



**08 March 2016, Report by Eeva Koivonen**

**Panel: Gender Parity: Game Changer or Gamble?**

On International Women's Day 2016 the Geneva Gender Champions and the Graduate Institute Geneva held a panel discussion on the downsides and advantages of gender parity. Gender parity is designed to reduce gender gaps by allowing women easier access to different sectors such as education and politics, but there is disagreement on whether parity is a way to equality. The panel was moderated by Scott Weber from Interpeace and the speakers advocating for gender parity were Elisabeth Prügl, the Professor and Director of Programme on Gender and Global Change, and Arancha González, the Executive Director of the International Trade Center. To them gender parity is a game changer, since it is the only effective way of ensuring equal representation of women and women's issues in politics.

Advocating against gender parity were Kate Gilmore, the UN Deputy High Commissioner of Human Rights and Stuart Halford, the Senior Representative to the United Nations in Geneva from The Sexual Rights Initiative. According to them gender equality is more than numbers and can achieve only superficial equality making the structural gender discrimination even harder to track.

In-line with the targets of the 5<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal, gender parity may be the most effective way to "[e]nsure women's full and active participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life". (SDG 5) However, discrimination can take varied forms and whether gender parity is effective in ending "all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" (SDG 5) is another issue.

In a poll at the end of the panel, the majority of the public had changed their opinion and saw gender parity as a risky gamble. As Kate Gilmore stated, there is a reason why it is called equality instead of "equantity".

**More on Geneva Gender Champions**

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