



Concept Note

WPL Summit 2023:

Representation Matters

June 7-8 in Brussels, Belgium

“We must continue to push for high female representation in politics”, said President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia in her keynote on the occasion of the inaugural WPL Summit, hosted at the European Parliament in Brussels in 2013. Johnson, who had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 for her efforts to bring women into the peacekeeping process, continued to say: “We have come a long way, but we cannot afford to be complacent.”

When it comes to political decision-making that reflects the experiences and perspectives of the world’s population, the message is clear: Representation matters. This will be the theme of the WPL Summit 2023.



Women Political Leaders (WPL)

Now celebrating its 10th Anniversary, WPL has emerged as a global force, committed to increasing both the number and the influence of women in political leadership positions.

WPL provides women leaders with a platform to contribute to global discourse, always from their perspective as women political leaders.

WPL has co-hosted leaders during the UN General Assembly, G20 Summit, APEC Leaders Meeting, Davos Week, Munich Security Conference, and OECD Forum.

Convening women who have reached the highest heights of national politics, WPL has hosted more than 2,000 Parliamentarians and nearly 40 women Presidents and Prime Ministers, including 29 recipients of the WPL Trailblazer Award.

WPL Summit

The annual WPL Summit is the largest worldwide gathering of women politicians, including some of the most powerful leaders on the planet. It convenes and gives a platform to leaders whose influence inspires women to enter and rise in politics.

The WPL Summit has been co-hosted by parliamentary and governmental bodies in every major region of the world, in Africa (Rwanda, the African Union Commission in Ethiopia), the Americas (Mexico), the Middle East (Jordan), Asia-Pacific (Japan), and Europe (Iceland, Lithuania, the European Parliament in Belgium).

WPL Summit 2023

To mark its 10th Anniversary year, WPL will emphasise the message that “Representation Matters” by co-hosting the WPL Summit 2023 at two Parliaments over two days in Brussels, Belgium.



Day 1 at the European Parliament: Peace & Security

Composed of 705 directly elected members representing 447 million citizens across 27 member states, the European Parliament is the European Union's legislative body and one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world.

Under the leadership of President Roberta Metsola, the third woman to occupy the post, the European Parliament has been a leading advocate for peace among sovereign states. In 2022, the body awarded its prestigious Sakharov Prize for the defence of human rights and freedom of thought to "the brave people of Ukraine".

It was also in the European Parliament that WPL was honoured with the 2022 Solidar Silver Rose Peace & Common Security Award for its initiative #WPL4Peace. In its citation the jury stated: "Since Russia's brutal military invasion of Ukraine, WPL has been calling for a ceasefire and an inclusive peace process" and that this call has "gained the support of more than 400 women leaders around the world".

The European Parliament, therefore, is an inspiring setting for WPL to reconvene a decade after its inaugural summit to address issues of Peace & Security. Throughout this day, keynote speeches, plenary panels and policy focus sessions will address questions pivotal to the future of secure societies, including:

Can we keep the UN Charter alive?

- How to build global partnerships to defend rules-based international order?
- What is needed to revitalise multilateralism and global governance?

Lead like a woman: peace and security

- Which role does the WPS agenda play in the current geopolitics?
- Which mechanisms are needed to hold perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict accountable?

War, Oppression and Strong Men

- Is feminism a remedy against dictatorships?
- What is the narrative of feminism in the 21st century?

The truth is what you make it? Navigating alternative facts, disinformation and conspiracy theories

- How can policymakers and societies as a whole address the disinformation and conspiracy theories from authoritarian regimes and extremists?
- How can we future-proof education in this regard?



Day 2 at the Belgian Federal Parliament: Removing Barriers for Women in Politics

The world's 27 federations include some of the world's largest federal republics, such as India, the United States, and Brazil. As one of only six federal monarchies, Belgium has deep experience in negotiating complex agreements among regions, political parties and language groups.

It can also boast of being near the forefront in advancing women leaders, as the Presidents of both chambers of the Federal Parliament are currently women. Stephanie D'Hose is President of the Senate and Eliane Tillieux is the first woman to serve as president of the Chamber of Representatives.

These credentials make the Belgian Federal Parliament an ideal co-host for the second day of the WPL Summit 2023, when the theme will be "Removing Barriers for Women in Politics".

Among the topics to be addressed via keynote speeches, plenary panels, and policy focus sessions on this day will be:

Representation matters

- How do politics change with more women in power?
- How do policies change with more women in power?
- What can political parties do to have more women politicians?

Violence against women in politics

- How can violence against women in politics be recognised as a systemic threat?
- What societal changes are necessary?
- Is legislation an answer?

Sexism in Politics

- How can individuals or organisations expose sexism in politics?
- Which measures work?
- What responsibility does the media carry?
- When is the time for #MeToo in politics?



A Unique Occasion: One Summit, Two Parliaments

Looking forward to breaking new ground, WPL Founder and President Silvana Koch-Mehrin said, “the WPL Summit will be a unique occasion: one global summit co-hosted with two vibrantly democratic Parliaments over two consecutive days. WPL will be honoured to welcome leaders from around the world to the European Parliament and the Belgian Federal Parliament.”

- What:** WPL Summit 2023
When: 7-8 June, 2023
Who: political leaders
Where: European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium
Belgian Federal Parliament, Brussels, Belgium