

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AT ALL LEVELS

CSW50 AGREED CONCLUSIONS (B)

United Nations, March 2006

EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AT ALL LEVELS

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which emphasized that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace could not be achieved, and that women's equal participation was a necessary condition for women's and girls' interests to be taken into account and was needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.
2. The Commission reaffirmed the outcome document adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session, paragraph 23 of 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 had persisted, and that women continued to be underrepresented at the 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 hindered women's entry into decision-making positions.
3. The Commission reaffirmed also the commitment to the equal participation of women and men in public life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which stated that women should be on equal terms with men, without any discrimination, entitled to vote in all elections, eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies established by national law, and entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions established by national law.
4. The Commission recalled the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which stated, inter alia, that States Parties should take all appropriate measures, including positive measures and temporary special measures, to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in the political and public life of the country.
5. The Commission urged States parties to comply fully with their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol thereto and to take into consideration the concluding comments, as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
6. The Commission noted that some States parties had modified their reservations, expressed satisfaction that some reservations had been withdrawn and urged States parties to limit the extent of any reservations that they lodged to the Convention, to formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible, to ensure that no reservations were incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention, to review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and to withdraw reservations that were contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention.
7. The Commission recalled General Assembly resolution 58/142, of 22 December 2003, on women and political participation, in paragraph 1 of which the Assembly urged all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive set of programmes and policies to increase women's participation, especially in political decision-making.
8. The Commission also recalled that its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on women in power and decision-making recognized the need to accelerate the implementation of strategies that promoted gender balance in political decision-making and to mainstream a gender perspective in all stages of policy formulation and decision-making.
9. The Commission welcomed the 2005 World Summit, which had 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 the Millennium Development Goals, and had 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.

10. The Commission recognized that some progress had 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 local, national and international levels, had resulted in an increase in women's participation in decision-making processes.
11. The Commission expressed concern at the serious and persistent obstacles, which were many and varied in nature, that still hindered the advancement of women and further affected their participation in decision-making processes, including, inter alia, the persistent feminization of poverty, the lack of equal access to health, education, training and employment, armed conflict, the lack of security and natural disasters.
12. The Commission underlined the importance of the empowerment of women and their effective participation in decision-making and policymaking processes as critical tools to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, and recognized that eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls enabled them to participate equally in decision-making.
13. The Commission expressed concern about the lack, at the local, national, regional and international levels, of sufficient information and data disaggregated by sex on the participation of women and men in decision-making processes in all areas, including the economy, the public and private sectors, the judiciary, international affairs, academia, trade unions, the media, non-governmental organizations and others.
14. The Commission reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressed the importance of their full and equal participation in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and the rebuilding of post-conflict society, in accordance with Security Council resolution

1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

15. The Commission recognized that gender equality, development and peace were key issues for the promotion of women, and that new efforts were needed by all actors to create an enabling environment in decision-making.
16. The Commission reaffirmed the urgent goal of achieving 50/50 gender distribution in all categories of posts within the United Nations system, especially at senior and policymaking levels, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in conformity with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, and also taking into account the continuing lack of representation or the underrepresentation of women from certain countries, in particular from developing countries, countries with economies in transition, and unrepresented or largely underrepresented Member States.

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The Commission urged Governments, and/or, as appropriate, the relevant entities of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, including the international financial institutions, national parliaments, political parties, civil society, including the private sector, trade unions, academia, the media, non-governmental organizations and other actors, to take the following actions:

- (a) Ensure that women had the right to vote and exercise that right without duress, persuasion or coercion;
- (b) Review, as appropriate, existing legislation, including electoral law, and remove or modify, as appropriate, provisions that hindered women's equal participation in decision-making, and adopt positive actions and temporary special measures, as appropriate, to enhance women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels;

