



# BIENNIAL GOALS 2026-2028

Proposed **January 2026**

# Introduction

## 1. Our mission: old and new challenges to be faced despite overall progress.

We are living through a transformative era in which technological innovation, armed conflicts, climate change, geopolitical tensions and economic volatility present profound challenges. At Zonta International, we are called to face these realities with resilience and to act responsibly in shaping opportunities that will sustain our mission to build a better world for women and girls into the future.

The 2025 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report and the 2025 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report remind us of both the scale of the challenges and the power of progress:

- In the last 10 years, child marriage and maternal and child mortality rates have fallen, and more girls complete school. Women's presence in parliamentary seats worldwide increased 5% (although keeping well below one third globally). Still, only 35% of SDG targets are on track or making moderate progress. Nearly half are moving too slowly and, alarmingly, 18% are in reverse. A closer look to SDG 5 – Gender Equality - shows no targets fully met, with only 40% showing moderate progress.
- According to the World Economic Forum, it may still take 123 years to achieve full gender parity globally: an improvement of 11 years compared with the 2024 estimate, but still far from acceptable.





For us as Zontians, these findings are a call to resilience, bold action, and strengthened long-term sustainability. Guided by our strategic plan, we must secure effective advocacy and service until our mission is fulfilled:

- **As members**, we must remain **resourceful and generous** (my personal tagline) in pursuing our mission of building a better world for women and girls. Change is possible when determination meets collective action. Together, we stand in solidarity, mutual trust and empowerment to champion SDG No. 5. Our recently redefined **Core Values** commit us to lead with integrity, courage, and inspiration. By living these values, we position Zonta as the organization that truly makes a difference in the lives of women and girls. Yet, to accelerate progress, we must broaden our alliances and engage men as partners, recognizing that gender equality is a shared responsibility.
- **As an organization**, we have a **responsibility to ensure a sustainable future**—one that will uphold and strengthen Zonta for the benefit of current and future generations of members as together we continue the journey toward gender equality, which is still projected to take longer than the 107 years that Zonta has been in existence. Over the past biennia, we have undertaken a thorough review of our organization and identified opportunities for improvement. This work culminated in the adoption of our **Strategic Plan: Zonta, Gender Equity, and a Vision for 2030 & Beyond**. Implementation began in the 2024–2026 Biennium, and the upcoming 2026–2028 Biennium will be critical in advancing this process.

**The time to strengthen our internal structure is now.**

## 2. A call to our global community

*“If we want to lift up women, we must be brave enough to lead,”* Marian de Forest said in 1919. Over a century ago, our funders were bold. This is a call to our global community to support the Zonta International leadership in implementing the strategic plan and our 2026-2028 Biennial Goals as a baseline to make our organization stronger, more sustainable and more effective in pursuing our mission to build a better world for women and girls.

## 3. Principles guiding the 2026-2028 Biennial Goals:

- Ensure continuity in the implementation of the strategic plan and transition smoothly from biennium to biennium.
- Put forth bold but wise biennial goals: it is time to put into action changes envisioned, evaluated and defined in the three previous biennia, while consolidating good practices that continue to be sustainable for the future.
- Recognize and value our members voices, needs and remarkable work.
- Anchor our strategies, actions and conduct in our Core Values.
- More directly involve young professional members in leadership.
- Emphasize new and existing alliances and partnerships.

## 4. 2026-2028 Mission and Leadership Motto:

Our mission statement will not change in this biennium.

Our leadership motto will be:

### **S.H.A.R.E.: Sustainability and Human Rights through Accountability, Respect and Empowerment**

The leadership motto S.H.A.R.E. encapsulates our commitment to advancing sustainability and human rights through a leadership approach rooted in accountability, respect, and empowerment. We recognize that meaningful and lasting change begins within our own community. By empowering one another with integrity and respect, we strengthen our collective capacity to empower others.

Accountability, respect, and empowerment are integral to the Zonta Core Values and define the essence of the Zonta spirit: principled leadership, collaboration, and a shared commitment to our mission to build a better world for women and girls.

The acronym S.H.A.R.E. reflects the commitment to community cohesion and transparent governance.

## 5. Alignment to the Strategic Plan:

The 2026-2028 Biennial Goals continue to be categorized under the four major goals identified in the 2023-2030 Strategic Plan:



The biennial goals address our organization globally and locally, and they can be adapted to meet local needs and conditions.

