



SOUTH-SOUTH FORUM

**INTER-REGIONAL SEMINAR ON
WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT**

Translating Women's Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence

Accra, Republic of Ghana, 28–30 August 2012

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Introduction

As a South-South forum, the Inter-Regional Seminar on Women's Political Empowerment, with the theme Translating Women's Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence, brought together representatives of 36 parliaments from across the globe to discuss the current state of women's political participation and representation in parliaments in their respective countries and the important policy objectives that women are pursuing within their legislatures. The following countries were represented at the Seminar: Bolivia, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Spain, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A large majority of members of parliament attending the seminar are currently serving as chairs or deputy chairs of women's inter-party parliamentary caucuses and committees set up to address issues pertaining to women's rights and gender equality within legislative bodies.

The objective of this Inter-Regional Seminar was to identify and promote optimal approaches that translate women's presence in leadership and decision making into critical action and influence. In particular, the discussions aimed to:

- Share knowledge and experiences on multi-faceted approaches that increase women's access to and retention in leadership and decision making and

include measures that target awareness raising of gender equality among men and boys;

- Identify strategies and approaches to optimise women's participation in leadership and decision making;
- Share and take stock of 'good practices' on the impact and difference women make in political leadership and decision making;
- Distil knowledge on transformative leadership styles and skills for women in politics.

The premise for the thematic design of this South-South Forum as the Inter-Regional Seminar was to highlight the gains, either incremental or ground breaking, that women bring into political spaces. The Seminar consisted of four plenary sessions where participants from various countries presented their experiences in the establishment and development of women's parliamentary caucuses and outlined recent achievements and recurrent challenges in implementing the objectives of these inter-party caucuses. Issues identified as part of these individual contributions served to create a broader context of general trends and challenges for women's political empowerment; for achievements and outstanding areas of work in the institutionalization of gender equality norms and principles; and for pertinent societal and structural issues facing women legislators within and outside parliaments. During the last day of the seminar, four parallel thematic working groups focused on identifying specific actions for promoting women's empowerment and increased political participation and

representation within political parties, parliaments and civil society, and in particular for the role of women's parliamentary caucuses during political transitions and democratic reforms.

The seminar resulted in the concluding document—the Accra Declaration—that outlines a strategic agenda for women's empowerment and spells out the commitments of the participants in the Seminar. All participants shared the agenda and agreed to pursue it in their individual capacities as women legislators and women leaders. (Please see the full text of the Declaration on page 15.)

Opening Session

Keynote Addresses

The key-note address was delivered by the Hon. Juliana Azumah-Mensah, Minister for Women and Children's Affairs of Ghana, who outlined the existing challenges to women's political empowerment and the critical role of women's parliamentary caucuses in promoting substantive equality between women and men through legislation and policy initiatives. The Minister outlined important governance reforms and institutionalization processes currently taking place in Ghana, with a focus on the objectives of women's political empowerment and policy gains with regards to gender equality and the implementation of the full array of women's civil, political, economic and social rights at national and local levels. The need for supporting the adoption of special measures, such as affirmative action measures for women's political participation and representation, was further underscored in her remarks and she thanked International IDEA for its ongoing efforts to support the adoption of the affirmative action legislation for women's political representation in Ghana. The Minister also thanked International IDEA for organizing the Inter-Regional Seminar in Ghana, a sign of the close working relation between International IDEA and Ghana, which is its only West African member state. The Minister expressed the hope that this initiative to bring women leaders from across the globe to discuss global trends and the objectives of women's political empowerment could serve to provide important momentum for reinvigorated reforms to increase women's participation and representation in Ghana and in the broader African context.

On behalf of International IDEA, Mr. Mustaq Moorad, Director of International IDEA's Africa Programme, stressed that the significant underrepresentation of women in politics remains a major flaw of democracies around the world. He underlined the responsibility of political parties as gatekeepers of women's political participation in creating political and institutional environments conducive to political participation and the representation of women on an equal footing with men. In responding to this challenge, International IDEA aims to strengthen the capacities of political parties to integrate legislative commitments aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality into their policies and processes and to develop knowledge-based tools and resources to inform the design of appropriate strategies at national and regional levels. With this aim, International IDEA has recently conducted a review of gender equality commitments of political parties in 34 African countries, as well as in Nepal, India and Indonesia, preceded by an earlier review of the implementation of gender equality commitments in 18 Latin American countries conducted in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank. International IDEA also maintains a global database of quotas for women, which collects and consolidates information on all countries that currently use any type of gender-based quotas for women in elected offices (www.quotaproject.org). In addition, International IDEA partners with other international agencies in managing the global knowledge portal for women in politics, iKNOWPolitics (www.iknowpolitics.org), where gender equality specialists, human rights activists and politicians share their knowledge and experience in promoting women's political participation and representation.

Session I: Setting the Context: Strategies for Accelerating Women's Access to Leadership and Decision Making

The session focused on the lessons learnt and gains from the strategies implemented in different regions (Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean) to 'open the spaces' or accelerate women's access into leadership and decision making in different regions of the world. The presentations were led by Hon. Teuta Sahatqija, MP, President of the Women's Cross Party Caucus, Parliament of Kosovo, the Hon. Josephine Francis, MP, Chairperson of the Women's Legislative Caucus in Liberia, and the Hon. Gilliam Guifarro Montes de Oca, MP, President of the Women's Commission in the Congress of Honduras.

It was noted that unfortunately the question of the real value of women's increased political participation and representation is often asked in a negative context by opponents of this agenda. This kind of backlash against women's political empowerment is obviously not unique to any one particular region or country and bears many commonalities across the regions. Gender equality and women's rights activists in a broad range of fields and capacities do provide answers to this question through their work and accomplishments.



Representatives of the Women's Legislative Caucus of Liberia

The chairpersons of women's caucuses identified the following common characteristics of this backlash:

- Systems of values within societies that are heavily influenced by patriarchy lead to weakened political and leadership ambition on the part of women, as individuals and as groups;
- The myth that women do not vote for women is widespread and should to be tackled with concrete evidence to the contrary and effective outreach by women candidates to women voters and constituencies; women candidates seeking to be elected need to make use of past examples of effective mobilization of the votes of women voters for women candidates.
- A backlash against women in politics may often occur when important gains have been made in a country either through the adoption of gender-based quotas or an increase in the number of women representatives within legislatures;
- Women in parliaments and especially in cross-party caucuses are well positioned to respond to these negative trends through increased awareness-raising activities and lobbying within parliaments;
- The availability of financial resources to run effective electoral campaigns remains a fundamental limitation on women's political engagement and freedom. Special measures for promoting women's political participation and representation need to include financial incentives for women candidates.