- (c) Establish concrete goals, targets and benchmarks for achieving equal participation of women and men in decision-making bodies at all levels and in all areas, especially in areas of macroeconomic policy, trade, labour, budgets, defence and foreign affairs, the media and the judiciary, including through positive actions and temporary special measures, as appropriate;
- (d) Develop and fund policies and programmes, including innovative measures, to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers, with the goal of achieving a gender balance at all levels and in all areas, in particular in strategic economic, social and political decision-making positions;
- (e) Establish the goal of gender balance in decision-making in administration and public appointments at all levels, develop alternative approaches and changes in institutional structures and practices, including gender action plans, which established concrete strategies and budgets for the achievement of consistent gender mainstreaming as a strategy for promoting gender equality objectives, in legislation and public policies, among others;
- (f) Ensure women's full and equal participation and representation at all decision-making levels in all aspects of peace processes and in post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation processes;
- (g) Encourage greater involvement of all marginalized women in decision-making at all levels and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making;
- (h) Ensure that gender perspectives were incorporated in development policies and programmes, and in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, to ensure that women and all other members of society benefited from development and that women were empowered to assume leadership positions;
- (i) Promote and strengthen international cooperation to accelerate the development process in which women played a key role and should be equal beneficiaries;
- (j) Introduce more effective measures aimed at eradicating poverty of women and improving their living conditions to promote the realization of their full human potential, and enable their advancement and their equal participation in decision-making;
- (k) Ensure that women and girls had equal access to education in all forms and that education was gender-sensitive, and promote educational programmes in which women and girls would be equipped with the necessary knowledge and prepared to participate equally in decision-making processes in all spheres of life and at all levels;
- (l) Ensure women's and girls' access to training that enabled them to develop their skills, capacities and expertise to exercise leadership, including tools, training and special programmes necessary to enter, inter alia, into politics, including at the highest levels, recognizing existing power differentials in society and the need to respect different positive models of leadership;
- (m) Ensure women's equal access to decent work, full and productive employment, productive and financial resources and information, in order to facilitate their full and equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels;
- (n) Introduce objective and transparent procedures for recruitment and gender-sensitive career planning to enable women to assume decision-making positions at all levels and in all areas in order to break the glass ceiling;
- (o) Eliminate occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, as well as discrimination against women, including marginalized women, in the labour market, through legal and policy measures, including by increasing opportunities for women and girls, as well as men and boys, to work in non-traditional sectors;
- (p) Ensure women's access to microcredit and microfinance schemes, which had proven to be effective means to empower women and could create an enabling environment to facilitate their full and equal participation in the decision-making processes at all levels, particularly at the grass-roots level;

- (q) Foster an enabling environment in decision-making processes at all levels, including through measures aimed at reconciling family and employment responsibilities, inter alia, by better sharing of paid and unpaid work between women and men;
- (r) Take measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, in order to promote their full and equal participation in public and political life;
- (s) Promote women's leadership in all areas and at all levels and remove all barriers that directly or indirectly hindered the participation of women, in order to increase the visibility and influence of women in decision-making processes;
- (t) Facilitate networking and mentoring among women leaders and girls, as appropriate, at all levels and in all areas, including in politics, academia, trade unions, the media and civil society organizations, specifically women's groups and networks, including through the use of information and communication technology, as appropriate;
- (u) Encourage, particularly among men and women in decision-making positions, the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and support women's participation, representation and leadership in decision-making processes at all levels, including the exchange of best practices and awareness-raising;
- (v) Develop strategies to increase the involvement of men and boys in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, through, inter alia, encouraging the sharing of household work and care;
- (w) Develop strategies to eliminate gender stereotypes in all spheres of life, particularly in the media, and foster the positive portrayal of women and girls as leaders and decision makers on all levels and in all areas;
- (x) Recognize the importance of women's participation in decision-making in all areas, including the political process, provide fair and balanced coverage of male and female candidates, cover participation in women's political organizations and ensure coverage of issues that had a particular impact on women;
- (y) Adopt clear rules, as necessary, for candidate selection within parties, including, as appropriate, the implementation of concrete goals, targets and benchmarks, including, where appropriate, temporary special measures, such as quotas, for achieving equitable representation of women candidates in elected positions;
- (z) Promote women's candidacies in elections, inter alia and as appropriate, through the adoption of specific measures, such as training programmes and recruitment drives and, as a temporary special measure, consider funding for women candidates;
- (aa) Make efforts to ensure equal opportunities during election campaigns, including equal access to the media and to financial and other resources, as appropriate;
- (bb) Facilitate the inclusion of women in decision-making positions within electoral management bodies and observer commissions and give consideration to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the structure and activities of such bodies;
- (cc) Consider establishing parliamentary standing or ad hoc committees or other statutory bodies on gender equality and empowerment of women, with cross-party representation, where appropriate, to monitor and review the implementation of existing laws and constitutional provisions, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, where applicable, and the commitments to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as taking into account recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, where applicable;
- (dd) Consider ratifying and implementing relevant instruments relating to full political, economic, social and cultural rights for women and girls, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- (ee) Reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a vital instrument for the advancement of women and, in that regard, take measures to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals;
 - (ff) Encourage public dissemination of national periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as concluding comments provided by the Committee;
 - (gg) Promote collaboration among all relevant actors, such as parliaments, national machineries for the advancement of women and other relevant national mechanisms, and women's groups and networks in civil society to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women;
 - (hh) Support the mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels and stages of the budgetary process, including through awareness-raising and training, where appropriate;
 - (ii) Strengthen research, monitoring and evaluation of the progress of women's participation in decision-making at all levels, in particular in areas where there was a dearth of information, including, as appropriate, through the development of acceptable standardized methodology for systematic collection of gender-specific data and statistics, disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors, and disseminate lessons learned and good practices;
 - (jj) Ensure political will to recognize the role of women in development in all spheres of life, to promote gender equality and favour the participation of women in decision-making positions. ■
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- Source: United Nations document E/2006/27