



YALE

MODEL
UNITED
NATIONS
CONFERENCE

CHINA

2024

UN Commission on the
Status of Women (CSW)

#Background Guide

UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (UNCESW)

Director: Estelle Balsirow



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Welcome Letter
Committee History

Topic 1

Introduction
Glossary
Topic History
Current Situation
Questions to Consider
Additional Resources

Topic 2

Introduction
Glossary
Topic History
Current Situation
Questions to Consider
Additional Resources

Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, or the UNCSW! My name is Estelle Balsirow, and I am a second-year college student from Jackson, New Jersey. I am the committee director for our wonderful commission. My prospective major is Linguistics with an Advanced Language Certificate in Russian, though I love to explore other languages and subjects! Outside of international policy, I play the oboe with the Yale Symphony Orchestra, sing with the Yale Slavic Chorus and Cadence of Yale, and volunteer with the Yale Undergraduate Legal Aid Association! My high school was very small with less than 250 students, so we never organized a Model UN; that's why I'm delighted to help plan and coordinate for you! If you have any questions, you can ask through my email: estelle.balsirow@yale.edu.

The resolutions passed during your time as part of the UNCSW will determine the outlook on gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the world (or, at least, during your time as model delegates). Whatever you decide your country believes in, I hope that you come out of this conference with way more knowledge and intrigue than you came in! Ultimately, this conference is both a learning experience and a great way to socialize and learn more about the United Nations! Good luck, have fun!

See you soon, delegates!

Estelle Balsirow

Committee History

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is the largest annual gathering of gender equality and women empowerment at the UN. The Commission was established by the ECOSOC resolution 11 (II) of 21 June 1946 through considering the reports by the Commission of Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women into granting the Sub-Commission to full commission status.

The Commission met for the first time at Lake Success, New York, in February 1947. The CSW's main functions were established to prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on the promotion of women's rights in economic, social, political, and educational fields; the commission also makes recommendations on any issues requiring urgent attention in the advancement of women's rights. Delegates from developing countries also raised attention to women in rural areas and the need to address their priorities and enhance their needs.

In 1979, through four years of work laid out by the UNCSW, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The treaty is seen as an international bill of rights for women consisting of a preamble and 30 articles. CEDAW describes what constitutes discrimination against women and also sets an agenda for national action that can lead to an end to this kind of discrimination. This historic treaty became effective in 1981, and has been ratified by 189 countries.

The ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 expanded the Commission's mandate and instructed that it will also monitor and review progress in implementing the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most progressive blueprint created in advancing women's rights, and the 2000(+5) 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly held in Beijing that concerned itself on the Beijing Declaration. The resolution also concerned itself with the Commission having a catalytic role in maintaining gender inclusivity and perspective in policies and programmes and to accelerate its previous goals in the progress and pursuit of women's rights previously defined.

It is important to note, however, that any and all resolutions passed during this session are non-binding and are instead only a recommendation for states to follow. Additionally, ECOSOC has no authoritative legal voice.

1

Implementation and Promotion of Reproductive Rights



Implementation and Promotion of Reproductive Rights

Introduction

With the recent sentiments on laws concerning abortion, which has especially come into the light due to the United States' Supreme Court decision, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women wants to examine the use of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to recommend and reinforce the treaty to supplement and protect women and their reproductive rights.



Glossary

Reproductive Health - The World Health Organization defines reproductive health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing in all matters that relate to the reproductive system and its functions and processes. This also means that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life as well as the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, and when, they choose to do so.

Reproductive Rights - The rights of a women in regards to their sexual and reproductive health. These rights include the right to liberty, life, and security of a person; the right to healthcare and information; the right to health care and information; and the right to non-discrimination in the allocation of resources to health services and in their availability and accessibility.

Abortion - The medical procedure to remove a pregnancy. During the first eight weeks, this involves the removal of pregnancy tissue and products referring to the tissue produced by the union of an egg and sperm. After eight weeks, the terms often used are fetus and placenta.

Fetus - An unborn offspring that grows inside the uterus. In humans, the fetal period begins after nine weeks after the fertilization of an egg by a sperm and ends at the time of birth.