Kosovo's Women's Parliamentary Caucus has spearheaded the development and adoption of new legislation to combat discrimination, reform inheritance rights, labour law and family codes, and introduce gender-based quotas into electoral legislation.

Following the post-war opportunity for democratic reform in Kosovo, the women's civil society sector, women in parliament and the international community present in Kosovo mounted joint campaigns to develop sound legal frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, new legislation in the field of anti-discrimination, inheritance rights, labour law, family codes and electoral legislation including gender-based quota provisions were adopted. Given Kosovo's decentralized system of governance, efforts of the Women's Inter-Party Caucus were supported and strengthened by Women's Inter-Party Caucuses at municipal levels. Nevertheless, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus faced a strong backlash, albeit unsuccessful, which challenged the need for quotas. This opposition demonstrated that many male counterparts in the parliament were threatened by the mounting reforms and gender-based quotas, and were aiming to reverse this trend. In responding and countering this backlash, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus engaged in active lobbying and networking within respective political parties, parliamentary leadership and civil society organizations, and was able to avert the calls for parliament to discontinue gender quotas.

In Liberia, women currently make up about 40–50 per cent of political parties' membership. This has obviously not translated into broader political impact and roles for women in leadership positions. The country is

In Liberia, the current agenda of the Caucus includes finalization of the bill on political participation and representation of women, which aims at instituting at least 30 per cent candidate quotas for women in electoral processes.

probably one of the best examples where a breakthrough in women's political empowerment remains a challenge, even though Liberia is headed by a powerful and influential female president. Liberia's post conflict political landscape was marked by a large number of political parties lacking meaningful messages for women and the equality agenda. Women were largely discouraged from political engagement due to high costs of politics, powerful societal stereotypes confining women to domestic chores and political corruption.

However, women in the Senate and the Assembly have increasingly gained ground, have established the Inter-Party Women's Caucus and engaged in substantive reforms in a non-partisan manner. In Liberia, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus has been lobbying for the adoption of a bill for equal representation of women and men in elected offices for the last six years. The bill is still pending in the Assembly.

In the case of Honduras, the last fifteen years have been marked by a dynamic and complex fight for instituting

In Honduras, the Women's Commission in the Congress has actively engaged male parliamentarians from the ruling party to mobilise the necessary support for the adoption of gender-based quotas for the electoral process.

gender quotas for women candidates. The approval of the first generation of quota provisions in 1998 (30 per cent) was accomplished by the tenacity of women and was successful despite attempts by some male MPs to block the process. In March of 2012 Honduras introduced a bill to raise the quota percentage to 50 per cent but the bill was modified to decrease the proposed quota percentage to 40 per cent and approved. However, it has so far not been possible to introduce the rule for alternation of candidates on the list and the election is held with open lists. The passage of the gender-based quota legislation was possible only through a rigorous lobbying of male parliamentarians and important support from the National Party, which at that time held the parliamentary majority in the National Assembly, and the full support of the president of the Congress (the president of the National Party).

In the subsequent plenary discussions, the following were identified as effective strategies for action:

- Establishing short, medium and long-term coalitions with partners among women's groups as well as with male parliamentarians and opinion makers;
- Creating mentoring networks aimed at utilizing the experiences of women in politics to empower younger generations of women leaders;
- Political parties as key gate keepers to women's political empowerment should undertake concrete measures to empower women and eliminate all

forms of marginalization and discrimination against women members;

- The lack of public funding for political parties, and subsequent lack of public funding for women within parties, should be addressed by providing relevant provisions in national political party laws;
- While a large number of international role models in women's political participation exist, initiatives need to be developed to showcase local, home-grown role models;
- Limited family and community support for women's needs has to be overcome if women are to be successful in politics and free from the fear of unsettling relations with their families and communities;
- Special measures, such as parity provisions for electoral lists and gender-based quotas, need to be supported as one key fast-track method for women to enter parliaments in substantial numbers; legal norms for gender based quotas need to include ranking order rules, and preferably rules for alternation between female and male candidates;
- However, quotas may not always suffice for transforming political spaces; among systemic obstacles that prevent increasing representation despite the existence of quotas are a lack of motivation on the part of women to enter politics, which is often considered as a discredited profession, their lack of financial resources, and a lack of tools with which to handle the media;
- The transformation of the daily business culture as well as the overall work culture of parliaments needs to be done through the changing of rules and regulations. Audits of procedures, committee functions and staff levels from a gender perspective should be made, and these areas reformed in line with gender equality principles. Such reforms are fundamental to the success of this agenda but can be difficult to implement without the full political will of all major parties.
- Successes in women's empowerment can only happen with the strong support and regulatory role of the state. Women's empowerment as the state-wide agenda ensures decreasing poverty for women, promoting social justice and inclusion for women and their families, and impacts positively on health, education, economic wellbeing and other fundamental objectives of the development agenda.

Session II: Intra-Party Democratic Processes and Practice

The second session hosted presentations featuring analysis of intra-party democracy processes and practices from the perspective of women's empowerment. The underlying rationale of the session was that the access of women to and participation in positions of power and decision making within political parties and elective positions are largely determined by intra-party democratic processes, systems and practices. Of special importance are the practices involved in the identification, selection and nomination of candidates. In addition, the following key questions were examined:

- Do political parties' constitutions, manifestos, internal rules, regulations and procedures promote women's political empowerment?
- Who are the gatekeepers within political parties to the accessing of positions of power and decision-making?
- What are the roles of women's organizations in political parties, and how can they serve as mechanisms for attaining women's empowerment within political parties?

The presenters at the session included the Hon. Abla Abu Olba, MP, Secretary of the Jordanian Community Party (Hash'd); Dr Anne Itto Leonardo, Deputy Secretary General of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, South Sudan; the Hon. Paola Pabon, MP, Coordinator of the Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights, Ecuador; the Hon. Patricia Tomaino Ndam Njoya, MP, Commission of Laws and Constitutional Affairs, Cameroon.



Participants from Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco

Women members of parliament in Jordan have been actively promoting political and public discussions aimed at ensuring constitutional guarantees for gender equality.

In the recent round of amendments to the electoral law in Jordan, efforts were made to introduce an increased number of reserved seats for women in parliament, with a small positive increase of this number from 12 to 15 seats for women. Intra-party democracy and the full implementation of international commitments in the field of human rights, in particular women's rights and gender equality, remains a key outstanding challenge for Jordan. As noted in the presentation, the common trend of weak domestic implementation of internationally adopted standards could be addressed through holding the next world conference on women, considering the emerging realities for women's rights globally and focussing on creating new momentum that will encourage countries to take all measures necessary to implement international standards in national laws.

