

# **COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN**



## **BACKGROUND GUIDE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:  
CHAIRS INTRO  
COMMITTEE INTRO

AGENDA 1 & 2:

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

TIMELINE

KEY PARTIES

QARMA





# CHAIRS? WHO?

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Dear Delegates,

We are delighted to welcome you to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at AMUN'25. As delegates of this MUN conference, you are stepping into the shoes of diplomats and world leaders, tasked with addressing some of the most pressing issues on the global agenda. We are confident that your dedication, research, and enthusiasm will lead to fruitful debates and constructive resolutions. This is your opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, to defend your country's policies, and to work collaboratively with others to find solutions to complex international challenges. Regardless of your level of experience, we have no doubt that you will give in your best effort during the conference.

We want to remind you that the main aim of any MUN conference is to have fun and make the most of your experience over the 3 days at AMUN. This background guide serves as a basic overview of the topics that will be discussed during the conference. We hope this guide will provide a good starting point for your research, however we do expect delegates to conduct more in-depth research on their own that align to their respective delegations. In preparation for the conference, we encourage you to thoroughly research your assigned country's stance on the topics that will be discussed in our committee.

Be sure to review not only your country's position but also the positions of other member states and relevant international organizations. Familiarize yourself with the rules of procedure, as a strong understanding of MUN protocol will enhance your ability to participate effectively in the sessions. We look forward to an exciting, unique and enlightening experience from all you delegates. We highly suggest you all immerse yourself in research as soon as possible, considering how advanced the committee is. With all this being said, we wish you the very best of luck in your upcoming preparation for the conference. Can't wait to see you all!

Best Regards,

**Ananya Joshi, Head Chair**

**Maitri Thakkar & Sia Sajith, Co- Chairs**

**The Dias of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**



# CHAIRS? WHO?



**Ananya Joshi**  
**Head Chair**



**Maitri Thakkar**  
**Co Chair**



**Sia Sajith**  
**Co Chair**



# WHAT IS UNCSW?

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The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) is a principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established in 1946 as a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UNCSW plays a critical role in advancing women's rights globally.

The Commission's primary objectives include assessing progress on gender equality, identifying challenges, setting global standards, and formulating concrete policies to promote women's empowerment. It provides a platform for governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to collaborate, share experiences, and develop solutions to address gender disparities. The UNCSW convenes annually at the UN Headquarters in New York, where representatives from member states, civil society organizations, and UN entities come together. Each session focuses on a priority theme that highlights pressing issues related to women's rights and gender equality, such as women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and promoting women's leadership and participation.

The Commission's work has significantly contributed to global frameworks like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which remains a foundational document for gender equality. Additionally, the UNCSW monitors progress on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5- achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. By fostering dialogue and advocating for policies that eliminate gender-based discrimination, the UNCSW aims to create a world where women and girls enjoy equal opportunities, rights, and participation in all aspects of life. Through its efforts, the UNCSW remains a driving force in achieving a sustainable, inclusive, and gender-equal future.



# AGENDA 1 & 2

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1. Cultural Practices vs. Women's Rights: Should the UN Intervene in Traditional Customs That Violate Gender Equality?

2. Abolishing the Pink Tax: Should Gender-Based Pricing Be Outlawed Globally?





# AGENDA 1

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The agenda, "Cultural Practices vs. Women's Rights: Should the UN Intervene in Traditional Customs That Violate Gender Equality?", represents a critical junction of cultural preservation with the universal protection of women's rights. This topic raises complex questions about balancing respect for cultural diversity with responsibility toward eradicating practices that engender and perpetuate gender inequity and undermine fundamental rights for women.

Cultural practices, traditions, and norms are so deeply ingrained in the societies of the world that they reflect history, identity, and values. However, in many parts of the world, certain customs continue to marginalize women and girls, restricting their opportunities and violating their human rights. Practices like child marriage, FGM, honor-based violence, and discriminatory inheritance laws not only promote systemic gender inequality but also impede progress toward achieving gender-related Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 5 on gender equality.

The debate presented goes into the specifics of whether the United Nations should actively intervene in such cultural practices and, if so, to what extent. The proponents of intervention claim that cultural traditions cannot be used to justify human rights violations, and the UN, through frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW, has a moral and legal obligation to promote equality and protect women. They explain that these harmful practices prevent women's empowerment, inhibit access to education, health, and employment opportunities, and promote cycles of poverty and discrimination.

