

Women and participation in decision-making bodies: Building a Strategic Action for Sustainable Results and Impact

Annual Forum on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel

Nouakchott, Mauritania, 14th to 15th March 2022

NOUAKCHOTT'S CALL TO ACTION FOR WOMEN ACTIVE AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

- 1. We, the participants in the annual Women's Forum, organized by UNOWAS in collaboration with ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, the International Center for Private Enterprise (CIPE), UNWOMEN and all the Agencies of the United Nations System in the region with the support of the government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania;**
2. Gathered in Nouakchott (Mauritania), from March 14th to the 15th, 2022 around the theme: "Women and Participation in Decision-Making Bodies: Building Strategic Action for Sustainable Results and Impact";
3. Expressing our satisfaction with the development and implementation of Women, Peace and Security/Country Action Plans which aim to facilitate, at the regional level, the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions
4. Concerned by the resurgence of acts of stigmatization, defamation and attacks on human lives, particularly in this period of electoral turmoil and political transition in West Africa and the Sahel;
5. Aware that the COVID-19 pandemic does not have the same impact on men and women, and that gender inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic, thus threatening decades of recorded progress and eroding gains made in gender equality;
6. Commending the outstanding contributions of women who have been at the forefront in the health sector, as well as other social sectors including within African households and communities, in national COVID-19 recovery and response initiatives;
7. Aware of the fact that women remain highly under-represented in decision-making bodies, particularly at the executive, legislative and judicial levels, on the lists of political parties, national institutions, as well as in the active population in general and that they represent 15% in elected positions and 17% in appointed positions, in West Africa and the Sahel;

8. Aware that several States in the Sahel and West Africa that have already adopted legislative measures to achieve equal representation of women and men, must make deliberate efforts to accelerate full implementation commitments and that those who have not yet adopted them shall do so urgently;
9. Recognizing the interdependence between the participation of women in public life and their participation in peace and security processes and initiatives;
10. Given the commitments of the countries of the region through the Protocol of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to the Rights of Women in Africa which stipulates in its Article 9 on the "Right of participation in the political process and decision-making", that women must be represented on an equal basis with men, without any discrimination, at all levels of the electoral process;
11. Stressing that the United Nations Convention of 18th December 1979 and the Protocol to the African Charter of Human Rights of 11th July 2003 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, ratified by most African countries, establish the responsibility of governments in the implementation of measures aimed at guaranteeing women equal participation in political life;
12. Firmly recognizing the importance of strengthening equal access to educational and training opportunities for women and girls so they can fully participate in the public and political life;
13. Reaffirming the importance of contributing to women rights in West Africa and the Sahel, to the implementation of Resolution No. 66/130 on the participation of women in political life, for the promotion of gender equality to achieve inclusive and peaceful societies, we request the following:

Legal and regulatory framework:

1. Legal reforms be undertaken to ensure the participation and representation of women in public and political life and adopt temporary special measures (TSMs) in accordance with the provisions of CEDAW, in order to accelerate de facto equality between men and women and guarantee the representation of women in decision-making bodies;
2. Promotion of the full implementation of global, continental and regional agreements as ratified by countries and national constitutional, legal and policy commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and their inclusive participation in political, peace and reconciliation activities;
3. Implementation of gender-responsive budgeting systems with participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the implementation of cross-cutting and inclusive policies and programs;
4. Promotion of gender parity in decision-making positions, in cabinets, institutions and commissions, including dialogue, peace and security delegations.
5. Integration the provisions of national laws on parity or quota into sectoral policies;

Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and the protection of victims

1. Explicit recognition through policy and legal commitments at continental, regional and national level that violence against women and girls in public and political life is a critical barrier that prevents women, including young women, to actively and meaningfully engage in political life as leaders;
2. Strengthening of the capacity of both national protection and statistical systems to regularly and systematically generate disaggregated data on violence against women for policy development and implementation purpose;

Changing discriminating social norms hindering gender equality, women leadership and their participation to public and political life

1. Dedication of adequate human and financial resources to behavioral change programs at national, local and community levels to systematically accelerate changes in mindsets;
2. Strengthening of awareness-raising measures in communities through the media and engage traditional and religious leaders and faith-based communities in addressing negative social norms and harmful practices;
3. Development of gender-responsive curriculums at all educational levels, removing references to gender stereotypes perpetuating social norms that are discriminating women and girls;

Dedicating funds to support women participation in public and political life and “leave no one behind”

1. Guarantying equal opportunities during electoral processes, including during campaigns, equal access to financial resources and the establishment of incentive measures for female candidates;
2. Establishment of strategic partnerships to support women's capacity building in leadership and implementation of the Women, Youth, Peace and Security Action Plans in their respective countries, including mentorship opportunities;
3. Involvement of men and celebrities such as politicians, artists, athletes, in the advocacy strategy supporting the full participation of women in decision-making and identify them as "champions";
4. Consideration of women and minorities specific needs in rural areas and in all legal and political frameworks in accordance with international and regional treaties and conventions, without negative impact on the national legal and regulatory frameworks;

Political participation and elections

1. Development and implementation of capacity building programs, including technical and financial advice for women with a coaching component for speaking in front of an audience and advocacy;
2. Strengthening of grassroots political participation by putting in place and/or promoting local decision-making committees in rural areas;
3. Promotion of the political participation of women through equal distribution and access to natural resources, particularly the land;
4. Acceleration of advocacy efforts for the appointment of women in the decision making spheres in strategic ministries such as finance, health, defence, foreign affairs, cooperation, communication, interior;

Defence, security and security sector reform

1. Development of infrastructures that are including women needs and experience in the work environment;
2. Implementation of special measures such as quota, parity through military programming laws with effectiveness monitoring mechanisms;
3. Adoption of measures to stop sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination within the defense and security forces;
4. Adoption of measures for work-life balance within the defense and security apparatus;
5. Establishment of civil-military programs to strengthen collaboration between civilians and defense and security forces as part of the civilian protection and the fight against insecurity in West Africa and the Sahel;

Conflict prevention, management and participation in peace processes

1. Building the capacities of women in mediation and negotiation techniques;
2. Advocacy with national, regional and international institutions for the inclusion of female mediators, including community mediators in official mediation missions;
3. Advocacy for the representation of women in delegations of parties to conflicts for negotiations and peace talks;

Preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) and terrorism

1. Championing of for the establishment of participatory mechanisms for the integration of women on issues of security, violent extremism and peace;

2. Advocacy for the integration of women in national prevention mechanisms of violent extremism as well as in the security and intelligence apparatus;
3. Advocacy for the mainstreaming of gender and women and youth concerns in policies and programs preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism;

Women's participation in the justice sector

1. Advocacy for the adoption of a law on quotas, parity or temporary special measures promoting the appointment of women at the highest judicial positions;

Women's representation and economic participation in the private and the business sectors

1. Support of the implementation of entrepreneurial focused mechanisms, as well as mentoring and financing of private women's initiatives;
2. Promotion of the participation of women in decision-making bodies through (i) the establishment of quotas for women at the managerial level and at the boards of public enterprises and (ii) tax and regulatory incentives for private sector to increase women representation at the managerial level;
3. Involvement of women in socio-professional spheres and encourage their representation in the trade union sector;
4. Promotion of women access to quality information in urban and rural areas.

Nouakchott, 15th March 2022