In South Sudan, as in many other contexts, an important observation in relation to party procedure and structures is that the main secretariats of political parties are the critical area of influence. Party secretariats are the bodies where important decisions are developed and implemented and therefore should be a central locus of lobbying and influence by women party members.

In South Sudan, it was noted that women represent a majority in the Sudan's People's Liberation Movement (the governing political party, which emerged from Sudan's People's Liberation Movement), and the party has instituted a 25 per cent minimum quota for women in all party structures.

In general, however, political parties' compliance with declared commitment on gender equality across the board remains problematic. Women leaders in the SPLM, who have served the party in its inception phase and have gained ground through organizing the party's support base in the early phases of the fight for



Members of Parliament and the Deputy Secretary General of SPLM of South Sudan

independence, have been successful in strengthening their roles as decision makers within the party and enjoying high degree of authority vis-à-vis male decision makers. However, it has been more difficult for female politicians who are newer entrants into politics to garner this wide support within the party.

Ecuador's Democracy Code advances the principle of intra-party democracy through the conduct of party primary elections as the only legitimate way of selecting party's candidates for various elected public offices.

In Ecuador, the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group of women MPs from all parties are united to fight for a common cause of ensuring the enforcement of women's rights enshrined in the new Constitution. An important gain for women was the adoption of a binding legislated quota in 2000 requiring at least 30 per cent of candidates on political party lists to be women, and an increase in the minimum required percentage of women candidates by 5 per cent in every electoral cycle. Recently, an additional gain for women was the adoption of a provision whereby a political party cannot register if there is no gender parity in the leadership of the party. It was also highlighted that representation of groups of Afro Ecuadorians, indigenous community representatives, and people of diverse age groups is an important complementary objective of gender equality and intra-party democracy.

In Cameroon, it was emphasized that gender equality issues within political parties are increasingly tied to the respect for democratic principles of accountability for stated commitments and to the honesty and integrity of the party leadership. As one positive practice, some parties have instituted specialized bodies equipped with relevant mandates and functions to focus on specific issues and thematic areas, including public policies related to women and youth. There is a balance of female and male members on these committees. Women within parties have been working extensively to lobby for the criminalization of polygamy, one of the key impediments to women's empowerment in the private and public spheres and to women's enjoyment of their rights on an equal footing with men.

In the plenary discussion, which followed the panel presentations, the following key points for action were identified:

- Intra-party democracy is fundamental to the overall health and plurality of parties, and should therefore be considered a goal for both women and men;

- One key principle ensuring intra-party democracy is the election of candidates through open and transparent process of primary elections;
- A clear difference should be drawn between the participation of women in the activities of political parties and the representation of women in a party's leadership, and these should not be seen as necessarily positively correlated;
- Political parties suffer from weak institutionalization, a lack of systemic rules and procedures, and limited transparency in decision-making. This inherently makes it difficult for women to establish themselves in political space that is dominated by patriarchy and traditional gender roles and stereotypes;
- Political parties should develop policy platforms which aim at promoting gender equality.
- Both individually and as communities of practitioners, women need to ensure that the large number of women recruited by parties understand, embrace and fight for the cause of women;
- National and international stakeholders should focus their efforts on producing positive results for women's rights and gender equality out of democratic uprisings and revolutions. Unfortunately, recent experiences in the Middle East and North Africa in this regard have not been encouraging and have produced new waves of radicalization and a conservative backlash against women's rights and gender equality;
- Women candidates should be supported through nominations in winnable districts, otherwise political parties risk paying only lip service to their declared commitment to women's empowerment. Parties should commit to providing support and training to women candidates on election campaigning and functions within the public office;
- The current state of affairs, including the progress made in the post-Beijing period, as well as new and recurrent challenges highlight the need for the next United Nations Conference on Women to be held.

Session III: Beyond the Numbers: Good Practices from Women's Parliamentary Caucuses

The session highlighted initiatives that women's parliamentary caucuses have undertaken or are currently implementing to bring their perspectives, skills and attributes into policy and decision-making on issues of national importance. Key question addressed at the session were:

- What are the conceptual and practical strategies for promoting a focus on women's concerns and strategic interests as part of constitutional, electoral and political party reforms?
- What are the approaches that women in parliaments are undertaking to translate their presence in leadership and decision making into critical action and influence?

The session featured presentations on lessons and experience from the Hon. Rebeca Delgado, MP, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Committee on Policies for Women's Participation, Bolivia; the Hon. Suprabha Ghimire, Former MP of Constituent Assembly, Advisor of the Women's Caucus, Nepal; and the Hon. Henriette Umulisa, Senator, Secretary General of the Rwanda Women's Parliamentary Forum, Rwanda.

In Bolivia, recent constitutional provisions ensuring gender parity and have underscored equality for indigenous women, were achieved by women MPs in collaboration with the alliance of women's organizations at the grassroots level. The Caucus ensured that training and capacity building support was delivered to rural and urban women in order to create a stronger public demand for constitutional reforms on gender parity, including an alternation rule among election candidates, gender sensitive language throughout legislation, economic valuing of domestic work, access to land for women, and revoking the burden of proof on women in disputes over the paternity of children, among other issues. The Caucus has focused on achieving policy gains for women and gender equality objectives by forming new alliances with women in various professions and sectors of the work force, as well as with women from indigenous groups.

In Bolivia, women MPs have worked to introduce parity principles in the electoral law, the law against gender-based harassment, the law on combating trafficking in human beings, and comprehensive legislation to combat domestic violence.

In the case of Nepal, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus has been able to lobby in the National Assembly for legislation on combating violence against women, and has worked in partnership with groups of women lawyers on the rights of women and produced reports for discussion with other groups. Their contribution to promoting parity in politics and special measures for



Members of Parliament from Bolivia and Nepal

women's representation in parliament has been long-standing. A key strength has been success in building unity between women in parliament and women leaders elsewhere, in the executive branch of government and in Nepal's vibrant civil society groups.

In Nepal, the Women's Caucus has achieved legislative improvements that include the provision of equal citizenship rights (inherited through the maternal line) and equal property rights.

In Rwanda, the Women's Parliamentary Forum has had to face particular difficulties in the wake of the genocide of the 1990s. In this context women were able to assume important roles as heads of households and as socially active citizens caring for communities, and this has subsequently led to the positive transformation of women's public image as good organizers and carers, and as activists for development and peace. Important gains for gender parity in government and elected institutions, embodied in the 2003 Constitution, were the start of a new phase for women's empowerment and resulted in enormous increases in the number of women in parliament and in substantive legal reforms focusing on protecting and promoting women's rights and gender equality. The Caucus has maintained the network of MPs created in 1996, and of women in particular, who have set aside their partisan interests. This network has also invited men to work hand in hand with women on important legislative and policy initiatives, and helped conduct popular consultations to seek the views of women about their needs and convey their findings to the Constitutional Drafting Committee.

