



Oral STATEMENT
39th session of the Human Right Council

Items 3
General Debate - Draft guidelines
on the effective implementation of the right to
participate in public affairs

MMM thanks the Office of the High Commissioner for the report on the right to participate in public affairs. This right is indeed of critical importance to democracy and advancing the realization of all human rights.

As stated in the report, participating in the conduct of public affairs, being able to vote or to be elected, and having access to public service are central to the right to participate in public affairs. Unfortunately, in 2018, many women, and especially mothers, cannot fully exert these rights. And globally, the conduct of public affairs is dominated by men.

There are many causes that lead to this inequality, but the deeply entrenched cultural expectations that women and mothers are better skilled at performing unpaid care work and taking care of their families is one of the important factors impeding their right to participate in public affairs.

Make Mothers Matter can only approve the guidelines of the report, and especially those encouraging legal and policy measures to increase the representation of women.

Iceland provides one of the best examples of its benefits. This country is ranked No. 1 in the world for gender equality by the World Economic Forum. In 2008, during the financial crisis, the male leaders of the largest banks of Iceland were sent to jail and replaced by women. The Prime Minister was also replaced by a woman, Jóhanna Sigurdardóttir, who instituted right away quotas requiring 40 percent of corporate boards seats to be held by women.

In just a few years, Iceland has staged an incredibly fast recovery, and now boasts a thriving economy. In 2018 it is even No. 4th in the ranking of the World Happiness Index.¹

Make Mothers Matter wishes that Iceland's gender equality model inspire other countries to follow suit.

Thank you!

¹ <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/world-happiness-index/iceland>