, in the first [international study](#) of its kind, the IPU found that 82 per cent of women MPs who were surveyed had experienced some form of psychological violence and that 20 per cent had been sexually harassed. The [2018 IPU study](#), published in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, confirmed these results and also found that 40 per cent of female parliamentary staff who took part in the Europe-wide research had been sexually harassed in parliament.

With these guidelines, we turn our attention from analyzing violence against women in politics to finding concrete solutions that will support and better equip parliaments in their efforts to put their own houses in order and lead by example. There are dozens of recommendations in the guidelines that parliaments can immediately put in place, including on how to mobilize political will and parliamentary leadership. The guidelines also recommend developing standards to combat sexism and harassment to be formulated in a policy which includes definitions and examples of prohibited behavior and how to protect staff and members of parliament from abuse, whether from colleagues, superiors or from outside parliament, particularly online. The publication advocates for an independent, confidential and fair complaints mechanism that all people working in parliament can trust. It also focuses on rigorous implementation of such policies and mechanisms by establishing initiatives to provide information and training, raise awareness, and offer support and counselling services for victims.

This new parliamentary tool was made possible thanks to the input of several parliaments which shared with us the measures they had taken to tackle sexism, harassment and violence. This material sheds light on and offers concrete examples to illustrate the practical advice and information set out in the guidelines.

We now call on all the parliaments of the world to implement the recommendations of the guidelines to end systematic sexism, harassment and violence against women – in parliament and in all walks of life. We are also counting on your Parliament to give visibility to the results of this implementation and share your experiences, lessons learned and good practices with other parliaments and the IPU.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Chungong  
Secretary General