



OUTRIGHT
ACTION INTERNATIONAL

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:

*"Challenges and opportunities in
achieving gender equality and the
empowerment of rural women and
girls."*

When: March 12th-23rd 2018

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 monitoring role in assessing progress and gaps in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (read more on this [here](#)).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) at CSW

Since 2016 CSW has also focused on measuring gender related progress within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While all of the SDG's 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](#)

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) at 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 or expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These violations perpetrated against individuals based on their real or perceived SOGIE 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 combine



with others such as broader notions of patriarchy and negative aspects of dominant economic models that 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 CSW

At 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 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 CSW and when possible should look out for one another to ensure that 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 of you your primary involvement as a CSO at 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 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 your 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 to let them know that you will be attending CSW
4. **Become familiar with the CSW proposed organization of work and advocacy entry points**
 - General Written Statement November 2016
 - Speech during general discussion - deadline February 17
 - Intervention during interactive expert panels - Deadline February 17
 - 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](#)