



Governing Council
Item 10

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12 October 2006

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

(c) REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) STATES

1. The Regional Conference of Women Parliamentarians of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States was held under the auspices of Dr. Faisal bin Radhi Al-Mousawi, Chairman of the Shura Council, in Manama, Bahrain, on 4 and 5 July 2006. The conference was organized jointly by the Ad Hoc Committee on Women and Children of the Shura Council and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
2. The regional conference brought together women members of parliament, ministers, members of local councils, candidates and women working in Parliament, from five countries of the GCC: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Experts from Egypt, Jordan and Sweden also took part in the meeting and shared their experience with the participants.
3. The conference provided a forum for women parliamentarians and women in other political decision-making positions of the region to debate questions relating to the development of political and parliamentary working skills, including the examination of other types of practical experiences from the Gulf and other regions. Participants discussed the different challenges facing women in the political process and possible means of addressing them. The conference was held a few days after the elections that took place in Kuwait. Lessons learnt were discussed in the presence of women candidates from Kuwait and the only woman Minister of the country, Dr. Massouma Al-Mubarak. Debates also stressed the important role women play in resource management, economic activity and national development. Participants agreed that development could only be achieved with women's participation and only if the quality of all aspects of their lives is improved and if the necessary economic, social, educational, cultural, psychological and health requirements are delivered to enable them to play their role fully and exercise their full rights as citizens.
4. Key recommendations were adopted at the close of the conference, which may be found in the annex to this document.

**RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF
WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) STATES**
4-5 July 2006

Participants recommend to:

1. Hold an annual conference of women parliamentarians and women leaders in the GCC States;
2. Establish a federation of legislative councils based on which a committee of women parliamentarians of the Gulf would be established;
3. Call on political leaders and legislative and executive authorities to create mechanisms to increase the participation rates of qualified women in the legislature and in decision-making positions, as well as to call on civil society institutions to pave the way for women to assume leading positions therein;
4. Urge the institutions concerned to prepare national strategies for the advancement of Gulf women that specify the desired objectives, implementation mechanisms and evaluation methods and that serve as a vehicle and a resource for women parliamentarians in the performance of their task in taking up women's issues;
5. Emphasize and support the role of women parliamentarians in reviewing the laws in force and propose laws designed to improve the situation of women, eliminate discrimination against them in all fields and create the means and mechanisms required for them to fulfil their various roles within the family and society;
6. Call on the executive authorities and legislative councils to prepare and approve budgets that respond to the needs of both women and men, as well as budgets that are child-friendly;
7. Stress the importance of forging partnerships and cooperation among women parliamentarians and their male colleagues in order to provide support for women's issues in parliament;
8. Devote special attention to youth issues and put them on the list of priorities for parliamentary action;
9. Seek to establish sophisticated technical and legal systems for voter registration in order to facilitate all stages of the electoral process for women;
10. Urge legislative councils, official institutions and civil society organizations to conduct active awareness-raising programmes for voters with the aim of eliminating functional illiteracy;
11. Strengthen the partnership between men and women in order to facilitate and ensure the success of women's entry into politics;
12. Use the various media to project a positive image of women parliamentarians and women in decision-making positions as successful models for building the capacities of Gulf women in order to promote public confidence in the capacities of women.