Comprehensive Sexual Education - Programs for the purpose of preparing young people for a productive and fulfilling life while being educated to make informed decisions on their sexuality and relationships and avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unintended pregnancies, gender-based violence, and gender inequality.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - A treaty adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and worked on by the UN Commission on the Status of Women over thirty years. The convention brings important light concerning the rights of women in the global sphere, and outlines important topics such as reproductive rights and the discrimination of women.

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - The body of independent experts that monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women. The committee is considered part of the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies.

Topic History

As mentioned previously, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was established to largely eliminate inequality and promote women's empowerment. A topic extremely relevant to this discussion is women's reproductive health and access to medical care. With the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, some of the main components introduced were the civil rights and legal status of women. The convention is thoroughly comprehensive, but within the convention, Part III, Article 12 explicitly states that:

- (1) States Parties must take appropriate measure in women's health care and to eliminate discrimination regarding family planning and other services
- (2) States Parties must ensure appropriate services for women in regards to pregnancy, confinement, and post-natal period.

The Article has been widely interpreted as the CEDAW affirming the right to safe and accessible abortion for women. The right to reproductive health has also been affirmed in Article 10: ensuring a woman's rights to education and Article 12: ensuring a woman's rights to bodily autonomy that encompasses sexual and reproductive freedom.

When looking at the general trend of the legalization of abortion, the trend ultimately leans towards the liberalization of reproductive laws. It has been shown through studies that abortion rates are generally lower in countries that do not restrict abortion. In general, the abortion rates have seen a general rise in countries with severe restrictions to abortion by around 12%, but has seen a decline in countries with generally legal abortion.

With these statistics and CEDAW in mind, there is a consideration for outlining how to implement CEDAW and these articles in countries where abortion has either been restricted for a considerable length of the country's history or in places where abortion has seen a rise in restrictions in recent years.



Current Situation

In June of 2022, the United States of America's Supreme Court overturned its landmark case, *Roe v. Wade* (1973) with the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), meaning that abortion is not federally recognized as a constitutional right. The landmark *Roe v. Wade* case argued that abortion was protected under the right to privacy from the Due Process clause of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights, where no state "shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." For 49 years since its ruling on January 22, 1973, *Roe v. Wade* protected a woman's right to abortion in all states of the United States of America, but did not fully protect a woman's right to abortion services and abortion at any stage of the pregnancy, which led to many individual states reducing the number of care facilities that provided abortion or the time period in which a woman could receive an abortion.

The *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* case argued against the right to abortion, stating that the 14th Amendment does not confer the right to abortion and states have the right to ban abortion as long as it is related to legitimate government interests. The ruling for this case on June 24, 2022 officially overturned *Roe v. Wade*, as the Supreme Court of the United States ultimately agreed that the 14th Amendment does not guarantee a right to abortion. Now, according to the Center for Reproductive

Rights, 21 states and the District of Columbia still protect abortion, and 26 states and 3 territories severely limit or prohibit abortion in its entirety.

The United States is also one of only 7 countries that have not ratified and become a party of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and that raises a concern of how to effectively call for the United States to adhere to articles laid out in CEDAW.

While the United States has restricted access to abortion in many parts of its country, Latin America has generally seen a rise in the decriminalization and legalization of abortion, in the so-called “green wave” movement. A major proponent to the movement is the legalization of abortion in December, 2020 through Argentina’s Congress passing the Law.27.610, “Access to voluntary interruption of pregnancy.” The law went into force on January 24, 2021 and allows the termination of a pregnancies for any reason up to 14 weeks of gestation and at any period of gestation in cases of rape or where the pregnant person’s life is at risk.

Colombia's Constitutional Court decriminalized abortion on February 21, 2022 with no exceptions up to week 24 of pregnancy and guaranteed healthcare services to provide abortion assistance. Abortion is also legal after the 24-week period, provided that the pregnancy poses a risk to the pregnant person, is the product of rape, or is non-viable. However, there have been questions regarding the interpretation of the law in Colombia, especially with recent rulings for tutela-actions, or mechanisms for the protection of a Colombian citizen’s constitutional right. In 2023, the Fourth Review Chamber of the Constitutional Court ruled on the tutela-action T-158 that a young indigenous woman who had been denied abortion access from the Caucus Indigenous Association a public health organization that provides indigenous people’s care, on the grounds of maintaining indigenous autonomy. While the court ruled in the woman’s favor, it also noted that it will not assert a fundamental right to abortion.

