

Civil society in forefront of struggle for gender parity, UN chief tells townhall event

The United Nations has embarked on an initiative to address the male-dominated power structure within its own ranks and now has more women than men in the senior management team, Secretary-General António Guterres told civil society activists on Tuesday.

“The struggle for gender equality is a tough struggle, and obviously it is tougher when we look at it from the perspective of Governments and institutions,” Mr. Guterres said during a town hall-style discussion at UN Headquarters in New York, an event held on the margins of the [62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW62\)](#), the UN’s largest gathering on gender equality.

“So it is civil society that is indeed being in the forefront of this struggle... Without civil society leadership and pressure, I doubt we would be where we are today,” he added.

The Commission is taking place from 12 to 23 March, with the theme, ‘Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls,’ bringing together global leaders, non-governmental organizations, private sector actors, UN partners and activists from around the world.

The UN chief stressed that the Organization must reach gender parity, starting from the upper echelons, noting that his Executive Office now has a staff ratio of 56 per cent for women against 44 per cent for men. The female-male ratio was 40 per cent to 60 per cent when he started as the top executive.

At the most-senior management level, gender parity was reached last month – for the first time in UN history – with 23 women against 21 men. “This is the clear symbol that when I talked about gender parity, it is not just an intention,” he said.

In April, he expects to increase the proportion of female resident coordinators from 47 per cent now to 50 per cent.

The next target for gender parity is the ranks of Special Representatives and Envoys, in which only one third of positions are held by women.

He also said he has issued a roadmap to achieve full gender parity in 2028, having already asked all UN departments and agencies to present their plans.

Mr. Guterres also said he is addressing the problem of UN staff sexually exploiting and abusing the people they serve as well as sexual harassments

happening within the UN.