



## Topic Synopsis

### 6<sup>th</sup> Legal, Legal Status of Women

#### I. Background of Topic

The history of women's legal status reaches far back before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the United States, the abolition movements kindled the attention on the issue of the status of women. Women in mostly North America and Europe were questioning their restrictive roles without even blaming men. Feminism movements spread throughout those areas as works were published providing a substantial basis to further the cause. However, it was not until the mid twentieth century that feminist movements seriously began to change the condition of women in the western world. Various committees, NGO's, and commissions have formed to help advance women's cause. This remains a problem to the world because women's inferiority throughout the world has been linked to global consequences such as human welfare, poverty, disease, education, and environmental health. Women who become empowered strive to improve these conditions and the lives of men, women, and children around the world.

#### II. UN Involvement

The United Nations became involved with this issue with the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco in 1945. This charter reaffirmed the fundamental rights of women. A sub-commission dedicated to the Status of Women was established under the Commission of Human Rights. Soon, the focus became discrimination against women concerning marriage and divorce. The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and several more were among some of the first international agreements on women's rights in relation to marriage adopted by the UN. On November 7, 1967, the General Assembly did even more to further the cause of women's legal status by adopting the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In 1975, the UN declared the year do be marked the International Women's Year. The same year coincided with the first World Conference of the International Women's Year. The conference created a plan of action that would gradually advance the legal status of women up until 1985. In 1981, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was put into effect by the General Assembly. The convention defined discrimination against women and became to be known as the international women's bill of rights. The Second World Conference occurred during the United Nations Decade for Women. The NGO forum discussed the employment, health, and education of women and they networked actively. Committees such as, UNIFEM and INSTRAW were also created during the decade of women. More conferences were held and continued to be planned by the Commission on the Status of Women and they succeeded in putting women's legal status on the global agenda as a significant world issue.

#### III. Possible Solutions

Some possible solutions include vocational training and primary education would be necessary to achieve an increased legal status of women. If women become well educated and receive high paying jobs, much of the poverty women face would end. Other countries could establish laws that ensure women's economic and political rights and to strictly enforce these laws. It is very important that the country has government support on gender equality



economically and politically. One of the most effective ways for countries to make change would be to pass laws and heavily enforce them. Laws should be passed to increase the legal age for men and women to be married and make it at least 18 years for both genders. A longer punishment for committing heinous acts or denying women their basic civil liberties should be instituted. Increasing this time to fit the seriousness of the crime would be effective. More conventions and commission by the UN would further raise awareness of the global issue and put solutions into effect to stop discrimination against women. Funding could come from various organizations and NGO's. The timeline for these solutions would vary but all should be carried out within the next ten years at the most.

#### **IV. Bloc Positions**

Asian – Women in Asia are usually socially inferior to men because of the Confucius religious values within the region. Women are inferior in regards to marriage and simply overall cultural conservatism.

Latin America – There has been a transformation of political, legal, and economic rights in this region. However, the area is still slow changing their cultural views of women as inferior compared to men concerning social rights.

European – Women in Europe generally have a high status compared to other parts of the world. Still, there remains a gap between the northern and southern regions; the north has a higher acceptance of women's legal status because women mostly fought in the northern areas for their legal rights.

African – Gender differences usually lie in social, economic, and educational areas in Africa. The poor economic situation in Africa does not provide opportunities for the status of women to grow.

Middle Eastern – Contrary to popular belief, the role of Islam actually encourages the increased legal status of women because of the Quran's belief of men and women as equal. However, the progress of expanding women's rights is still slow and unsteady due to the prevalence of cultural customs.

#### **V. Guiding Questions**

How has your country dealt with the issue of women's legal status?

What countries promote and support advancing women's cause?

How would it economically and socially benefit a country if women were treated equally?

What are some possible ways to raise awareness of this issue?

For nations that are radically against women's rights due to cultural normality's, what is the best way to convince them to convince them of women's importance?



**Mission Viejo High School Model United Nations**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
*"Through the Fire the Spirit is Forged"*

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**Sources**

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[www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org)

[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)