With these prospects in mind, the overall abortion rate has stayed relatively the same since 1990, with around thirty-nine per one thousand women having abortions. There is also risk in unsafe abortions, with 4.7-13.2% of maternal deaths related to unsafe abortions around the world, with around 7 million women in developed countries alone being medically treated due to complications in unsafe abortions. The criminalization and banning of abortions can lead to more of these injuries and deaths related to abortion and may exacerbate the discrimination and equality disparities related to women and girls. Abortions restrictions have also shown to affect women in regards to their education, social and economic contributions, and their parental investment in their children. With that in mind, abortion can be seen as something that not only constitutes a legal right, but can also positively affect the general advancement of women.

Illegal Abortions and the Impact on Health

Statistics show that abortion rates have generally decreased where countries have more liberal laws on abortion; in fact, according to the Guttmacher Institute, most of these countries have shown a decrease by 43% between 1990-1994 and 2015-2019 in abortion rates. About 90% of abortions are considered safe within countries that have legalized abortion, compared to just 25% of safe abortions in countries where abortion is banned.

Cultural and Religious Views on Abortion

Some issues that prevent the legalization of abortion include the dominant religion posed within a country, as well as societal and cultural stigmatization of the procedure. As a result, though CEDAW proposes that abortion is an essential reproductive right, several countries still place firm restrictions on abortions, often only providing them if the abortion will save the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest.

The main goal within the duration of the conference is to create a plan that can encourage implementation of women's education and/or bodily autonomy within all countries. Delegates are encouraged to use the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to help them formalize resolutions and decide on the best course of action regarding abortion rights and women's health. Overall, delegates should keep in mind the complex role abortion has played within many countries and decide on a proper route to advance women's rights in terms of sexual and reproductive education.

Questions to Consider

These questions are posed to help facilitate conversation on the topic at hand and to help with drafting resolutions on the topic. It is important to note that while the UNCSW created CEDAW, there is a separate committee that monitors the implementation of the convention.

In addition, delegates should decide on their country's opinion on the access of implementations related to sexual and reproductive education, such as contraception and abortion.

1. What is the role the UNCSW plays in regards to countries to promote implementation of rights regarding abortion, bodily autonomy, and sexual education?
2. Where does the UNCSW stand on its interpretation of CEDAW? How can that interpretation come into play even in countries that have not formally ratified the convention?
3. What are the biggest issues in regards to sexual and reproductive education, and how can the UNCSW work to improve and guarantee safe access to abortion and contraception?
4. If contraception and abortion are not supported by your delegation, what are other ways to combat discrimination related to women that can decrease the rate of deaths due to unsafe abortions?
5. How will women's freedom of choice for abortion affect their overall wellbeing and status within our world?

Additional Resources

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/introduction-committee>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/8/guidebook-cedaw-general-recommendation-30-women-peace-security>

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/CEDAW-for-Youth.pdf>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abortion>

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/roe-v-wade-and-supreme-court-abortion-cases?fbclid=#:~:text=In%20Dobbs%20v.,however%2C%20independently%20protect%20abortion%20rights.>

<https://www.guttmacher.org/2023/01/six-months-post-roe-24-us-states-have-banned-abortion-or-are-likely-do-so-roundup>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/personhood-bills-ivf-restrictions-alabama-rcna140228>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/access-safe-and-legal-abortion-urgent-call-united-states-adhere-womens-rights#:~:text=The%20Committee%20has%20repeatedly%20stressed,their%20reproductive%20freedom%2C%20and%20that>

<https://www.cfr.org/article/abortion-law-global-comparisons>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30315-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30315-6/fulltext)

<https://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-abortion-rights-latin-america>

https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf

<https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-018-0705-y>

<https://time.com/6173229/countries-abortion-illegal-restrictions/>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/shalev.htm>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/index.html>

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/reproductive-rights-and-abortion>

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/9789231002595>

<https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2008/09/30/abortion-laws-around-the-world/>

2

Technology and its Effects on Women's Rights



Technology and its Effects on Women's Rights

Introduction

Using the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women wants to continue its role in the societal development for women. This topic will be focused on specifically the use of modern technology to accelerate education for women, especially in rural areas.

Glossary

Gender-responsive budgeting - Strategy to create budgets that work for a fair distribution of needs equally.