In Rwanda, following reforms securing of gender parity in the parliament, the reforms have focused on ensuring gender equality and equity in education, gender budgeting and economic empowerment of women.

The plenary discussion highlighted the following key points:

- It is critically important for civil society and women's movements to work towards building sustained public pressure and demand for gender equality in politics;
- The political will should not be understood as the will of one or two people but as the presence of a strong awareness and consistent determination of groups of people in the higher levels of government;
- Women leaders have benefited from forming strong alliances on issues of immediate interest and concern to women. However, at the same time they need to engage actively in on-going social and economic issues, such as policies to prevent and deal with food crises, and financial and development models conducive to social cohesion and well being. In this way their influence will be enduring and sustained across all areas of public life.

Implementation of gender equality legislation, even the strong and well-articulated legislation such as the law against gender-based violence in Spain, requires significant awareness-raising activities that aim to popularize these measures for the general public and help gain their broad support and confidence.

Session IV: Transformative Leadership for Women's Empowerment

This session focused on an exchange of practices for transformative leadership approaches, and the qualities and skills that can transform political practice and decision-making processes. Key questions addressed included:

- Do women possess the transformative leadership qualities and skills that are less hierarchical and more collaborative? What is transformative leadership?
- Are women's transformative leadership qualities profiled in the media?

The presentations were led by the Hon. Dr Joyce Laboso, MP, Vice Chairperson of the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee, Parliament of Kenya; the Hon. Mili Odiambo, MP, Vice Chairperson of the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee; and the Hon. María del Carmen Quintanilla Barba, MP, Chairperson of the Committee on Gender Equality, Congress of Spain.

In Kenya, the number of women in the National Assembly has steadily increased over the last decade, and is currently at 12 per cent. But this is still far from the minimum objective of ensuring that women make up at least 30 per cent of the Assembly. There are growing hopes that the newly adopted Constitution, which stipulates that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender" (Article 27 (8), Constitution of the Republic of Kenya 2010), will help reach this objective. In current constitutional and public debates, the question of transformative leadership is extremely important, and also timely in the current Kenyan context, where often women parliamentarians find themselves viewed by constituents as more caring and ready to listen to individual issues and needs. Constituents expect to find greater compassion and assistance from women parliamentarians in solving their problems; this positively influences the level of trust and respect towards female parliamentarians, and forms part of the understanding of a transformative leadership style, together with a participatory and deliberative working culture. However, women parliamentarians should take care to spread their efforts strategically, so that their legislative activity is not focused only on the individual issues of constituents, but is equally focused on achieving important systemic change.

In Kenya, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus has worked tirelessly to adopt laws such as the sexual offenses law, anti-trafficking legislation, the Victims of Violence Act and a social protection bill.

In Spain, current gender equality policies are an example for many countries in the region, with women making up about 35 per cent of parliamentarians, a number that rises to 50 per cent in the autonomous parliaments. The establishment of Spain's Institute for Gender Equality in 1983, brought about by a strong lobbying and awareness raising on the part of the women's movement, was a decisive moment in spurring further positive changes in legislation and policy. Patriarchy and negative gender stereotypes are still a strong impediment to full empowerment and a culture of equality. In countering these stereotypes, an important tool has been building partnerships with the media to change the popular mentality and showcase the critical support of men in promoting cultural and attitudinal change towards gender equality. Nevertheless, real progress remains slow in relation to making household responsibilities between spouses more equal, and the majority of household chores

remain women's work. In response to this challenge, a successful strategy is thought to be the provision of mandatory paternity leave for fathers.

A transformative leader is someone who inspires her constituents through showing them a clear vision for action, engaging them in the implementation of this vision and setting high standards of conduct.

Discussion at this session focused on identifying the key common characteristics of transformative leadership style and determining how it is closely associated with successful strategies for women's political empowerment and the promotion of a positive image of women as public and political leaders. Women leaders often gain public support and trust due to their transformative leadership style, which is distinguished by women's willingness to respond to citizens' needs and concerns, to develop participatory and inclusive forums for discussing and solving community issues, and to transform existing modes of decision making into forms of governance that are more responsive, inclusive and effective.

Devising participatory forms of leadership is a distinguishing feature of transformative leadership and contrasts with more hierarchical styles of governance that employ various forms of domination and may well be aggressive and non-collaborative. Women leaders willing to take on transformative leadership styles are often challenged most forcefully in environments where special party interests conflict with broader public interests or the needs and rights of individual constituencies or communities. Other similarly important challenges for transformative leaders emerge when they have to work not only across party lines but also across other social or economic dividing lines, such as racial, class, urban/rural, religious/secular or inter-religious lines. Examining the transformative leadership characteristics of various leaders, women and men, is always a useful exercise and helps measure the performance of politicians, elected or appointed, against the common benchmarks of transparency, accountability, responsiveness and representativeness. However, women should not be idealized as transformative leaders; not all women leaders are transformative leaders and not all embrace collaborative and non-hierarchical approaches.

Session V: Outcomes and the Concluding Declaration

On the last day of the seminar, four parallel thematic working groups focused on identifying specific actions for promoting women's empowerment and increased political participation and representation within political parties. Other issues discussed were critical areas for action within parliaments and the role of women's parliamentary caucuses during political transitions and reform.

Women's Role during Political Transitions (Arabic-Speaking Group)

The group particularly focused on identifying key actions to ensure that women's participation and voices influence decision-making during political transitions. The Arab revolutions that have taken place over the last two years, and which are still in transitional phases of constitution-drafting, transitional justice and transitional administration periods and are establishing public institutions, present immensely important opportunities for women's movements, as well as dangerous pitfalls.

In response to these challenges, women leaders need to focus on the three different levels of action.

- Constitutional and legal measures: the constitutional process is an opportunity but can also be a threat, so it is necessary to ensure that new constitutions provide guarantees of democracy, political pluralism and equality, including gender equality, and that they respect fundamental human, social and economic rights and freedoms.
- Women's Mobilisation: women must be encouraged to enter political parties and to transform politics into a more accountable and responsive process that will enjoy a higher degree of public confidence. They should engage with trade and professional unions in order to mobilize their support for changing gender-based stereotypes that prejudice women.