This agenda invites member states, civil society and experts to debate strategies that respect cultural diversity while protecting the rights of women. A balance needs to be reached where respect for tradition is not at the expense of a denial of any cultural practice of the dignity, agency, or equality of women. By way of discussions, cooperation, and innovative solutions, UNCSW tries to overcome this thorny yet critical challenge in pursuing a gender-equal world





# AGENDA 1

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At the very core, cultural practices have shaped the very identities of the histories and social fabrics across diverse communities worldwide. However, there are several traditions that propagate injurious norms resulting in women's and girls' discrimination with restricted rights and curtailed liberties and other opportunities. To name just a few of these repulsive traditions include child-marriage, FGM, or honor-based violence. While these practices are usually defended as either cultural or religious traditions, they are the ones that result in physical, psychological, and socio-economic long-term damage, violation of dignity, and fundamental rights of women.

The international community has for a long period identified gender equality as a core development and human right. Instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) enshrine women's rights as universal, indivisible, and non-negotiable. Other frameworks, such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), identify the elimination of harmful practices and the empowerment of women as critical global priorities.

In spite of these frameworks, problems still remain. Proponents of intervention believe that no cultural tradition should justify the perpetration of systematic violations of human rights. They stress the role of the United Nations in ensuring accountability among its member states and in providing aid to eradicate such customs. Their opponents, however, believe that intervention poses a risk of violating sovereignty, causing cultural alienation, or perpetuating neo-colonialist sentiments. They emphasize that real change needs to be driven from within the community, with local leaders and stakeholders driving efforts to reform traditions from within.

This agenda brings up some important questions: Can cultural preservation and women's rights coexist? Should the UN adopt a more interventionist role, or focus on empowering local movements for change? The discussion challenges member states to balance respect for cultural diversity with the moral and legal imperative to protect women's rights. The UNCSW is an opportunity to develop solutions that eradicate these practices with respect for the cultural contexts in which they are found, toward a more inclusive and just world, by fostering dialogue and collaboration





# TIMELINE 1

Date	Event
December 10th, 1948	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where the preamble, (...in the equal rights of men and women...) affirms gender equality
December 18th, 1979	Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ( ... <i>elimination of all acts of discrimination against women...</i> ) to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women
June 28th, 1993	Establishment of the International Indigenous Women's Forum during the UN's Vienna Conference on Human Rights
September 8th, 2000	Adoption of the Millennium Development Goals ( ... <i>women are equal with men in the enjoyment of their civil, cultural, ... rights...</i> )
April 2nd, 2004	Groups in Sudan oppose ratification of the CEDAW by the UN arguing it conflicts with Islamic law
July 18th, 2010	Establishment of the United Nations Women which has been proactive in promoting cultural change to end all forms of discrimination against women
January 18th, 2013	Conservative groups in Kenya and Sudan publicly resist UN led campaigns against female genital mutilation claiming that they undermine cultural sovereignty



# TIMELINE 1

Date	Event
March 10th, 2016	Leaders in Yemen hold protest against the United Nations for setting a minimum marriage age of 18
February 16th, 2017	Religious organizations in India reject the UN-backed campaign to ban triple talaq (instant divorce) saying it overpowers their cultural freedom.

## KEY PARTIES 1

### *United Nations Women*

- Has advocated for equality in all fields of gender based discrimination through campaigns against FGM, child marriage or early marriage, dowry related violence, witchcraft or sorcery related violence, various taboos or practices about women's bodies, son preference, and female infanticide

### *United Nations International Children's Fund*

- UNICEF has been active in protection of female children and recognizes Child marriage female genital mutilation as internationally recognized human rights violations.

### *Girls Not Brides*

- An International Non Governmental Organization which intends to work alongside and facilitate other organizations working towards ending child marriage.

### *Human Rights Watch*

- An international NGO based in the States, it documents human rights abuses related to cultural customs and advocates for its legal reforms.



# KEY PARTIES 1

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## *The Girl Generation*

- A collective organization of over 700 organizations working together to end FGM in this generation. It aims at supporting grassroots initiatives that aim to influence a change in the social norms against women.