At the 2028 Convention in Copenhagen, a report will be issued on how these biennial goals were fulfilled. In addition, the transition to the 2028-2030 Biennium will set the scene for our membership to take final decisions and launch the *Blueprint for the Future* of our organization.

# Credible and Visible Voice

## Strategic Plan Goal 1 states:

*Zonta acts as a credible and visible voice on gender equity and delivers initiatives addressing education equality, climate justice, ending gender-based violence, and ensuring women are represented in decision-making positions on an equal basis with men.”*

During the 2026-2028 Biennium, our key focus areas in advocacy and service at international and local levels will:

- Be aligned with the strategic plan.
- Be implemented continuously but will each culminate in shared moments for activism on an annual basis to help Zonta positively impact gender equity globally and be recognized as such.
- Each have a dedicated session in the virtual advocacy series (the Zonta Says NO Summit being the session dedicated to the 16 Days of Activism).



# Credible and Visible Voice

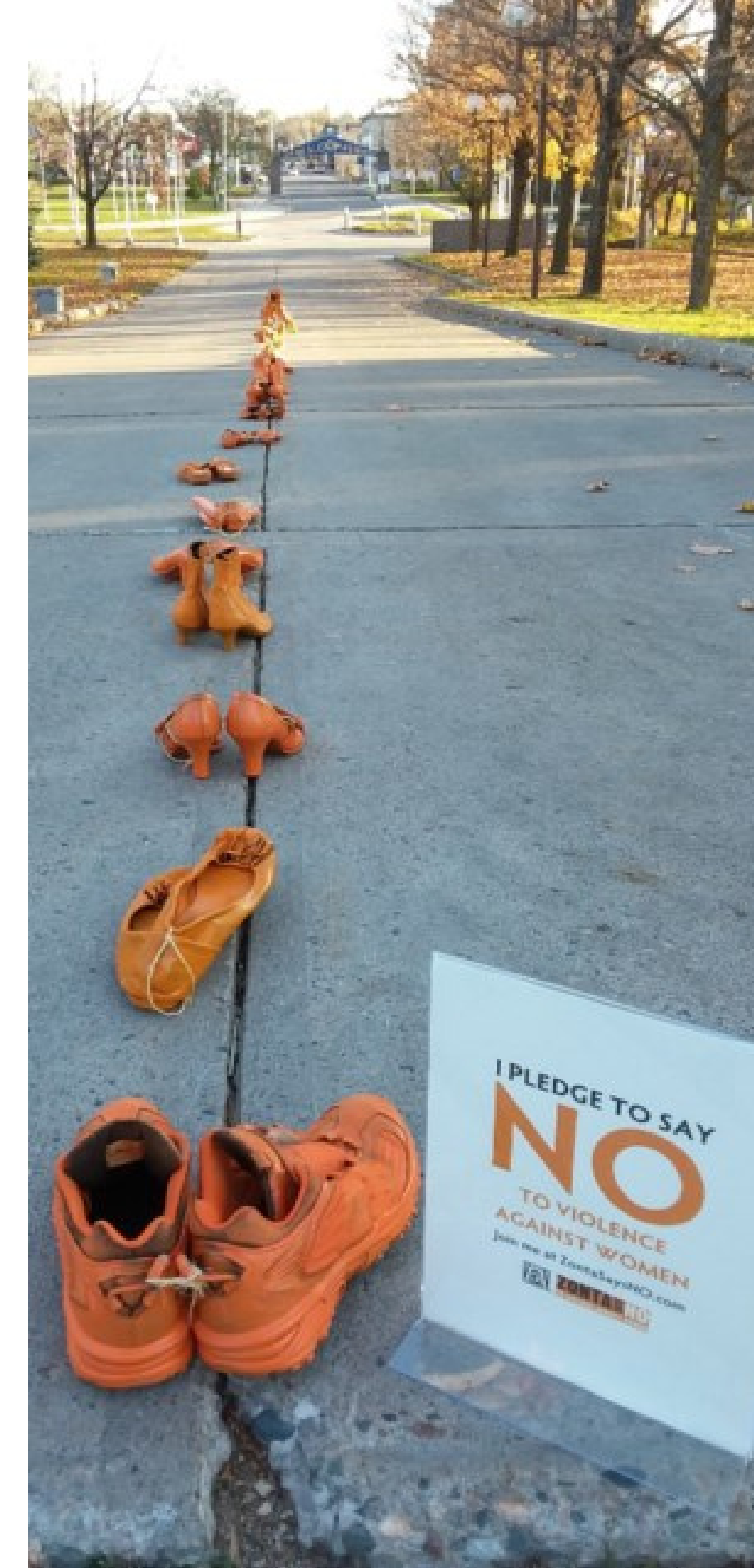
Clubs are NOT called to work on ALL areas and/or all focus dates, rather to be active in the focus areas that are locally most appropriate and necessary. Moreover, the specific dates can be adapted, based on local traditions or needs.

