

## REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

### (g) SEVENTH MEETING OF WOMEN SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT

(New Delhi, 3-4 October 2012)

1. On 3 and 4 October 2012, women Speakers of parliament convened in New Delhi at the invitation of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. The meeting, their seventh, focused on ways of making parliaments gender-sensitive and opened with welcoming speeches by the Speakers of both Houses of the Indian Parliament, the IPU President and the President of India. Keynote addresses were delivered by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, and the IPU Secretary General.
2. The women Speakers and Deputy Speakers of 13 national parliaments recognized that, in their positions, they play a crucial role in spearheading efforts to make parliaments and society more responsive to gender issues and needs.
3. The discussions focused on women's representation in parliament, which remains at low levels (a global average of just 20 per cent), and women's participation in parliamentary structures. Specific measures, such as supporting electoral laws and temporary special measures to increase the number of women elected to parliament, were pinpointed. Participants also considered their role in supporting and mentoring other women, both those who are and those who wish to become MPs.
4. In addition to ways of increasing the numbers of women MPs, participants discussed how to improve the parliamentary working environment for both men and women. Child care facilities in parliaments, working times and gender-related policies on parental leave and other issues were discussed.
5. The meeting concluded with the adoption of "The New Delhi Initiative for Gender-sensitive Parliaments", in which women Speakers committed themselves to realizing the full potential of women's political participation, placing gender equality high on the parliamentary agenda, improving the parliamentary working environment and taking initiatives to share the responsibility for gender equality with men. The Initiative highlights ways of meeting those objectives, including putting in place action plans to support electoral laws and temporary special measures to increase representation, increasing women's participation on parliamentary committees, revising internal policies, rules and codes of conduct to meet the gender needs of parliaments and ensuring that gender equality issues are debated in parliament (See [Annex](#)).
6. Since the New Delhi Initiative was agreed on shortly before the adoption of a plan of action on gender-sensitive parliaments, at the 127<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, the women Speakers stressed the plan's importance and usefulness for parliaments and expressed support for the text.
7. Participants decided that, at their next meeting, women Speakers of parliament should take stock of achievements, challenges and lessons learned in making parliaments gender-sensitive and share their individual experiences.



## Seventh Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Parliament House Complex, New Delhi, 3-4 October 2012

Organized by the Parliament of India and the Inter-Parliamentary Union



### NEW DELHI INITIATIVE FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS

We, women Speakers of parliament, *recognizing* the vital role of women Speakers in spearheading the movement for establishing gender-sensitive parliaments and societies, gathered at the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliaments in New Delhi on 3 and 4 October 2012,

*Commit to:*

1. Promoting women's representation in parliament and other elected bodies -

*By supportive electoral laws and temporary special measures, mentoring other women in parliament, sensitizing men and women, advocating with our political parties and other stakeholders, and promoting women's political participation in international, regional and national forums.*

2. Bringing women's participation to its utmost potential -

*By enabling women's participation in all parliamentary committees, forums and groups and in other elected that women are nominated and/or elected to effective leadership positions in all parliamentary structures.*

3. Placing gender equality higher on the parliamentary agenda -

*By ensuring that debates on gender equality issues take place in parliament, by mainstreaming gender through the establishment of specialized committees on gender, and through empowered gender or women's caucuses and gender units in parliament.*

4. Sharing the responsibility for gender equality with men -

*By raising their awareness and knowledge and associating them in legislative initiatives, debates and events on women's rights and gender equality and by raising gender capacities in parliament and other elected bodies through training, gender analysis tools and checklists that are systematically used throughout the work of the institution.*

5. Enhancing gender sensitivity in the working environment in parliament -

*By focusing on ensuring that the internal policies of parliament respond to the needs of women and men by reviewing from a gender perspective the internal rules, codes of conduct and communication strategies of parliament and by adopting and enforcing anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies.*

6. Assessing, monitoring and planning for gender-sensitive parliaments and other elected bodies –

*By carrying out gender assessments of parliament and by strengthening or formulating initiatives/action plans for gender sensitive parliaments, with regular monitoring.*

7. Supporting IPU initiatives to make parliaments more gender sensitive –

*By contributing expertise to the assistance IPU provides to parliaments to become gender-sensitive and recommending that IPU develops options for gender-sensitive communication strategies for parliaments.*

8. Ensuring follow-up

*Taking stock of achievements, challenges and lessons learned in making gender-sensitive parliaments for gender-sensitive societies at future meetings of women Speakers of parliament.*

*Participating in the formulation of a strong Action Plan for Gender-sensitive Parliaments taking into consideration the draft Plan of Action prepared by IPU.*

9. Future agenda item

*Take stock of the achievements of women Speakers of parliament and Presidents of Senate, the challenges they face and share lessons learned from their individual experiences.*