Participants in the Working Group on the Role of Women in Transitions

Role of Women Leaders within Parliaments (English and French-Speaking Groups)

Members of the group noted that leadership on gender equality and empowering women within parliaments entails legislative, oversight and representative functions. Within these three functions, the following key actions were identified:

- Enacting anti-discriminatory laws and particularly addressing areas where additional legislative measures may be required to ensure that gender equality guaranteed legally is implemented in reality.
- Ensuring the harmonization of internationally adopted standards in gender equality, human rights and non-discrimination into national legislation.
- Implementing routine gender-audits of proposed legislation within parliaments.
- Increasingly, caucuses need to act as independent pressure groups, in order to practice the maximum possible discretion and autonomy in leading parliamentary action in support of gender equality. Caucuses should avoid politicizing their agendas.
- While the key function of women's parliamentary caucuses is to work within parties, working outside parliament and reaching out to women leaders at grassroots and civil society levels is critically important.
- Working with various media outlets, both electronic and print, and sharing practices with media professionals on promoting gender sensitive media coverage and equal and proper portrayal of women and men and the issues that affect them.
- Engaging in initiatives aimed at sharing good practice and lessons learned between different countries within regions and globally, in forums similar to this International IDEA event.



Participants of the Working Group on Women Leaders within Parliaments

- Promoting women's empowerment through education and economic independence.
- Ensuring that the parliamentary caucuses are able to allocate funding, even if in small amounts for important activities funded by international donors.
- Women's parliamentary caucuses will be better able to maintain their political independence if they are primarily composed of members of parliament who do not at the same time hold important political positions such as that of a minister.

Role of Women in Political Parties (Spanish-Speaking Group)

- The group emphasized the fundamental importance of intra-party democracy for achieving women's political empowerment. This internal democracy needs to be based on principles of respect for diversity, including diversity of race and ethnicity.
- Parties need to undertake important reforms in their statutes in order to incorporate gender equality as a central value and gender parity as strategic objective. Furthermore, these objectives need to be supported by internal party measures, including measures that ensure equality of opportunity for women to access leadership positions in parties and elected public positions.
- Political parties need to integrate gender-based considerations into their work on electoral reforms and reforms of political party regulation and funding.
- Gender equality measures should be integrated into parties' work and organizational structures, from the highest levels to local party offices and branches. Women's sections within parties need to be empowered to be effective in their work on gender-mainstreaming.
- Gender equality in politics will remain a challenge as long as parties lack transparency and are organized around single individuals, with no public funding and without transparency of funding.
- Last but not least, the group emphasized the need to consider, at national and international levels, the feasibility of organizing a new World Conference on Women.

Concluding Declaration—Accra Declaration

The following Concluding Declaration is based on the key areas of action and strategies identified through plenary and the group discussions:

We, the members of parliament and senates, leaders of political parties and women's parliamentary caucuses from countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and South Asia, namely Bolivia, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, participated in the South-South Forum of the Inter-Regional Seminar on Women's Political Empowerment—Translating Women's Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence organized by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in Accra, the Republic of Ghana. The Inter-Regional Seminar was officially opened by the Minister of Women and Children in Ghana, the Hon. Juliana Azumah-Mensah, and International IDEA's Regional Director for Africa, Ambassador Mustaq Moorad, who delivered a statement on the Institute's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in its democracy building initiatives.

Being actively committed to protecting and promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in our various leadership capacities as members of parliaments and senates, political parties, women's parliamentary caucuses and ultimately as gender equality and women's human rights advocates, we focused on the following critical issues:

- Increasing women's access into decision making and 'getting the numbers right' through mechanisms and strategies for accelerating equal entry into and retention of gender parity in political leadership and decision making at all levels;
- Maximizing women's presence, increasing influence and transforming political spaces/"beyond the numbers and mechanisms/strategies" for influencing decision making and effective participation;
- Advocacy by men and their involvement on gender equality and women's empowerment as a key ingredient in creating a political climate that enables women's political participation;
- Appreciating the support and cooperation of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the significance of this South-South seminar as an initiative to enhance knowledge exchange and transfer between countries from across the world, and as an intervention to document good practice and lessons on the contributions or differences that women bring into politics and decision making across different regions;
- Emphasizing that equality between women and men, and the full enjoyment of women's rights and freedoms is an inalienable tenet of genuine democracy, as well as the means to achieve sustainable development and peace;
- Recognizing that the implementation of gender quotas is a key strategy for achieving the equal participation and representation of both women and men, thus enhancing the quality and outcomes of democracy;
- Acknowledging that gender inequalities are the result of power imbalances between women and men that negatively affect the status and position of women in the public and private spheres of life;
- Insisting that gender equality and women's political empowerment cannot be achieved in repressive and authoritarian states, and that the continued under representation of women in positions of power and decision making points to the general democratic deficit within a given country and a lack of intra-party democracy;
- Concerned that in many parts of the world gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched and that progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of life has been halting and remains uneven. Consequently, few women are represented in key political and economic decision making positions. For example, the participation and representation of women in

parliaments and legislatures across the world is only 19.6 per cent. While we applaud the important strides made in regions and countries where the critical minority of at least 30 per cent of women in positions of power and decision making has been accomplished, we note that each step forward has been achieved against difficult obstacles and stubborn resistance to women's empowerment;

- Deeply convinced that if a critical mass of women are elected into positions of power and decision making at all level levels they bring different perspectives, skills and attributes in policy and decision making on issues of national importance, such as the economy and finance, poverty reduction, security and peace, environment and natural resources, conflict prevention and nation building, education, health, housing, employment and job creation, rights of marginalized groups and minorities;
- Highlighting the importance of the need to level the playing field for electoral competition and political processes not just across political parties but between men and women in order to promote equal engagement by all stakeholders in respect of diversity, gender equality, justice, fairness and peace;
- Recalling that political parties are key gatekeepers for the equal political participation and representation of women and men and are in the position to contribute to the transformation of politics and eradication of obstacles to women's effective empowerment, particularly women's access into politics and positions of power and decision making at all levels;
- Reaffirming our commitment to the values and principles contained in regional and international landmark inter-governmental conventions and declarations advancing gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Reiterating that principles contained in these documents are yet to be fully domesticated and effectively implemented through national legal systems;

WE DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO BE TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS

With regard to legislative responsibilities on lawmaking, representation and oversight, we will:

