



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 135<sup>th</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 23 – 27.10.2016

## The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference: Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective

### *Resolution adopted unanimously by the 135<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (Geneva, 27 October 2016)*

The 135<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

*Noting* that equal participation of men and women in public affairs and decision-making has long been recognized as a human right, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1953 Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant UN Security Council statements,

*Recalling* that the 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union states that “the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society”,

*Taking into account* the provisions contained in the national constitutions of States relating to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and CEDAW,

*Recognizing* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit draws up a new blueprint for global development and emphasizes that realizing gender equality and women’s empowerment will make a crucial contribution to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

*Noting* that gender equality is a vital part of development, as set out in Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in target 5.5, which aims to “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, social and public life”, and target 5.c, which makes a call to “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”,

*Recognizing* that the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action call for equal and active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels,

*Recalling* UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, which set a 30 per cent target for women in leadership positions by 1995, and a target of parity by 2000, and which emphasizes the importance of improving men’s and women’s capacity to raise awareness about gender equality in their communities and change negative attitudes that lead to discrimination against women,

*Concerned* that as at 1 August 2016, the global average of parliamentary seats held by women is still only 22.8 per cent, and *deeply concerned* that there are still eight parliamentary chambers with no women members at all,

*Noting* that various impediments continue to hinder women's ability to participate in political processes, including at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels, such as a male-dominated political culture, negative cultural attitudes and stereotypes regarding the role of women in society, persistent discrimination against women in law and practice, as well as security concerns, lack of support from political parties and society at large, unequal access to health, quality education, training and employment, lack of finances and resources,

*Also noting* the need to change mindsets and culture within institutions and society, in particular with respect to traditional gender norms, by addressing gender stereotyping in the media and by promoting the values associated with gender equality among young people of both sexes,

*Underscoring* that the economic empowerment of women is a precondition for their ability to take part in political processes and to raise funds for campaigning,

*Recognizing* that young women face specific challenges based on their age, sex, education, health, access to basic services and the spread of poverty among women, and that they are the least represented in parliament among both youth and women,

*Underlining* that electoral systems have an impact on women's representation, and that the proportional representation system tends to be more conducive to higher representation of women,

*Noting* that electoral gender quotas, among other measures, have proved to be useful and successful in facilitating women's access to elected office and to leadership positions, in particular when such quotas set ambitious goals, are promoted by political leaders, are understood by the general public and are supported with strong implementation mechanisms, such as sanctions for non-compliance,

*Bearing in mind* that quota systems alone are not sufficient to change or challenge societal views whereby women are not perceived as equals, that only 15 countries among those who have chosen to use a quota system have established a system that aims to achieve a rate of women's political participation above what has been determined as the critical level of 30 per cent, and that measures to promote gender equality in other areas are also needed,

*Underlining* that the increasing inclusion of women in political processes around the world has been accompanied by forms of resistance such as stereotyping, harassment, intimidation and violence, including online and in social media, in addition to other forms of resistance that are related to social, cultural, economic and legislative factors,

*Acknowledging* that the climate of tension and confrontation that characterizes the political arena may dissuade both women and men from participating in politics, and that the specific forms of violence that women face constitute an additional obstacle to their engagement in politics and can inhibit their freedom to exercise their mandate as they would wish,

*Recognizing* that a gender-sensitive parliament is one that responds to the needs and interests of both women and men in its structures, rules and regulations, operations, methods and work,

*Also recognizing* the need for parliaments to encourage the adoption of a strategy of gender-based analysis, namely, the process of assessing and taking into account the impact on women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes at all levels and in all spheres,

*Further recognizing* the need for parliaments to encourage the adoption of a strategy for gender mainstreaming, namely, taking into account women's and men's concerns and experiences as integral dimensions of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated,

*Underlining* that gender balance at expert hearings in parliamentary standing committees is of great importance for mainstreaming gender policy,

*Underscoring* that gender equality is in the interest of both men and women and should be promoted jointly by both sexes in legal, political, economic, cultural and social terms at the local, national, regional and international levels,

1. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that national laws and the rules and practices of government authorities comply with international law and human rights obligations and all other international obligations, including those linked to the United Nations system organizations, particularly in relation to women's and young women's empowerment;
2. *Also urges* parliaments to amend or repeal existing legislation that directly or indirectly discriminates against women and impedes their full participation in political processes, as well as to enact legislation that encourages gender equality;
3. *Calls on* men and women parliamentarians to work together and to take joint initiatives in parliament to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels of policy-making processes and decision-making positions;
4. *Also calls on* parliaments to include a gender equality perspective in education policies and to work towards closing the gender gap in educational opportunities;
5. *Urges* parliaments to continue to promote education as part of an inclusive democratic society, with particular focus on ensuring equal access for women and girls, and incorporating a gender equality perspective into all civic education activities;
6. *Encourages* parliaments to support the strengthening of national mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as collaboration and synergies between them;
7. *Calls on* parliaments and parliamentarians to enhance cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly independent women's organizations, in the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of measures to increase women's participation in political processes;
8. *Also calls on* parliaments to promote new media strategies that address the role of women and develop gender equality, and if possible, to enact national legislation that requires such strategies to be issued or adopted, as well as to develop media, educational and community-level campaigns that aim to combat gender stereotypes; and *further calls on* men and women parliamentarians to play a prominent role in those efforts, and to act as champions and role models in challenging gender stereotypes and negative attitudes towards women;
9. *Urges* parliaments to facilitate the reconciliation and strengthening of personal, family, professional and political life for both women and men, including by promoting shared parental leave, as well as economic support, infrastructure-building and improving childcare services through enacting and amending legislation and labour regulations that affect family life;
10. *Strongly urges* parliaments to set a deadline by which at least 30 per cent of parliamentarians should be women and to set a further deadline by which that proportion should reach 50 per cent;
11. *Calls on* parliaments to consider the adoption and implementation of quota systems or other similar measures that set ambitious goals and enable women to be pre-selected into winnable seats or winnable positions on lists;
12. *Also calls on* parliaments to create a fairer environment for women and men candidates, including by, but not restricted to, tying part of public funding to the number of women candidates that political parties field, establishing special funds or interest-free loans for women candidates, capping expenses, and limiting the duration of campaigns;

13. *Further calls on* political parties to ensure that their candidate-selection processes favour gender-balanced representation and to consider the implementation of quota systems for that purpose;
14. *Urges* political parties to provide regular political education aimed at strengthening women's capacity and enhancing society's awareness of women's participation in political processes;
15. *Also urges* parliaments and political parties to ensure there is an equal number of women and men in leadership positions in all policy areas and all governance bodies, through transparent and fair processes, such as dual leadership and gender rotation in leadership positions;
16. *Calls on* parliaments and political parties to support young women's political participation through specific work programmes, including by implementing empowerment programmes that target young women, by enabling young women to access leadership positions and to act as role models for other young women, and by engaging young women in programmes and training courses designed to foster and prepare them to become future leaders;
17. *Urges* parliaments to ensure that national strategies adopted in all spheres of governance incorporate a gender perspective in terms of design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and *calls on* parliaments to promote gender-responsive legislation, policies and programmes in order to achieve gender equality;
18. *Also urges* parliaments to strongly support measures for improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and the development of gender indicators;
19. *Calls on* parliaments to promote mechanisms to advance gender equality in the work of parliament, including the establishment of women's caucuses that are open to supportive men parliamentarians, parliamentary committees on gender equality that include men, and gender expertise among parliamentary staff of both sexes;
20. *Invites* parliamentary standing committees to ensure that both women and men are equally represented among the experts in committee hearings, and that there is sufficient capacity among the experts to evaluate the effects of planned legislation on gender equality;
21. *Invites* men and women parliamentarians to work together on the development and effective implementation of legislation and policies on harassment and violence against women, including in politics, and to collaborate in this endeavour with the relevant government agencies, civil society and other stakeholders, including technology companies, on tackling online abuse;
22. *Calls on* political leaders and individual men and women parliamentarians to condemn acts of harassment, intimidation and violence against women candidates and parliamentarians, including online and in social media; and *also calls on* parliaments to adopt legal and practical measures to prevent and punish such acts;
23. *Urges* parliaments and political parties to promote an institutional culture that offers a safe and secure working environment for both men and women, including strong and well-implemented internal policies against sexist language and attitudes;
24. *Also urges* parliaments and political parties to adopt policies on sexual harassment, effective complaints mechanisms and penalties for offenders in order to safeguard women when performing their duties;
25. *Further urges* parliaments to ensure that their institutions put in place the necessary framework (infrastructure, technical assistance) for women with disabilities, who continue to suffer from discrimination on multiple fronts, to be able to carry out their parliamentary mandate;

26. *Calls on* parliaments to review the gender sensitivity of their institutions, with a view to making them places that are amenable to both men and women, that promote gender partnerships and that fully advance equality in society;
27. *Requests* the IPU to support national parliaments wishing to conduct an assessment of their gender sensitivity, in line with the 2012 *IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments* and its self-assessment methodology, and to increase technical assistance and support for parliaments in their efforts to enhance institutional gender sensitivity;
28. *Also requests* the IPU to develop comprehensive tools and guidelines for each action area in the 2012 *IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments* and to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan;
29. *Further requests* the IPU to work closely on gender equality and women's empowerment with relevant UN bodies, such as UN Women, as indicated in the recent UN General Assembly resolution 70/298 (2016) on Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union;
30. *Calls on* the IPU, in cooperation with its international partners, to develop capacity-building programmes for women parliamentarians, as part of its work towards achieving gender equality in politics;
31. *Also calls on* the parliamentary assemblies and parliaments participating in international election observation missions to ensure a gender-balanced composition of their delegations, and to devote particular attention to the role and participation of women in electoral processes;
32. *Further calls on* parliaments to enhance their engagement in the Universal Periodic Review process conducted by the UN Human Rights Council in the area of gender equality, and to ensure their countries' full cooperation with the Council's Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.