

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

CSW41 AGREED CONCLUSIONS (1997/2)

United Nations, March 1997

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

1. Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action should be accelerated to ensure women's full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.
2. Achieving the goal of equal participation of men and women in decision-making and ensuring equal political, economic and social participation of women in all spheres would provide the balance that is needed to strengthen democracy.
3. Governments and bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other international organizations, social partners and non governmental organizations, should collectively and individually accelerate the implementation of strategies that promote gender balance in political decision-making, including in conflict prevention and resolution. They should mainstream a gender perspective, including the use of gender-impact assessments, in all stages of policy formulation and decision-making. They should take into account diverse decision-making styles and organizational practices and take the necessary steps to ensure a gender-sensitive workplace, including a workplace free of sexual harassment and noted for its ability to recruit, promote and retain female staff. Decision-making structures and processes should be improved to encourage the participation of women, including women at the grass-roots level.
4. Research, including a gender-impact assessment of electoral systems to identify measures that would counter the under-representation of women in decision-making and reverse the downward trend of women in parliaments worldwide, should be supported.
5. Political parties are urged to remove discriminatory practices, incorporate gender perspectives into party platforms, and ensure women's access to executive bodies on an equal basis with men, including access to leadership positions as well as to appointed positions and electoral nominating processes.
6. Positive action, including such mechanisms as establishing a minimum percentage of representation for both sexes and/or gender-sensitive measures and processes, is needed to speed the achievement of gender equality and can be an effective policy instrument to improve women's position in sectors and levels where they are under-represented. All responsible actors in government, the private sector, political parties and non governmental organizations should review the criteria and processes used in recruitment and appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies, including leadership structures, so as to ensure a comprehensive strategy to achieve gender equality.
7. Governments should commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in decision-making, in administration and public appointments at all levels and in the diplomatic services, *inter alia*, by establishing specific time-bound targets.
8. Governments and civil society should promote awareness of gender issues and call for their consistent mainstreaming in legislation and public policies.
9. Governments should examine their own communications and policies to ensure the projection of positive images of women in politics and public life.
10. Use of the media both as an image-setting instrument and as a tool to be more effectively used by women candidates should be further explored.
11. Governments, the private sector, political parties, social partners and non-governmental organizations should review the criteria and processes for recruitment and appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies so as to establish the goal of gender balance. At the same time, the business sector should take the challenge to optimize business by promoting a gender balance in the workforce at all levels and to facilitate the reconciliation of work and personal life.
12. Political parties should be encouraged to fund training programmes in conducting campaigns, fund-raising and parliamentary procedures to enable women successfully to run for, be elected to, and serve in public office and parliament. In order to promote reconciliation of work and personal

life for women and men, structural changes are needed in the work environment, including flexible working times and meeting arrangements.

13. Governments and the international community should ensure the economic empowerment, education and training of women to enable them to participate in power and decision-making.
14. Governments should promote educational programmes in which the girl child will be prepared to participate in decision-making within the community as a way to promote her future decision-making capacity in all spheres of life.
15. Governments and the United Nations system should promote women's active and equal participation as governmental and non-governmental representatives, special rapporteurs and envoys in all of the initiatives and activities of the system, including as mediators for peacekeeping and peace-building.
16. Governments and bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other international organizations, should actively encourage the sustained participation and equal representation of women and civic movements in all areas, including decision-making processes related to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and rehabilitation, with a view to creating an enabling environment for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction of their communities.
17. Governments and political parties should actively encourage the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in politics and power structures through increasing women's representation in decision-making to a critical mass in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Alternative approaches and changes in institutional structures and practices can contribute significantly to mainstreaming a gender perspective.
18. Governments, political parties and bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other international organizations and non governmental organizations, should continue to collect and disseminate data and sex-disaggregated statistics to monitor the representation of women in government at all levels, in political parties, among

social partners, in the private sector and in non governmental organizations at all levels, as well as the participation of women in peace and security.

19. The Secretary-General should ensure full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) so as to achieve overall gender equality, in particular at the Professional level and above, by the year 2000. The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) (CCAQ/PER) should continue to monitor and make concrete recommendations regarding steps being taken in the United Nations Secretariat to achieve the target of 50 per cent women in managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000, as well as steps to achieve gender balance in the United Nations system as a whole. Consistent with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Secretary-General is urged to increase the number of women employed in the Secretariat from countries that are unrepresented or under-represented. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to appoint a woman to the proposed new position of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations as a step in mainstreaming women in decision-making positions throughout the United Nations system.
20. International and multilateral agencies should consider ways to communicate and exchange information throughout the United Nations system, *inter alia*, through the convening of workshops and seminars, including at the managerial level, on best practices and lessons learned for achieving gender balance in institutions, including accountability mechanisms and incentives, and mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, including bilateral and multilateral assistance.
21. Member States are also encouraged to include women in their delegations to all United Nations and other conferences, including those dealing with security, political, economic, trade, human rights and legal issues, as well as to ensure their representation in all organs of the United Nations and other bodies such as the international financial institutions, where women's participation is negligible.

22. Member States are urged to promote gender balance at all levels in their diplomatic service, including at the ambassadorial level.
 23. Representation of women from other under-represented or disadvantaged groups should be promoted by Governments and by bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as other international organizations and non governmental organizations in decision-making positions and forums.
 24. The attention of Governments is drawn to the general recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on articles 7 and 8 concerning women in public life and decision-making, to be included in the report of the Committee on its seventeenth session. ■
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Source: United Nations document E/1997/27