

**Commission on the Status of Women
Fiftieth session, 27 February – 10 March 2006**

Draft Agreed Conclusions

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action¹ on women in power and decision-making, which emphasized that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved, and that women's equal participation is a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.
2. The Commission reaffirms the outcome document adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly², which acknowledged that despite general acceptance of the need for gender balance in decision-making bodies at all levels, a gap between de jure and de facto equality has persisted, and that women continue to be underrepresented in legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels, as well as at the highest levels of the corporate sector and other economic and social institutions, and drew attention to the obstacles that hinder women's entry into decision-making positions².
3. The Commission further reaffirms the commitment to the equal participation of women and men in public life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.³
4. The Commission recalls the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which states, *inter alia*, that State parties should take all appropriate measures, including positive measures, to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country.⁴
5. The Commission recalls General Assembly resolution 58/142 on Women and political participation which urged all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive set of programmes and policies to increase women's participation, especially in political decision-making.⁵
6. The Commission also recalls that its Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on women in power and decision-making recognized the need to accelerate the implementation of strategies that promote gender balance in political decision-making and to mainstream a gender perspective in all stages of policy formulation and decision-making.⁶

¹ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13). para 181

² A/RES/S-23/3 of 16 November 2000, para 23

³ Resolution 217A(III), Resolution 2200A(XXI), annex, Resolution 640(VII), annex

⁴ Resolution 34/180, annex

⁵ A/RES/58/142 of 10 February 2004, para 1a-1

⁶ Commission on the Status of Women (2000). *Agreed Conclusions on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action 1996-1999*. New York: United Nations, p.37, para 3.

7. The Commission welcomes the 2005 World Summit, which reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including Millennium Development Goals, and resolved to promote increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.⁷

8. The Commission recognizes that progress has been achieved since the Fourth World Conference on Women in women's participation in decision-making at all levels. Introduction of policies and programmes, including positive measures, at the national level, has resulted in an increase in women's participation in legislative bodies.

9. The Commission expresses concern that progress has been slow and uneven and that women continue to encounter challenges to their participation and leadership at the highest levels of decision-making as a result of, inter alia, the absence of enabling environments in political institutions, such as parliaments, legislatures and political parties, and the persistence of stereotypes that discourage women from taking up decision-making positions.

10. The Commission further expresses concern about the lack of sufficient information and data at the national, regional and international levels on the participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels, including the local level, and in all areas, including, inter alia, the economy, including the private sector, the judiciary, trade unions, media, foreign affairs, and academia.

11. The Commission recognizes that efforts are needed by all stakeholders to create an enabling environment for *de facto* gender equality in decision-making.

12. The Commission urges Governments and, as appropriate, the relevant entities of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, including the international financial institutions, political parties, civil society, including the private sector and nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders, to take the following actions:

- a) Establish concrete goals, targets and benchmarks for achieving equal participation of women and men in decision-making bodies at all levels, especially in the areas of macro-economic policy, trade, labour, budgets, defense and foreign affairs, including through positive actions;
- b) Develop policies and programmes to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic economic, social and political decision-making positions;
- c) Review, as necessary, existing constitutional, political, legislative, and regulatory frameworks, including electoral systems, to remove provisions that hinder women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels;
- d) Ensure women's equal access to employment opportunities, productive resources, information and education and training, including leadership training, in order to facilitate their full and equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels;

⁷ A/60/L.1 of 20 September 2005, para 58

- e) Ensure that institutions, including parliaments, develop an enabling environment for women's participation, including through measures aimed at reconciling family and professional responsibilities;
- f) Facilitate networking among women in decision-making positions at all levels including in academia, trade unions, the media and civil society organizations;
- g) Encourage men in decision-making positions to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and support women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes at all levels;
- h) Promote efforts to eliminate stereotypes, including in education and training programmes and in the media, and encourage the portrayal of positive images of women as leaders in all areas of life;
- i) Monitor media coverage of women in decision-making to identify gender bias and means to address it;
- j) Facilitate research on the conditions under which the influence of women in decision-making positions or policy outcomes is increased, and women's leadership at all levels is enhanced, and disseminate lessons learned and good practices.
- k) Ensure ratification and implementation of the relevant instruments relating to full political rights for women, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women;
- l) Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities during election campaigns by providing public funding and access to the state media, setting campaign spending limits, and ensuring that campaign finances and expenditures are disclosed;
- m) Promote women's candidacies in elections through the adoption of specific training programmes, recruitment drives and financial incentives, especially in majoritarian electoral systems where women may face greater challenges in getting nominated;
- n) Ensure that women are included in decision-making positions within electoral management bodies and that due consideration is given to issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the structure and activities of such bodies;
- o) Provide women's branches in political parties, where they exist, with the necessary resources to increase visibility within the party structures, to influence decision-making and to support women's candidacies;

- p) Review party structures and procedures to remove all obstacles for women's participation, in particular in leadership positions, with the aim of achieving parity at all levels;
- q) Adopt clear rules for candidate selection within parties, including, as relevant, the implementation of quotas for achieving equitable representation of women candidates in elected positions;
- r) Ensure that parliaments establish standing or ad hoc committees or other statutory bodies on gender equality and empowerment of women, with cross-party representation, to monitor the review and implementation of existing laws and constitutional provisions, as well as recommendations from international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action;
- s) Ensure that parliaments, including standing committees and women's caucuses, engage in productive collaboration with national mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as Women's Ministries, Gender Equality Commissions, and Ombudspersons' Offices, as well as with women's groups and networks in civil society;
- t) Disseminate national periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women prior to their official submission to the Committee, as well as concluding comments provided by the Committee;
- u) Encourage consultative gender-budget processes to increase women's participation in and influence on economic decision-making;
- v) Promote recruitment and career-development programmes that equip women with managerial, entrepreneurial and technical skills to enable them to assume decision-making positions at all levels and areas, especially in economic decision-making;
- w) Encourage efforts of trade unions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to achieve equality of women and men in their ranks, including equal participation in decision-making;
- x) Fully implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 in order to increase the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction;
- y) Strengthen research, monitoring and evaluation of progress in the participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels, including the local level, in particular in areas where there is a dearth of information, such as the economy, academia, media, trade unions, including through the development of standardized methodology for systematic collection of gender-specific data and statistics disaggregated by sex.