## *Boko Haram*

- A militant group in Nigeria is infamous for its opposition to so-called 'western ideologies' in relation to women's education and gender equality. The most notable incident was the Chibok schoolgirls' kidnapping in April 2014, where 276 girls were abducted in order to prevent their education.

## *African Union*

- An active organization that has implemented laws in a region which has many conservative groups. Their commitment to gender equality is well shown through implementations of the Maputo Protocol and Agenda 2063.

## *Saudi Arabia*

- Strongly rooted in religious and cultural traditions, Saudi Arabia opposes external interference in gender norms and is likely to argue for cultural sovereignty in their internal matters.

## *Netherlands*

- This country is known for prioritizing human rights, it supports balancing cultural respect with UN intervention where necessary.

## *Iran*

- Advocates for non interference due to religious laws shaping gender roles, viewing UN intervention as a threat to cultural identity.

## *Sweden*

- A global advocate for women's rights, it strongly supports UN led actions against harmful cultural practices.





# **QARMAS 1**

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- Should the UN intervene, recommend, or encourage such practices? If yes, then to what extent and how?
- How can national jurisdiction follow global standards while respecting cultural practices?
- What role should women's advocacy groups and NGOs play in shaping and implementing laws?
- Should the UN create special funds for organizations that seek to solve this issue?
- What non-invasive or culturally sensitive ways can be used to ensure gender equality without direct intervention of the UN?
- What steps should the UN take to not be seen as imposing western ideologies on other cultures?
- What steps must be taken to prevent backlash and resistance by conservative communities shown against measures taken by the UN?
- How can the UN spread awareness and empower women especially in rural and backward communities such that they themselves take proactive steps toward gender equality within their area?





# AGENDA 2

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'Pink Tax' is a modern type of discrimination which involves higher pricing of items targeted towards women than those targeted towards men. Some say that this is done due to the higher quality standards that women look for in materials but it is still considered discrimination. This tax can be understood as the extra amount of money that women must pay within their daily lives as they consume products that are 'necessary' in the perspective of the society seeing them as appealing and feminine. Many are unaware or uneducated regarding the reasoning and existence of this tax within society and that is also why it is branded as a 'hidden' tax.

According to a study, averaged across the entire grocery consumption basket, women pay 4% higher per unit prices than men do for products in the same product-by-location market. This price difference is sustained not just by purchases of gendered products, but also by differences in purchasing habits between men and women for food and household items.

Even though 'Pink Tax' is most frequently referenced in regard to cosmetic and personal care products, it is also prevalent in transportation services. Women are three times as likely to be concerned for their safety on shared modes of translocation, and hence, choose longer, expensive, or less efficient transportation options. Moreover, the physical and psychological impact of gender-based trauma can result in lifelong preferences for cars or taxis over transit or bikes.

The question 'Should gender-based pricing be outlawed globally?' depends on the ethical considerations of equality and fairness, the economic impacts of such pricings, the feasibility of enforcement across huge legal and cultural systems, and the implications for consumer rights and gender discrimination.

Some think that the pink tax results from market forces, consumer choices, or variations in products, yet it unfairly targets women, increasing economic disparity. The problem becomes especially crucial in lower-income areas, where the total impact of gender-based pricing exceeds financial disparities. People argue that this pricing is not just mere marketing strategies but also brings back disgusting gender stereotypes.



# AGENDA 2

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However, we should consider the difficulties in implementing such laws, keeping in mind economic obstacles, and tackling possible loopholes in pricing policies. Additionally, we should evaluate if other approaches, like educating consumers or implementing regulatory measures, might reach the same objectives while reducing economic disturbances.

The “Pink Tax” refers to a phenomenon in which women are charged more than men for items that are basically equal in all other respects. Mostly, these differences are observed in products such as toiletries, clothing, personal items, and even services such as haircuts and insurance. The Pink Tax, which is a gender-based pricing gap, disadvantages women. Studies demonstrate that women, on average, pay 13% more for the similar products men buy. To name a few, the average price for a women's razor, shampoo, and deodorant is higher in comparison to those of men, while they are only slightly different in terms of ingredients or functionality.

