



The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Civil Society (CSO) Guide

A short primer to help you make the most of your experience

What: The annual meeting within the United Nations (UN) system that prepares reports and makes recommendations on matters concerning the rights of all women and girls. The CSW brings together representatives from UN Member States, civil society organizations (you) and UN entities to collaborate around written Agreed Conclusions to an annually-chosen

Priority Theme. The priority theme this year is:

“Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”

When: March 11th-22rd 2019

Where: 405 E 42nd Street (46th St & 1st Ave)
New York, NY 10017



Accessible via public transportation from the **4** and **5** trains at Grand Central Station

A Brief History: The CSW was founded in 1946 and is a “functional commission” of the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It advises them on issues related to gender and sexuality alongside UN Women (more details [here](#)). In 1996, the Commission became the lead monitor in assessing progress and gaps in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (read more on this [here](#)).

The Bureau of the Commission

The Bureau of the Commission plays a crucial role in facilitating the preparation for, and in ensuring the successful outcome of the annual sessions of the Commission.

For this year’s CSW, Ireland will serve as the Chair with Kenya, Colombia, Estonia and Iraq serving as Vice Chairs. Kenya, as one of the Vice Chairs, will be facilitating the negotiations for the main outcome document of the CSW, the Agreed Conclusions.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at CSW

Since 2016 the CSW has also focused on measuring gender-related progress within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While all of the SDGs are relevant to gender, the CSW often focuses in particular on measuring progress towards Goal 5:

“achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls”

[Read some background on why Goal 5 is important here](#)

Established in 1990, OutRight has staff and offices in 7 countries globally and is dedicated to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics. OutRight has ECOSOC status and a UN Program focused on UN headquarters. For more information: www.outrightinternational.org.



Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) at the CSW

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) women, transgender and gender non-conforming persons continue to experience human rights violations because of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These violations perpetrated against individuals based on their real or perceived SOGIESC include killings, violent attacks, torture, arbitrary detention and forced marriage, nonconsensual surgical interventions, in addition to denial of rights to assembly and expression and discrimination in accessing health care, education, employment and housing. These factors, combined with others such as broader notions of patriarchy and negative aspects of dominant economic models, work to erode all women's human rights.

LBTI women, trans and gender non-conforming persons around the world are often excluded from the benefits of many international development investments, and have also suffered from a foreclosed definition of "women" in the CSW. We recognize that LBTI women, trans and gender non-conforming persons face gender-based violence and discrimination. We push for an inclusive and non-binary definition of gender, include people with diverse sex characteristics in our work, address harmful gender norms, stereotypes and roles that pertain in society and exclude people who transgress those norms, and push for a definition of "woman" that is intersectional and multifaceted, and therefore includes and protects LBTI women, trans and gender non-conforming persons as well.

Civil Society Organizations at the CSW

At the CSW, you will be able to collaborate with like-minded organizations and partners, such as progressive SRHR, environmental, and indigenous rights organizations, to create coalitions centered on specific topics that can have a potentially significant impact as a group resulting from shared networks, expertise, resources, and influence. These coalitions play an important role in contributing to the Agreed Conclusions, and advocating for key priorities with UN Member States. These interactions at the national level help to hold governments accountable to their international obligations.

It should be noted, however, that there are also many CSOs that attend the CSW who may have different or even opposing views. It is important for all those attending to understand this reality and prepare themselves for possible encounters with these organizations. Activists should prioritize personal safety and wellbeing at the CSW and when possible should look out for one another to ensure that the CSW is a safe and enjoyable experience.

Side Events: They're Important

Limited numbers of CSOs are included in the public sessions, and some are asked to make statements to the Commission. Because of this, for many, your primary involvement as a CSO at the CSW will come in the form of *Side Events*, which are parallel events either organized by civil society outside of the UN premises or by Member States inside UN Headquarters. These events offer vital opportunities for CSOs to contribute to the overall



dialogue, even if their areas of expertise and focus are not included in the current CSW theme or outcome. Do not underestimate the importance of networking and side events. Building solidarity is a

critical part of the mission of the CSW. Set realistic goals for your advocacy during the session, and focus on building relationships.