- Ensure that guarantees on women's human rights are enshrined in constitutions and endeavouring to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in constitutions, laws and policies as a means to achieving gender equality;
- Advance the implementation of measures that ensure the full enjoyment of women's rights and freedoms through the elimination of discriminatory practices, policies and laws such as those concerning marriage and divorce, inheritance, land ownership, citizenship, children's custody, employment and economic policies and programmes, education and human development and other areas;
- Adopt legislation that ensures the conduct of free, fair, transparent and gender sensitive elections;
- Adopt and implement affirmative action measures to increase women's political participation and representation such as legislated gender quotas in all elective and appointed positions and at all levels of positions of power and decision making, in order to accomplish the objective of ensuring at least a critical minority of 30 per cent of women in decision making positions, and striving further for gender parity in these positions, including the monitoring of the implementation of these measures;
- Endeavour to put in place implementing mechanisms for affirmative action measures and commitment to international conventions agreed to;
- Develop and promote implementation of measures for ensuring gender equality in the private spheres of life;
- Adopt laws for the prevention of all forms of gender based violence, including violence in political and electoral processes, and ensuring prosecution of offenders;
- Adopt laws that guarantee equal access of women and men to public funding for political parties;
- Adopt laws which ensure balanced and fair coverage by the media towards all electoral contestants in the political and electoral process;

- Call for the organization of the next world conference on women, to promote continuity in the post-Beijing era and to ensure further progress in the implementation of measures to attain women's empowerment and gender equality.

In political parties we will:

- Systematically spearhead the review and reform of internal political parties' constitutions, rules of procedure and programmes to provide a level playing field for female and male members of political parties;
- Strengthen internal democracy within parties through increased inclusiveness, transparency in decision making and accountability for political parties' promises and commitments;
- Develop and further strengthen the implementation of gender quotas, including voluntary quotas within various political parties' structures, in particular at the higher levels of decision making;
- Develop measures linking public funding for political parties with gender equality, thus creating more incentives for political parties to implement these commitments in an effective manner;
- Advance the adoption and existence of a multiparty system and support genuine partisan action to ensure broad popular participation and inclusiveness in representative institutions through democratically and fairly elected processes;
- Place women's rights and empowerment as strategic issues for women and men on the agenda of political parties, combined with nurturing partnerships with both women and men, to achieve gender parity and encourage collaboration with male gender equality champions.

With regard to public awareness and transformative leadership development we will:

- Support and strengthen collaboration between elected officials and civil society representatives in order to promote knowledge transfer and development of public governance structures and processes as well as foster a broader ownership of the gender equality agenda among the public;
- Promote networking and mobilization of women through mentoring young women who would like to pursue political careers;
- Seek to build support groups and coalitions across the public in order to diversify the support and promotion of gender equality objectives through sustained public awareness initiatives;
- Enhance women's capacity to mobilize as women and as agents for change and cultivate robust initiatives for women to support other women;
- Strengthen transformative leadership skills among women through additional empowerment strategies that translate women's presence into critical influence and actions to engage from an understanding of women's rights as human rights and the broader democratic issues;
- Engaging men and designing initiatives that systematically target men and boys on advancing women's empowerment and gender equality and making men equally responsible for women's empowerment through partnerships and collaboration with male gender equality champions;
- Undertake media advocacy campaigns to raise awareness and address the underlying gender inequalities that are key drivers of all forms of gender based discrimination and inequality among women, men, boys and girls.

We jointly adopt this declaration as a sign of our shared vision of the current challenges described above and of our joint commitment to address these critical areas of concern and challenges.

30 August 2012, Accra, Ghana

Programme

MONDAY 27 AUGUST 2012

ALL DAY ARRIVALS AND REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES

DAY ONE: TUESDAY 28 AUGUST 2012

08:30–09:00 Registration and delegates seated at 08:50

08:50–10:00 OPENING SESSION

Opening Session, Director of Ceremonies: Theophilus Dowetin, Programme Manager, West Africa Programme, International IDEA

- Welcome and Introduction of Delegates by the Director of Ceremonies
- Statement by Ambassador Mustaq Moorad, Regional Director for Africa, International IDEA
- Statement and Official Opening by the Hon. Juliana Azumah-Mensah, Minister of Women Affairs and Children, Republic of Ghana

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH AND REFRESHMENTS

Session One

10:30–12:45 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INTER-REGIONAL SEMINAR
Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Senior Programme Manager (Democracy and Gender), International IDEA

SETTING THE CONTEXT: STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING WOMEN'S ACCESS INTO LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Chairperson: Lucia Witbooi, Member of Parliament, Republic of Namibia

This session will focus on the lessons learned and gains made from strategies implemented in different regions (Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean) to 'open the spaces' and accelerate women's access into leadership and decision making in different regions. The session will highlight practical strategies that are working and effective, asking what makes the strategies effective, what are the obstacles (structural and systemic) and challenges, and what are the ways to overcome the obstacles. Chairpersons of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus will lead this session.

Presentations on lessons and experiences from Kosovo, Liberia and Honduras

- Hon. Teuta Sahatqija, MP, President of the Women's Cross Party Caucus, Parliament of Kosovo
- Hon. Josephine Francis, MP, Chairperson of the Women's Legislative Caucus in Liberia
- Hon. Gilliam Guifarro Montes de Oca, MP, President of the Women's Commission in the Congress of Honduras

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS ON THE KEY ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES

13:00–14:00 LUNCH BREAK

Session Two

14:00–16:45 INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Chairperson: Ms. Nabila Mounib, General Secretary of the United Socialist Party of Morocco

This session will focus on analyzing intra-party democracy processes and practices from a women's empowerment approach. Women's access into and participation in positions of power and decision making within political parties and elective positions is largely determined by intra-party democracy processes, systems and practices, and in particular by the identification, selection and nomination of candidates. Key questions include whether political parties' constitutions, manifestos, internal rules, regulations and procedures promote women's political empowerment; who the gatekeepers within political parties are who control access to positions of power and decision making; what the roles are for women's organisations in political parties and how they can serve as mechanisms for attaining women's empowerment within political parties? Secretaries-general, deputies, chairpersons, vice chairpersons and executive committee members from political parties will lead this session.

Presentations on lessons and experiences from Jordan, South Sudan, Ecuador and Cameroon

- Hon. Abla Abu Olba, MP, Secretary of the Jordanian Community Party (Hash'd), Jordan
- Dr Anne Itto Leonardo, Deputy Secretary General of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, South Sudan
- Hon. Paola Pabon, MP, Coordinator of the Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights, Ecuador
- Hon. Tomaino Ndam Njoya, MP, Commission of Laws and Constitutional Affairs, Cameroon

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS ON THE KEY ISSUES AND STRATEGIES ON WORKING WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES

16:30 TEA/COFFEE

END OF DAY ONE

DAY TWO: WEDNESDAY 29 AUGUST 2012

Session Three

09:00–12:45 BEYOND THE NUMBERS: GOOD PRACTICE FROM WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUSES

Chairperson: Hon. Blanca Judith Diaz Delgado, Member of the Senate of Mexico

This session will focus on the initiatives that women's parliamentary caucuses have undertaken or are currently implementing as good practice in bringing different perspectives, skills and attributes to policy and decision-making on issues of national importance, and on the impact and difference women are making in political leadership and decision making. A key question is that of the influence practical actions are having on constitutional, electoral or policy and political parties' reforms that place women's concerns and strategic interests on the political agenda pursued by women in parliaments. What are the approaches that women in parliaments are undertaking to translate their presence in leadership and decision making into critical action and influence?