However, clubs are strongly encouraged to participate in our flagship campaign “Zonta Says NO” during the **16 Days of Activism**, 25 November through 10 December, with actions such as:

- Raise awareness locally and/or in social media and involve the local media.
- Take part in actions for legislative changes to improve safety and protection for women and girls.
- Take the Zonta Says NO Pledge at club level or individually and encourage non-Zontians to take the pledge as well, particularly men, local celebrities and authorities.
- Report actions through Share Your Story.

Among the priority areas of the Zonta Says NO campaign, clubs will be encouraged to undertake advocacy initiatives addressing **gender-based violence against women and girls in wars and armed conflicts**, an increasingly pervasive and severe violation of human rights worldwide.

**ZONTA SAYS NO**  
**TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**



# Credible and Visible Voice

## How we will act to support our clubs' voices:

- To support clubs in their activities, the Advocacy Committee will be organized around four portfolios by key focus area, but act as a whole team, in order to exploit synergies and share competencies. To act as a credible and visible voice, each portfolio will include organizing a Zonta virtual advocacy series session on compelling topics in each focus area, including the annual Zonta Says NO Summit . All these events will be uplifted to reach a broader audience outside Zonta International.
- The **internal training program** on women's rights and how to be a gender equity advocate launched in the 2024-2026 Biennium will continue. The program will be assessed and further implemented to meet the needs of Zontians.
- Focus on advancing the human rights of women and girls at **national level** will continue to be emphasized. Therefore, the creation of caucuses and national unions where such groups do not already exist will be encouraged and their work brought more closely under the umbrella of Zonta International advocacy.
- **Remarkable Women, Powerful Stories Series** will continue to be distributed on a global podcast platform with high-level guests focusing on violence against women, climate justice, women in decision-making and education equality, with emphasis on topics that matter most to young generations.
- **The Zonta Foundation for Women Quarterly Report** that communicates progress and results to donors and other stakeholders and promotes support for Zonta's life-changing work will be enriched with more stories. Virtual meetings with our partners and/or virtual visits to the sites of our service projects will be organized as appropriate.



# Credible and Visible Voice

## How we will act as a credible and visible voice at international level:



### International service projects

- The international service project “Ending Child Marriage” in partnership with UNICEF USA and UNFPA will continue to be our signature project.
- Ongoing, careful monitoring and risk management of funded projects will remain a priority, with progress reported to the membership via the Zonta Foundation for Women Quarterly *Inspiring Impact* Report and other suitable communication channels.

### Zonta’s education programs

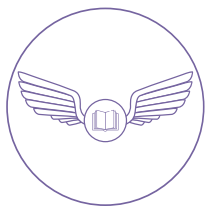
We will stand out by delivering meaningful benefit in the fields where they are currently most needed and continue offer unique programs that enhance our reputation, visibility and credibility at local and global levels.



- We will strengthen promotion and awareness-raising of the Zonta Young Women in Leadership Award, a well-established program that continues to receive strong and consistent participation from our clubs each year.



- Zonta Women in Business Leadership and Zonta Women in STEM Awards: After a first cycle in 2024- 2026, a second biennial cycle is performed with the same funding goals and in time to allow assessment for future decision-making. The application eligibility criteria, however, will be reviewed in relation to feedback received from districts and clubs.



- Amelia Earhart (AE) Fellowship: In recognition of its **90th anniversary** in the second year of the biennium, the Fellowship amount will increase to US\$12,000. An **AE Anniversary Ambassador** is appointed to plan the celebrations (including an AE reunion at the Convention in Copenhagen) and organize and promote an AE anniversary fundraising and PR campaign to uplift our Fellowship program.

# Credible and Visible Voice

## Advocacy at the United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (CoE)

With more than 55 years' experience holding general consultative status at the UN/ECOSOC, and more than 40 years holding consultative status at the Council of Europe, Zonta International representatives are equipped to continue making relevant impact on gender-related matters, in particular in our key focus areas, and staying relevant to the current challenges and adapting to the revitalization of the UN and CSW.