Making the Most of your CSW:

1. Relate your advocacy back to the CSW Theme

- To maximize your impact, it is essential that you familiarize yourself with the priority theme and keep it in mind. Align your advocacy with the theme so that it fits into the context of this CSW.

2. Relate your advocacy back to the Sustainable Development Goals

- In its current iteration, the UN Body remains focused primarily on the SDGs. It would be useful to frame your advocacy in these terms.

3. Contact the Foreign Ministry and Ministry for Women/Gender

- If it is safe and possible for you, make contact with your Foreign Ministry and Ministry for Women/Gender, or any other government you have access to, to let them know that you will be attending the CSW

4. Become familiar with the CSW proposed organization of work and advocacy entry points

- General Written Statement November 2018
- Speech during general discussion - deadline February 18

- Intervention during interactive expert panels - Deadline February 18

- Influencing Ministerial Declaration Interventions in Ministerial Roundtable as soon as possible

5. Establishing contact and arranging meetings with Ministerial Delegation and UN Mission representatives

- Find out about the CSW delegation and key priorities. This will help you to make the most of your attendance and make your work known.
- The **UN Bluebook** for contact information is available [here](#)

Here are some questions for you to ask:

1. What are the country's key priorities?
2. Who is on the country's CSW delegation?
3. Who is the country's chosen representative on the CSO delegation?
4. Can we arrange a meeting?

A Few More Useful Links

[CSW Official Documents Page](#)

[UN Women's Expert Report](#)

[UN Secretary General's Agreed Conclusions Report 2018](#)

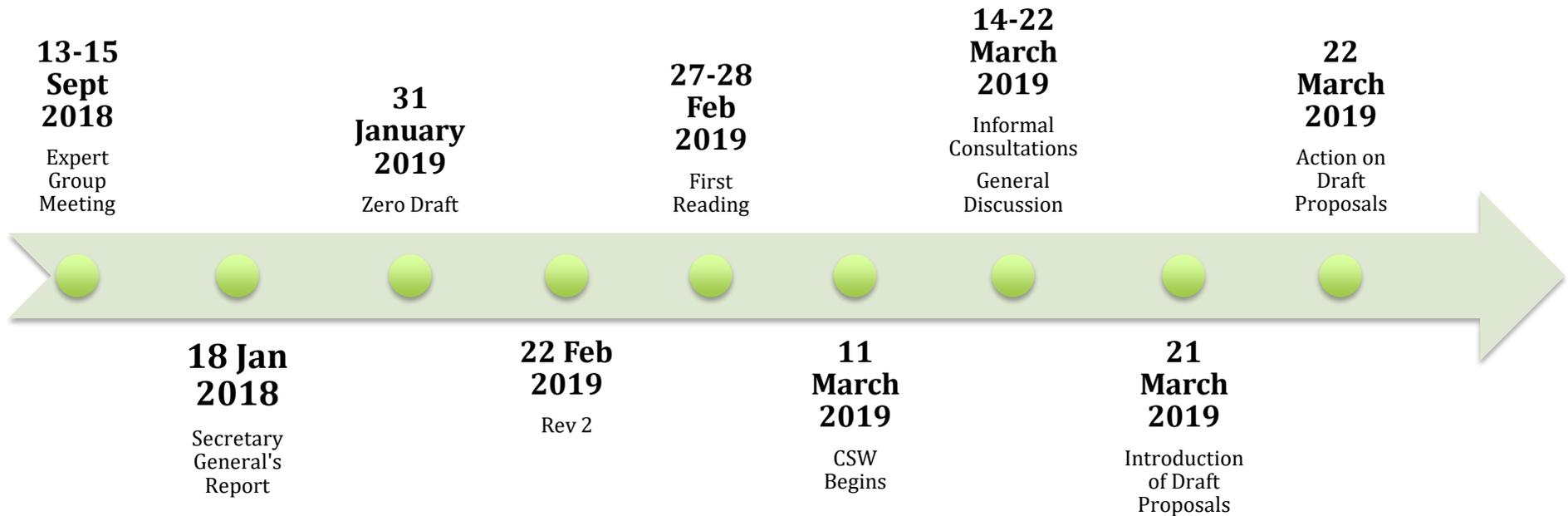
[UN Secretary General's HIV and AIDS Report 2018](#)

[Prior Agreed Conclusions](#)

The Agreed Conclusions Process Explained

The Agreed Conclusions are the primary output document of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The Agreed Conclusions are negotiated in an inter-governmental process between UN Member States. Most of the negotiations occur during the second week of CSW, although important parts of the process occur in the lead up as well. The final document includes an analysis of the CSW priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations on gender justice and equality for governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level.