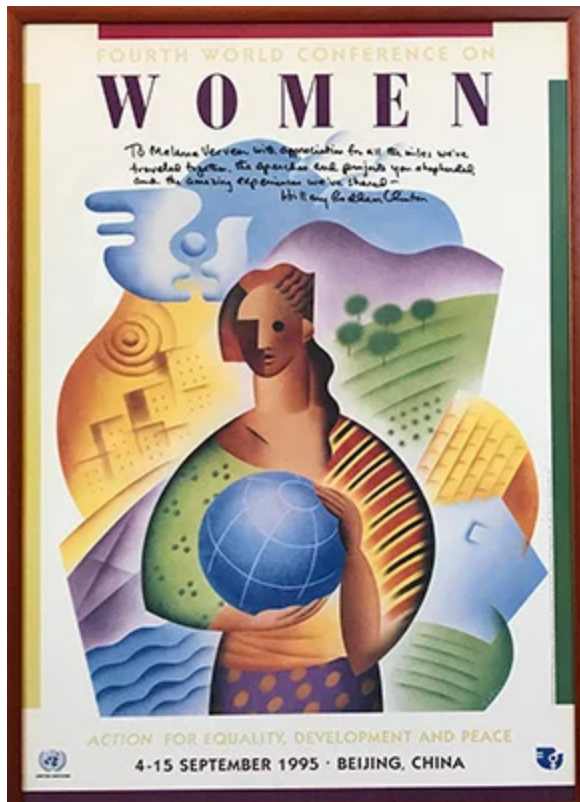
Sustainable Development Goals - 17 goals that provide a shared plan for prosperity and peace across the globe. They are based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and are an urgent call for all countries, both developed and developing, to assist each other and themselves in ending poverty and other desperations through improving education, reducing discrimination, and other factors.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - A plan of action for the people, planet, and prosperity. The plan seeks to also strengthen global peace in greater freedom. The plan posits that poverty is the number one global challenge and seeks to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. The plan, enacted in 2015, planned for 15 years of development towards its goal.

Millennium Development Goals - 8 Goals that the United Nations signed in September 2000 to combat several important topics around the world, including hunger, discrimination against women, and poverty.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - A resolution passed in 1995 that served as an agenda for the empowerment of women and girls around the world.

Topic History



The United Nations and the UNCCSW have long discussed the need to think about the future of women's rights and how to accelerate women's place within their society. In 1995, thousands of representatives from governments, women's movements, and NGOs convened during the Fourth World Conference on Women for women's equality and peace. From them, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was created as a historic agenda that set out to improve the role of women in social, economic, environmental, and political domains. Rather than adding women to flawed systems without any support, the Beijing Platform called for large systemic change, which would change the gendered power relations that exist in broken systems that continue to promote the gender status quo.

In a more broad sense, the United Nations has been committed to ending discrimination against women for the express purpose of ending all discrimination and disparities in our world. In 2000, after the Millenium Summit to discuss the UN's role in the 20th century, the UN had set out several goals for itself with Millennium Development Goals created through adopting the UN Millenium Declaration. These goals were generally to combate inequalities and had set targets for their overall progress by 2015. They include: elimination of poverty and hunger, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, combating disease like HIV/AIDs and malaria, to ensure the sustainment of our environment, and to develop a global partnership for development. While many countries were able to achieve great bounds in their goals, those countries that have a larger rural population and/or affected by high levels of economic hardship, disease, or conflict struggled to maintain their developments. Maternal health had only reached half of its goal in the rate of its decline by 2015, and topics like reproductive health and births assisted by professional staff were still on the low end of percentages in regions and areas that desperately needed them.

Similarly to the Millennium Development Goals, and being adopted in 2015 by the UN, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized poverty as one of the leading causes for global discrimination and inequality. Thus, it set out 17 Sustainable Development Goals to stimulate action by the next fifteen years. This includes Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Thus, the SDGs

directly ties into gender equality and societal, economic, educational, and political acceleration for all women across the globe.

In our world, the 'digital revolution' has transformed every aspect of our lives, changing the landscape of gender equality rapidly since the Beijing Platform in 1995. While these advancements have aided women in receiving education through access to information, the question still remains of how to use this technology to help facilitate gender equality while also not pushing an exclusively 'technosolutist' narrative in terms of advancement.