The UN Committee representatives are uplifted at all UN sites, with particular attention to UN Nairobi- Kenya, that is deemed to assume a major role with SDG5. Young professional members are added, as appropriate, to our UN and Council of Europe committees, to nurture the next generation of advocates and bring the youth perspective into our advocacy actions.

Both committees continue to regularly inform members of their actions through the CoE and UN Essentials.

## Our commitment to the SDGs and to diversity and inclusion

Zonta International will remain deeply and visibly committed to diversity and inclusion as a governance, leadership and accountability priority across all levels of the organization, strengthening inclusive leadership pathways.

Moving from principles to practice, we will promote inclusive multilanguage communication across our materials and events, ensuring that our voices truly reflect our global community.



# Club Success

## Strategic Plan Goal 2 states:

*Clubs serve as a welcoming and inspiring environment to those who wish to work to empower women and girls and create information and resources necessary to focus on the most important issues facing women and girls.*

Membership forms the arms and soul of Zonta International. The success of each club is essential to ensuring members remain proud, engaged, and committed to advancing our mission within a positive and inspiring environment.

The following actions will be taken:

- In order to nurture the Zonta spirit, the **Core Values of Zonta International**, together with the **Membership Code of Conduct**, will be actively promoted as the foundation of our collective identity. These principles foster a culture of mutual understanding and respect, essential to sustaining vibrant and flourishing clubs. Clubs will be encouraged to engage in open dialogue around these values and to embed them into their practices, further strengthening an inclusive, welcoming, and inspiring environment for all members.
- Clubs will further be supported in developing an enhanced **culture for diversity and inclusion** to welcome people from various genders, age groups, ethnicities and different backgrounds as members and guests.

## IN ZONTA WE VALUE



**Friendship**



**Equality and  
Inclusion**



**Respect**



**Global  
Community**



**Integrity**

# Club Success

- A dual-tier **Zonta Community Give Back Grant** program is established to tangibly recognize, support and elevate the service work of Zonta clubs worldwide. The program aims to strengthen the connection between Zonta International and its clubs by demonstrating the organization's commitment to supporting grassroots impact. It is a strategic step forward in enhancing Zonta's global visibility, fostering local credibility, and building a culture of collaboration and shared purpose. The program will be implemented in the 2026-2028 Biennium through one cycle of grants open for application to all clubs, and one cycle of microgrants reserved to small clubs up to 15 members. The 2026-2028 cycle theme will be Gender-Based Violence, currently the most universal focus area in the Zonta world.

The Zonta Community Give Back Grant program is included in the biennial funding goals that will be submitted to the Vancouver convention.

- Again, the annual Share Your Story Festival will bring members together virtually in 2027 and in person at the 2028 Convention in Copenhagen.



# Club Success

- Streamlining the Zonta International structure at all levels (see under Leadership and Sustainability) within the *Blueprint for the Future* will also simplify club governance and contain costs for members, enabling clubs to operate in a way that best serves the club and club members.
- Youth clubs' creation and retention are supported by a specific working group under the membership committee that includes members of Z and Golden Z clubs.
- Retention and expansion shall be strategically planned, building on the lessons learned in recent biennia, including new membership categories and a robust retention program. In particular, opening new countries shall prioritize strategic positioning to pursue our mission, and thoroughly consider sustainability and potential expansion beyond the first club. Chartering of new clubs remains important, with particular focus on **countries that currently have four or fewer clubs, and countries that have already been approved by the board.**
- A feasibility study is being conducted to assess the potential establishment of a fund aimed at supporting the creation of clubs in economically disadvantaged areas.
- The twinning program is streamlined and supported by a more automatic process where clubs may apply and seek their twin in their own or other countries and register existing and new spontaneous fellowships. Newly formed clubs will be encouraged to twin with a well-established club as a support for growth and activities planning, aligned with our mission.



# Leadership & Sustainability

## Strategic Plan Goal 3 states:

*Zonta manages its resources, including both time and money, to meet the vision and ensure the organization's long-term viability and success. Zonta modernizes its governance structure to align with its strategic plan, ensure innovative thought and allow for effective decision-making.*

According to the 2024-2026 Biennial Goals, a Governance Working Group has thoroughly reviewed ZI governance, leadership and internal structures at all levels and identified and evaluated options to enable the effective achievement of Zonta's mission.

The 2026-2028 Biennium will be the turning point when *Our Vision for 2030 and Beyond* will start to become reality through the implementation of the *Blueprint for the Future* aligned with the input by the Vancouver Convention.

