

Media invitation, February 20, 2024

## Empowerment, Equality, and Inclusion: Women in Decision-Making Systems

On Friday, February 23, 2024, the World Trade Institute (WTI) of the University of Bern will host an international conference on women's economic empowerment. The conference will bring together 16 international experts to discuss a UN recommendation and develop a subsequent workshop recommendation. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is expected to adopt this recommendation in October 2024. The University of Bern is the first Swiss university to participate actively in this process.

While global statistics indicate that women already hold over 30% of global wealth, persistent barriers and inequalities persist in all economic sectors, in both developing and developed nations, like Switzerland. Women's equal representation in decision-making processes is pivotal to achieve economic empowerment of women. In February 2023, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) decided as part of its mandate to develop a new [General Recommendation \(GR 40\)](#) to support States Parties in achieving inclusive representation of women in decision-making processes - both in the public and private sectors. The overarching goal is a "parity and paradigm shift" under the motto "Parity: From a Cause to a Norm. From Leaving No One Behind to Bringing Everyone Along".

### "Making gender parity a permanent feature of our societies"

Elisa Fornalé, professor at the WTI, has been directly involved in this drafting process since last year, including participating in an expert meeting in Washington DC in September 2023. "I believe that the CEDAW Committee and its forthcoming GR40 offers an unparalleled opportunity to make gender parity a permanent feature of our societies," says Elisa Fornalé. "The WTI's efforts share the urgent need to empower minds across the gender spectrum by making available an academic environment that fosters equality at every turn," she adds.

The WTI conference is now taking a step forward and inviting members of the UN CEDAW Committee to Switzerland for the first time. They are experts from academia, international organizations, civil society, and governments. All of them specialize in different ways in gender equality, women's empowerment, and the economy. "Ahead of its final adoption, our Conference aims to launch a call for an ambitious change of perspective: To shift from powerless to powerful equality", says Elisa Fornalé.

At the conference, participants will focus the current state of women's participation at national and international levels as well as the challenges and prospects for women's economic empowerment. On Saturday, February 24, participants are invited to work on the draft United Nations General Recommendation in a workshop format.

This conference is jointly organized by the WTI, the [GQUAL Campaign](#) (Claudia Martin) and [the Institute of International Relations in Prague](#) (Federica Cristani). The conference is also part of a three-year research project by Elisa Fornalé. The project "[Gender Equality in the Mirror \(GEM\): Clothing the Invisibility of Women's Participation at the International Level](#)" is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

**Media representatives are cordially invited to the event:**

Date: Friday, 23 February 2024, 13:30 – 18:45, followed by dinner  
Location: Silva Casa Auditorium, World Trade Institute, Hallerstrasse 6, Bern  
Entrance: Free for media representatives. Registrations are welcome until Thursday, February 22.  
We are happy to take your reservation: [mario.sgarrella@unibe.ch](mailto:mario.sgarrella@unibe.ch)

**Participating Panelists:**

- Elisa Fornalé, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
- Clara Delgado Jesus, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO, Cabo Verde
- Alva Bruun, European External Action Service, European Union
- Javiera Thais Santa Cruz, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
- Ivana Kristin, UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls
- Anoush der Boghossian, World Trade Organization
- Nicole Ameline, UN CEDAW Committee
- Esther Eghobamien-Mshelia, UN CEDAW Committee
- Claudia Martin, American University Washington College of Law
- Isabel Ascension Trujillo Perez, University of Palermo
- Flavia Bustreo, Global Women Leaders Voices
- Maura Marchegiani, University for Foreigners of Perugia
- Elisa Cavasino, University of Palermo
- Mona Lena Krook, Rutgers University
- Federica Cristani, Institute of International Relations, Prague
- Elham Manea, University of Zurich

**Speakers available for interviews:** Claudia Martin, Federica Cristani and Isabel Ascension Trujillo Perez

Further information can be found [here](#).

**Further information and contact details can be found on the following page.**

### **Short biography**

**Elisa Fornalé** is Professor at the World Trade Institute (WTI), the University of Bern. Since 2017, she is the Principal Investigator of the project [Framing Environmental Degradation, Human Mobility and Human Development as a Matter of Common Concern](#), which is exploring the adverse impacts of slow-onset events and human rights protection. Since 2021, she leads the [Gender Equality in the Mirror \(GEM\)](#), which explores women's participatory rights. Since 2023, she is Work Package (WP) leader on Climate Change and Human Rights, in the Horizon Europe HRJust project. She is the appointed Co-rapporteur of the International Law Association (ILA) Committee on International Law and Sea Level Rise. Elisa Fornalé holds a PhD in international law from the University of Palermo (IT).

### **World Trade Institute (WTI), University of Bern**

The World Trade Institute (WTI) is a leading interdisciplinary academic institution dedicated to teaching and research focused on international trade and investment regulation, economic globalisation and sustainability. As a centre of excellence at the University of Bern with an international, interdisciplinary focus, we explore the interconnections between the fields of law, economics and political science.

The WTI combines graduate-level **education**, interdisciplinary **research** and specialised **advisory services** in a unique and dynamic institution. We recruit students, researchers, faculty and employees from around the world, creating a diverse culture and stimulating environment.

More information: <https://www.wti.org/>

### **Media contact:**

Mario Sgarrella

World Trade Institute (WTI), University of Bern

Phone: +41 31 684 54 94

E-Mail: [mario.sgarrella@unibe.ch](mailto:mario.sgarrella@unibe.ch)

### **Conference Organizer:**

Prof. Elisa Fornalé

World Trade Institute (WTI), University of Bern

Phone: +41 76 641 76 85

E-Mail: [elisa.fornale@wti.org](mailto:elisa.fornale@wti.org)

With kind regards,

Media Relations

University of Bern