Current Situation



GENERATION EQUALITY

REALIZING
WOMEN'S
RIGHTS FOR AN
EQUAL FUTURE

It has been more than 25 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was created to combat systemic issues regarding women's rights and freedoms, yet while there have been leaps of improvement in terms of LGBT+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and gender, shifts in political and systemic frameworks have meant that some progress has been once again restricted. Real change that women see in their lives has been excruciatingly slow, and laws and culture surrounding women have remained unchanged or even might have become more restricted. The need to only think of economic growth without thinking about the well-being of humans and social inclusion has given rise to greater inequalities, and the need to address gender within this new age has significantly increased.

In addition, the goals set out through the Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality have also shown that the world is failing to achieve gender equality by its set goal in 2030. More than 340 million women and girls will still live in poverty by 2030, and around one in four will experience food insecurity. While fair progress has amounted to girls' education, women will still fall behind in their share of workplace management positions by 2050, and no country can claim they have eradicated partner violence. The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath has also brought new dimensions in thinking about gender discrimination and has brought an urgency to work collaboratively on a way to end gender discrimination, empower women, and to make sure these goals are not restricted.

To accelerate women's rights and their place in society, financing is needed for development. The knowledge, money, and the technology are all present to achieve women and girls' equality. Technological jobs also need to address the role of women in its workforce. Most importantly, governments should also look towards gender-responsive budgeting to address and inequalities due to the underfunding of women's education, any pay gaps that occur due to the gender discrimination, and to recognize the individual needs of women, that can concern itself with socio-economic status, race, location, and ethnicity. Most importantly, a general change in the status quo of gender needs to take into effect to reach the Sustainable Development Goal set out for 2030.

During this conference, the delegation should set out to think about the role technology has to play in women's economic, social, political, and environmental status across the world. Whether that includes the restriction of technology that can potentially harm women, or the implementation of education programs that target women for them to learn more about technology, the main goal is to examine the intersection of gender and technology and reach a resolution that builds upon the groundwork the Beijing Platform created. This resolution should also help address and accelerate the completion of the Sustainable Development Goals related to the empowerment of women and girls by 2030, and must address ways that we must ensure these goals are implemented in all states.

Questions to Consider

Building off of the resolutions such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the goals set out by the 2030 Agenda and 2015 Millennium Declaration, delegates should focus on creating a new resolution based on advancing women's rights through the use of technology. There is emphasis on specifically the development of women in rural societies, and delegates should address how education in technology impacts women's role in that society.

Delegates should consider the positive and negative consequences of this new, digitized age, and also should ask themselves:

1. What are some ways to improve access to education that include technology?
2. What is the role of gendered structures within technology? How would addressing these structures play out?
3. How do women in rural areas gain easier access to education and information provided through technology?
4. How can we dissuade the use of technology to promote gender-based violence, misinformation of topics such as reproductive and/or maternal health, and to fall back into a status quo of discrimination and inequality?
5. Why have the Sustainable Development Goals around empowerment of women fallen short? What are some ways it improved?
6. Where does the intersection of poverty and gendered structures lie, and what can we do to help combat and support women to change these structures?
7. What are some technologies that pose a threat to women in society? How do we address rapidly advancing technology in a short time while being thorough and comprehensive?

8. When are these goals of development for rural women attainable? How can we ensure they are recommended and implemented?

Additional Resources

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/7/press-release-commission-on-the-status-of-women-64th-session-concludes>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm>

<https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/043/10/img/nr004310.pdf?token=tDNITVvQPZt0x3EXEc&fe=true>

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n97/775/21/pdf/n9777521.pdf?token=Lp2aamRDL024pbagAS&fe=true>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/what-is-gender-responsive-budgeting?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCCQiAoeGuBhCBARIsAGfKY7y19gNLKYP2YNRO3yhJhMpx3Rnj3CVOxnPNixw0BFwsQUPMcH1hddYaApcZEALw_wcB

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023>

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-\(mdgs\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-(mdgs))

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Booklet_BPA.pdf

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/innovation-and-technology>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/11/action-kit-engaging-parliaments-in-gender-responsive-budgeting>

Yale Model United Nations China 2024

May 17-19, 2024
Shenzhen, China

ymunchina.org
[@ymunchina](https://twitter.com/ymunchina)