Sustainability continues to be crucial to build an equal, responsible, green and clean future where the human rights of women and girls are recognized and implemented. Leading by example, Zonta International started to benchmark itself at international level in the 2024-2026 Biennium and in the 2026-2028 Biennium is asking its local structures to adopt a similar approach and will provide tools and guidance.



## Zonta, Gender Equity, and a Vision for 2030 & Beyond

Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies 2023–2030

# Leadership and Sustainability

- Transitioning into the new Zonta International structure starts with little steps forward in the definition of our committee structure:
  - Committees are streamlined and committee members are individually assigned a portfolio under the leadership and supervision of the committee chair.
  - Young professional members are appointed to the committees, as appropriate.
  - Under specific periods of intense activity, members may request periodic support by a larger group, subject to appointment by the International President.
- A Governance Advisory Team is appointed to progress the *Blueprint for the Future* as envisioned in the 2024-2026 Biennium with the input collected at the Vancouver Convention. The team will implement, in collaboration with the Bylaws & Resolutions Committee and the Finance, Investment and Risk Committee, the necessary proposals for changes to the Zonta International Bylaws and other governing documents in order to streamline and modernize the Zonta International governance structure at all levels, to be voted on at the Convention in Copenhagen in 2028 or prior to the Convention, if possible. Actions that encountered the favor of the Convention in Vancouver and do not require approval by the Convention will be initiated in the 2026-2028 Biennium.



# Leadership and Sustainability

- Zonta International & Zonta Foundation for Women finance, investment and risk functions are strategically guided by a global committee to safeguard resources, strengthen risk management and awareness, and ensure Zonta's long-term sustainability and success, and support clubs' awareness to conduct Zonta business with healthy finances and a risk mitigation approach.
- The Fundraising Development Committee will develop a global fundraising strategy in collaboration with the Headquarters development team. The role of the foundation ambassadors is elevated within this committee. Fundraising goals of Zonta Foundation for Women are supported by more detailed and frequent updates of the status of our international service projects. Donation trends continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis. The Zonta 1919 Legacy Giving Circle is promoted to grow our planned giving program.
- Monitoring the status of sustainability and environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues within Zonta International is continued. Zonta International ESG performance will be periodically updated at international level.
- A smooth leadership transition safeguarding continuity occurs between biennia of 2024-2026 and 2026-2028 as well as 2026-2028 and 2028-2030.



# Engagement of Audience and Allies

Strategic Plan Goal 4 states:

*Zonta creates customized pathways to connect to Zonta, develops collaborations with like-minded organizations, and expands revenue streams to further our mission and extend our voice.*

The following actions will be taken:

- Increased communication, both internally and externally, continues to focus on Zonta's work with the United Nations and its agencies, the Council of Europe, and various Zonta caucuses and other country-based advocacy groups.
- Zonta continues to look for **advocacy partnerships** both at global level and for joint statements. Parallel and joint advocacy actions will be coordinated with like-minded organizations around our four key focus areas (education equality, climate justice, ending gender-based violence, and ensuring women are represented in decision-making positions on an equal basis with men).
- Partnership and sponsorship opportunities are explored by the summer 2027 for Zonta's educational programs. **The Amelia Earhart Fellowship's 90th anniversary** offers a unique opportunity to engage partners and sponsors for this and other programs.



# Engagement of Audiences and Allies

- Zonta representatives at **other UN sites** are also encouraged to organize at least one session in the biennium where Zonta members can participate and be heard (such as NGO CSW Geneva, NGO CSW Vienna, etc.), making it easier and more cost-effective for members in those regions to experience directly Zonta's work at the UN and Council of Europe.
- Options identified in the 2024-2026 feasibility study for **alternative funding** and revenue sources will be further explored and implemented.



The **Commission on the Status of Women** offers an annual occasion to gather in fellowship, strengthen connections with like-minded organizations, set bases for new alliances and share in the Zonta spirit. It also provides a unique platform for members to deepen their knowledge and enhance their effectiveness as committed advocates for gender equality.

Zonta International hosts annually at least one side event within the Commission on the Status of Women with the emphasis on Zonta's strategic focus areas and encourages its leaders and members to organize and/or participate as speakers in parallel events, both in person and virtually.

In consideration of international travel costs and sustainability, virtual participation is also widely encouraged. Zonta International's delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women increases annually by 5% over the previous year in person and 10% virtually.