As civil society, it can be hard to understand the process of coming to the Agreed Conclusions because much of it happens behind closed doors in spaces that restrict access and participation of civil society. This document aims to clarify the process as well as show you where you can influence the outcome.



Advocacy Entry Points and Useful Tips

<p style="text-align: center;">Release of The UN Women Expert Group Report and The Secretary General's Report January 2019</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What Is It?</p> <p>The UN Women Expert Group report and the Secretary General's report are two separate reports created by the respective offices to inform the development of the Agreed Conclusions (AC) by providing an evidence base for the CSW priority theme. This guides the development of the zero draft and the way in which UN Member States negotiate on the theme.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Advocacy Entry Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is wise to begin preparing for CSW at the same time as UN Member States – typically 1 year in advance. By preparing early you will be positioning yourself to be able to input into important processes such as the creation of these two reports. • Consider making briefs, primers, and fact-sheets on your position. You can send these documents to UN Women and the Secretary General's office to impact the creation of these reports.
<p style="text-align: center;">Zero Draft 31 January 2019</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What Is It?</p> <p>The 'zero draft' of the AC is the UN term for the initial draft of the AC. It is generally drafted by UN Women and is based on the UN Secretary's Report on the priority theme. Most of the zero draft is quoted language from other UN texts.</p> <p>Negotiations on the language begin using this text as a starting point. Governments submit written comments directly to the CSW facilitator (this year the facilitator is Kenya) either within regional groups or as individual countries.</p> <p>The comments are compiled into a second document, which results in the first revision of the Agreed Conclusions also known as 'Rev. 1'. Each subsequent formal revision of the draft is referred to as Rev 2. Rev 3., Rev 4. - etc...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Advocacy Entry Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most effective entry point for civil society is at the national level as the zero draft is distributed to all member states for review. Because of this, it is important to build a relationship with your government representatives responsible for CSW if it is safe and possible to do so • Prepare for the release of the zero draft by asking your government, or another government you have access to, to provide a copy of the document as soon as it is available • Find out if your government, or another government you have access to, is holding any civil society consultations on the zero draft and ask to be included • As soon as the zero draft is available work to develop concrete proposals for wording

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to remember that governments only have two weeks to change language in the draft • Arrange meetings with your government, and any other government you have access to, to determine their stance on contentious issues and any red-lines that they may have • If possible, submit comments to your government to encourage them to reflect LGBTIQ issues in their mark-up of the draft
<p>First Reading 27-28 February</p>	<p>What Is It?</p> <p>The first reading of the AC, now in the Rev 1 version, is a closed in-person negotiation on the text between UN Member States. A closed negotiation means the meeting is not open to general civil society. During these negotiations, the facilitator generally identifies areas of agreement.</p> <p>Advocacy Entry Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your government for a report-back on the meeting • Work with other civil society representatives to share information about the dynamics in the room • Use this information to prepare an advocacy strategy for in-person engagement with your government at CSW
<p>Revisions and Negotiations 21-22 March</p>	<p>What Is It?</p> <p>The formal CSW negotiation on the AC begins on March 21. These negotiations remain closed and therefore restricted to general civil society. Only civil society who are formally appointed to their governments delegations are permitted to observe. At this point all language suggestions are debated in an attempt to reach consensus. If consensus is reached the facilitator streamlines the language and produces the final document. If consensus is not reached in the general session, mediated negotiation in small groups occurs.</p> <p>Advocacy Entry Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if your government is holding any civil society briefings on the negotiations during CSW and ask to be included • Feed approved language from related proceedings to allied governments • Identify any allied civil society organizations who are on formal government delegations and seek information from them • Work with other civil society representatives to share information about the dynamics in the room • Use this information to prepare advocacy responses and provide support to your government. Try proposing streamlined language that supports your issue and help to defend the State's preferred language