Presentations on the lessons and experiences from Bolivia, Nepal and Rwanda

- Hon. Rebeca Delgado, MP, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Committee on Policies for Women's Participation, Bolivia

- Hon. Suprabha Ghimire, Former Member of the Constituent Assembly, Advisor of the Women's Caucus, Nepal
- Hon. Henriette Umulisa, Senator, Secretary General of the Rwanda Women's Parliamentary Forum, Rwanda

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS ON EVIDENT ACTIONS AND INFLUENCE FROM WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

10:30–11:00 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

12:45–14:00 LUNCH BREAK

Session Four

14:00–16:00 TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Chairperson: Hon. Sharon Ffolkes-Abrahams, MP, and Minister of State, Jamaica

This session will facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge on leadership approaches, qualities and skills that can transform political practices and decision-making processes. Key questions are whether women possess transformative leadership qualities and skills that are less hierarchical and more collaborative. What is transformative leadership? Are women's transformative leadership qualities profiled in the media? Reflections will be offered on the hypotheses that:

- If more women are elected to office, they bring different perspectives, skills and attributes in policy and decision making on issues of national importance such as the economy, poverty eradication, security, conflict prevention and peace building, ending violence, women's concerns, youth, minorities and other disadvantaged groups in society;
- Increasing women's political participation and representation has positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties and citizen's lives, helps improve the responsiveness of policy making and governance and consequently helps democracy deliver;
- Women have the potential to promote transformative leadership and conflict resolution skills that are less hierarchical and more collaborative, such as asking for inputs from constituencies on policies and laws, spending more time with their constituents, and pressing for government accountability as well as collaboration across political parties on matters of mutual interest to women, even in highly partisan environments;
- In post-conflict contexts, women tend to pursue efforts to bridge political divides, healing and weaving threads of peace, while simultaneously establishing the tenets of democracy.

Presentations on the lessons and experiences from Kenya and Spain

- Hon. Dr Joyce Laboso, MP, Vice Chairperson of the Constitution Implementation Oversight Committee, Parliament of Kenya
- Hon. María del Carmen Quintanilla Barba, MP, Chairperson of the Committee on Gender Equality, Congress of Spain

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS ON WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

16:00 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

18:00–20:00 SOCIAL EVENT FOR DELEGATES HOSTED BY INTERNATIONAL IDEA

DAY THREE: THURSDAY 30 AUGUST 2012

Session Five

09:00–10:00 GROUP DISCUSSIONS

This session will consolidate the key elements and lessons learned on women's influence and 'going beyond the politics of presence and numbers' in political spaces and decision making. From the group discussions and preceding sessions, this session will distil the key benchmarks for translating women's presence in politics into critical actions and influence. This information will further serve as a basis for the development of fact sheets and publications documenting evidence-based differences that women in politics can make and are making. The theme is Translating Women's Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence.

GROUP ONE: Political Parties (Spanish-Speaking Group)

Identify the key actions and influence to be undertaken by women within political parties.

Facilitated by the Hon. Luz Salgado, Member of Parliament, Peru

GROUP TWO: Parliaments (English-Speaking Group)

Identify the key actions and influence undertaken and to be undertaken by women in parliaments.

Facilitated by the Hon. Beatrice Nyamupinga, Member of Parliament, Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus and SADC Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus

GROUP THREE: Parliaments (French-Speaking Group)

Identify the key actions and influence undertaken and to be undertaken by women in parliaments.

Facilitated by the Hon. Elise Loum Ndoadoumgue, Member of Parliament, Chad

GROUP THREE: Women in Political transitions (Arabic-Speaking Group)

Identify the key actions to ensure that women's participation and voices in political transitions can influence decision-making in political transition processes and outcomes.

Facilitated by the Hon. Maya Jribi, Member of the National Constituent Assembly, Tunisia

10:00–10:30 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

10:30–12:00 Presentations by the Facilitators

12:00–12:30 Review of the Draft Concluding Declaration

Conclusions and Way Forward: Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Senior Programme Manager, International IDEA

13:00 LUNCH AND DEPARTURES

INTER-REGIONAL SEMINAR ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Translating Women's Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence

28-30 August 2012

ACCRA, REPUBLIC OF GHANA

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The past three decades have witnessed a heightened international awareness of the need to empower women through measures that increase social, economic and political equity at all levels. The adoption of landmark governmental conventions and agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 and signed or ratified by 186 states, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) and the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals (2000), highlight the great importance of addressing gender inequalities in all spheres of life. CEDAW recognises that due to historic discrimination, women do not start at an equal footing to men and that therefore this requires the implementation of holistic empowerment strategies and the means to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life.

As a response to these obligations, many countries of the world are in the process of implementing actions and measures to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Globally, 139 national constitutions have provisions on guarantees for gender equality and in 115 countries women have equal rights with men to own property; in 93 countries women now have equal inheritance rights and 125 countries outlaw domestic violence (UN Women: Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012, In Pursuit for Justice). Achieving the empowerment of women challenges one of the most deeply entrenched of all human attitudes and behaviours, progress remains grindingly slow and uneven across the world. Despite this progress and efforts, women still have reason to expect substantive change as the picture remains gloomy. It is apparent that beyond the normative progress on changing the laws and policies, transformation of practices in the home, community and the public sphere is fundamental.

For example, in the decision making area women still hold less than 20 per cent of elected parliamentary seats globally. Today only 15 women are Heads of State or Government around the globe. At the current rate of increase, the "parity zone" where neither sex holds more than 60 per cent of parliamentary seats will not be reached by developing countries until 2047 (UNIFEM: Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women). Women in politics and decision-making are often faced with informal barriers, especially when they form a small minority, although they represent one half of the total population. In many parts of the world violence against women in all forms is a terrible "fact of life" that is endured by women across the world and it is often condoned.