These disparities in pricing bring about significant economic difficulties for women, especially those who come from low-income families. The increased costs are part of the larger woes that women face including the gender pay gap, where women are already paid less for the same work as men. The Pink Tax is deepening the economic inequality and is putting restrictions on women to be self-supporting by forcing them to pay more for the products and services.

Critics argue that the Pink Tax is so far explanatory in nature because of the gender norms. Marketers sometimes argue that items for women will become more expensive due to the associations with either femininity, beauty, or luxury. However, this kind of thinking is unjust and eventually burdens in perpetuating inaccurate ideas about higher expenditure of women's needs as the necessary costs. It also creates economic inconsistencies with prolonged influence, particularly in those areas of the world where women are already challenged with finance and other opportunities.



# AGENDA 2

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International conventions, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to fulfill gender equality as well as to bring about the empowerment of women, stress the fact that the abolition of pricing-based gender discrimination should be a notable area. The emphasis made by these legalities is that the discriminatory pricing practices are the violations of women's rights and one of the main reasons for broader gender disparities that impede social and economic progress for women.

The UN has also addressed these gender-based pricing disparities, often termed the "pink tax," through various milestones. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration highlighted economic inequalities, urging gender-equal pricing. Later, the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals emphasized gender equality in economic participation. Continued UN advocacy supports eliminating gendered pricing to advance women's economic empowerment globally.

# TIMELINE 2

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Date	Event
December 17, 1997	Mayor Giuliani signs City Council Bill No. 804-A into law, prohibiting the public display of discriminatory pricing based on gender
December 20, 2012	EU rules on gender-neutral pricing in insurance industry enter into force





# TIMELINE 2

Date	Event
July 8, 2016	In response to increasing concerns about unfair pricing practices, the U.S. Congress proposed the Pink Tax Repeal Act. The bill sought to abolish the Pink Tax at the federal level
April 10, 2022	The National Women's Law Center published an article that included four interrelated reports that examined the federal tax code with a focus on gender and racial equity, as well as explored policies to make the tax code work for all
January 1, 2023	The Consumer Alert issued by the Attorney General of California is committed to Assembly Bill 1287, which insists that businesses should not be allowed to charge higher prices for similar products solely based on gender.
September 16, 2024	UN report urges immediate global action to close critical gender gaps

## KEY PARTIES 2

### *United Nations*

- As part of its ongoing effort to further promote gender equality under Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), UN Women seeks to remove gender-based pricing. Their work addresses issues of economic inequities such as the Pink Tax.

### *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*

- UNCTAD seeks to level the playing field in the international market, promoting policies of fair trade and protection of consumers of trade exploitation practices like gender pricing.



# KEY PARTIES 2

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## *National Women's Law Center*

- The NWLC takes centerstage in the USA: they are the main organization that works against gender-based pricing significantly focusing on the economic implications of the Pink Tax.

## *European Commission*

- In the European Union, the European Commission has been active in countering gender-focused pricing strategies, by instituting protections against unjustified price differentials of essential items such as water, soap, or clothing.

## *U.S. State Governments*

- In California, for instance, laws restricting psychoactive drugs have been enacted in states such as New York, funding laws by state authorities prohibiting gendered pricing practices. An example is California Assembly Bill 1287 and New York Local Law 62, which bans pricing discrimination against women.

## *Consumers International*

- On a global level, Consumers International, the world federation of consumer organizations, opposes restrictive pricing across all regions and calls for end to gender bias in pricing.

## *The Business Community*

- Businesses and Corporations also further exacerbate the Pink Tax by charging women more than men for different types of similar goods and services.

## *Australia*

- Public awareness campaigns have helped highlight the Pink Tax issue, and some retail and service industries have voluntarily pledged to close the gender pricing gap.

## *India*

- Advocacy groups have raised concerns about the price differences between men's and women's products, and media campaigns have drawn attention to these disparities.





# QARMAS 2

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- How Can We Protect Low-Income Women From the Pink Tax Without Disrupting Market Freedom?
- Should Gender-Based Pricing Be Considered a Violation of Economic Rights Under International Law?
- How Can Multinational Corporations Be Held Accountable for Gender-Based Pricing in Developing Countries?
- How Can We Prevent Price Increases for Men's Products When Abolishing the Pink Tax?
- How Can We Ensure Global Cooperation in Abolishing the Pink Tax Without Igniting Cultural Backlash or Nationalist Resistance?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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