

## 50-50: Bridging the UN's Gender Gap

by Ryan Villarreal • September 10, 2015 • Secretary-General, Women's Issues •

As Colombia leads a group of dozens of nations to promote a woman as the next United Nations secretary-general, when Ban Ki-moon leaves office at the end of 2016, these same voices are also demanding gender equality inside the UN, especially at senior and high-policymaking levels.

It's not surprising that women who work at the UN or in its environment express major frustration over why they remain stuck, for the most part, outside important positions of power in 2015, 20 years after the Beijing declaration pledged equality for women worldwide.

At the UN, it is often said that the organization should be setting an example of gender equality inside its own four walls, given its universal membership — 193 countries. And various countries and their delegations acknowledge efforts made by the UN, including by Ban, to promote and respect gender equality and women's empowerment, but they also say that these gains have not been enough.



*U. Joy Ogwu, left, Nigeria's ambassador to the UN, and Zainab Hawa Bangura, the UN's envoy on sexual violence in conflict, August 2015. RICK BAJORNAS/UN PHOTO*

And so, coupled with a new resolution underway in the General Assembly to revitalize its work, the push by Argentina, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Qatar and many other nations to have a woman secretary-general installed for the next term is just one part of their overarching goal to guarantee equal opportunities for women in gaining access to senior decision-making positions in the UN.

In this video, produced exclusively for PassBlue by Ryan Villarreal, longtime UN observers and those who have worked inside the world body wonder why gender parity, an international goal that formally surfaced in 1994 at the conference on population and development in Cairo, stays stubbornly out of reach across the UN system.

As Cora Weiss, a New Yorker and women's rights and peace activist, says in the video, "So, we don't lose anything by bringing women to the table, and we have the potential to gain a lot." — DULCIE LEIMBACH, EDITOR