The present ideal of participatory democracy implies commitment and contribution of all parts of the population without regard to gender, class, sex, age, race, ethnic or religious background. In most of these countries, the equal rights to vote and to be voted for that exist in law have not been translated into reality as evident in the outcomes of electoral processes that keep reproducing gender imbalances among leaders such as parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, heads of state and government and local governance leadership. While in nearly all countries women and men have equal rights to vote and stand for elective positions, equal rights to vote that exist in law can be denied in practice. Though, in some countries gender gaps in the outcome of electoral processes have narrowed due to some direct measures on electoral systems reforms in combination with positive actions measures such as quotas. Still in many countries women's ability to stand for election may be restricted by the hostility of communities and community leaders to women's participation and leadership and due to cultural constraints.

Women's access into and participation in positions of power and decision making within political parties and elective positions is largely determined by the intra-party democracy cultures, processes and practices and in

particular the identification, selection and nomination of candidates. In many instances the low participation and representation of women is in fact part of the broader issue of cultural and traditional attitudes that are entrenched within and perpetuated by political party norms, systems, practices, procedures and access to leadership positions which are male dominated. The fact that political parties are regarded as the “real gatekeepers” to accessing positions of power and the advancement of women in politics and decision-making entails that it is at the political parties' levels that women's empowerment principles must be put into practice.

Rationale

Over the past ten years, women's numerical presence in positions of power and decision making has received increased attention. Women are demanding full inclusion in politics and government and including women, who constitute half of the world's population, is a fundamental human right and a democratic imperative.

As growing numbers of women are standing for election into public decision making positions, this has heightened the interest on ways and strategies to translate women's presence into “critical actions” and influence. Once in power women are expected to become effective political actors to transform political spaces and be held accountable alongside men for gender equality and social justice. Is the presence of women in decision making institutions such as parliaments, from Nepal to Ecuador, Rwanda to Spain making an impact and a difference in politics, public decision making and governance?

The concept of women's participation is about two equally important aspects, firstly, the physical presence of women, ‘the politics of presence’, as actual human beings in politics and decision making institutions and processes. The focus on the physical presence of women is grounded in the recognition that women's participation and representation is a democratic imperative as they constitute half of the world population. Secondly, it is about the presence of women's concerns and strategic interests on the political agendas and in the outcomes of decision making processes. It is evident that men, however well informed and sympathetic to women's concerns, cannot represent women in all respects due to different life situations and experiences and women should therefore be able contribute new perspectives on policy issues and public decision making.

The Inter-Regional Seminar aims to explore and document experiences on what women bring into politics and decision making across the different regions. This is informed by the hypothesis that:

- If more women are elected to office, they bring different perspectives, skills and attributes in policy and decision making on issues of national importance such as the economy, poverty eradication, security, conflict prevention and peace building, ending violence, women's concerns, youth, minorities and other disadvantaged groups in society;
- Increasing women's political participation and representation has positive and democratic impacts on communities, legislatures, political parties and citizens' lives, helps improve the responsiveness of policy making and governance and consequently helps democracy deliver;
- Women have the potential to promote transformative leadership and conflict resolution styles that are less hierarchical and more collaborative ways, such as asking for inputs from constituencies on policies/laws, spending more time with their constituents, pressing for government accountability as well as collaboration across political parties on matters of mutual interest to women, even in highly partisan environments;
- In post-conflict contexts, women tend to pursue efforts to bridge political divides, healing and weaving threads of peace, while simultaneously establishing the tenets of democracy.

Objectives

The overall objective of the seminar is to identify and promote optimal approaches that, through effective and transformative participation, translate women's presence in leadership and decision making into critical action and influence. The specific objectives are to:

- Enhance multi-faceted approaches to increase women's access to and retention in leadership and decision making, including measures targeting men and boys;
- Identify strategies and approaches to optimise women's participation in leadership and decision making;

- Share and gather good practice on the impact and difference women make in political leadership and decision making;
- Strengthen the transformative leadership styles and skills of women in politics.

Key Issues

- Increasing access and ‘getting the numbers right’ through mechanisms and strategies for accelerating equal entry in and retention of gender parity in political leadership;
- Maximizing women’s presence, increasing influence, transforming political spaces and going ‘beyond the numbers’ through mechanisms and strategies for influencing decision making and achieving effective participation;
- Advocacy by men and their involvement in gender equality and women’s empowerment. This is a key ingredient in creating a political climate that encourages women’s political participation.

Expected Outputs

- Concrete actions and measures to optimise positive outcomes due to women’s presence in decision making;
- Collation and documentation of women’s influence—the ‘results chain’—in political leadership and decision making, and the development of experience based fact sheets on women’s influence that goes beyond ‘the politics of presence and numbers’, in political spaces and decision making (Translating Women’s Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence);
- Knowledge-based experiences shared on IKNOW Politics (<<http://www.iknowpolitics.org>>);
- Database of inter-regional stakeholders to serve as a resource base for synergies, partnerships and networking on approaches to accelerate women’s access into leadership and decision making, and maximising their presence in political spaces.

Participants and Coordination

The Seminar will bring together 70 women leaders from political parties in positions such as Secretaries General/Deputies and Chairpersons/Vice Chairpersons and Members of Parliament representing women’s parliamentary caucuses from Africa and the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean to distil and document the current experiences and strategies for translating women’s presence into critical action and influence in politics and decision-making spaces and processes. The Seminar will be conducted in English, Spanish and Arabic and will be facilitated in a participatory approach that facilitates the transfer and sharing of knowledge and information among the stakeholders. The Seminar will be held for two and half days. Depending on the availability of flights, participants will arrive in Accra, Ghana on Sunday 24 or Monday 25 June and depart on the evening of Friday 29 or on Saturday 30 June. The Seminar will be held in Accra, Ghana, a Member State of International IDEA.

The Seminar is organised by International IDEA’s Democracy and Gender programme in coordination with IDEA’s regional programmes in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia Pacific region.

The objective of achieving gender equality is indivisible from International IDEA’s goal of supporting sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA is an inter-governmental organization established in 1995 with Member States from all regions of the world. In its 2012-2017 Strategy, International IDEA is committed to ‘go beyond the purely quantitative aspects of gender-based inequality to promote positive change in the form of a more equal influence and impact of women and men in politics’. International IDEA’s work in this area remains anchored in global agreements and frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the third Millennium Development Goal and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. For International IDEA, this Seminar builds upon and expands the Institute’s on-going initiatives in support of women’s parliamentary caucuses in Latin American countries and in Nepal. These efforts are documented in studies on the contribution of women in constitution making in Nepal—Women Members of the Constituent Assembly—and in Latin America, *One Size Does Not Fit All: Lessons Learned from Legislative Gender Commissions and Caucuses* (International IDEA and NDI).