



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE**

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

3rd Standing Committee

SPECIAL TASK FORCE

WOMEN IN POLITICAL LIFE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Co-Rapporteur: Mrs Askin Asan, TURKEY

13 March 2009

Draft Report

I. Background:

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of every person to take part in the government of his or her country. Equality between women and men can only be achieved if both are equally in a position to participate in decision-making processes at all levels. Women make up more than half of the population and the electorate in its member states, but continue to be seriously under-represented in political and public decision making in a large part of its member states.

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as to hold public office at all levels of government (Article 7). States parties agree to take all appropriate measures to overcome historical discrimination against women and obstacles to women's participation in decision-making processes (Article 8), including legislation and temporary special measures (Article 4). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women consistently expresses concern over the low rate of implementation of Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention. In its general recommendation 23 of 1997 the Committee reviewed the persisting barriers to women's participation in political and public life and set out a series of steps for Governments to take in order to abide fully by Articles 7 and 8, urging especially the adoption of temporary special measures in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, brought attention to the persisting inequality between men and women in decision-making. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognize women's unequal share of power and decision-making as one of the twelve critical areas of concern. The Platform for

Action outlines concrete actions to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures (Strategic Objective G.1), and to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership (Strategic Objective G.2).

The Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 of the 41st session of the Commission on the Status of Women's on women in power and decision-making processes called for the acceleration of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in order to achieve women's full and equal participation in decision-making. Governments were urged to establish time-bound targets for reaching the goal of gender balance in decision-making, and ensure gender mainstreaming in legislation.

The General Assembly of Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century reviewed achievements in the promotion of women into power and decision-making positions. It noted that an increasing number of countries had adopted positive discrimination policies, including the establishment of quota systems during elections, setting of measurable goals, and the development of leadership training for women.

General Assembly Resolution 58/142 on Women and Political Participation in 2003 urged Member States to eliminate all discriminatory laws in their national legislatures, counter "negative societal attitudes about women's capacity to participate equally in the political process" (para 1d), and "institute educational programmes...in the school curriculum that sensitize young people about the equal rights of women" (para 1g).

The 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in February-March 2005 reviewed the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. Most Member States reported the introduction of measures aimed at increasing the participation of women in various levels of decision-making processes, and reported progress in getting women into positions of power (para 327). Equitable participation remains a challenge, however, and only eleven Member States have reached the critical mass of 30% of women in parliament (para 331). While hailing the progress made by Member States so far, the Commission concluded that a wide range of customs, traditions and stereotypes in most cultures impede women's participation in decision-making processes (para 351); that despite significant democratization since 1995, the only steady increase in women's participation in decision-making has been at the local level (para 351); and that devolution of power to the local level created opportunities for women to gain more meaningful participation (para 351). It called for the study of linkages between women's economic and political empowerment (para 352), of the way in which women's political participation leads to the transformation of political institutions and processes (para 353), and for the study of the costs of women's exclusion vis-à-vis the goal of sustainable development (para 354).

Today there are more women in government than ever before. The proportion of women in national assemblies has increased by 8% to the current global average of 18.4% in the decade from 1998 to 2008, compared to an increase of just 1% in the two decades after 1975. Yet even at the current rate of increase, developing countries will not reach the 'parity zone' where neither sex holds more than 60% of seats until 2045.

As of February 2009, none of the Mediterranean countries had met the target of at least 30 percent representation by women in parliament (see Table), which was set by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1990. Furthermore, it is regrettable that PAM Member States rank below the world average with respect to female representation in parliamentary assemblies (see Table).

II. Political accountability to women requires:

- *Strong mobilization:* Women's movements have played an important role in many countries to promote women rights.
- *Strong representation:* Quotas and other temporary special measures, such as reserved seats, are a proven means for supporting women's engagement in political competition; they are currently used at national and sub-national levels in 95 countries.
 - In elections held in 2007, the average representation of women was 19.3% in those countries that used some type of electoral quota, as opposed to 14.7% for those countries without quotas, regardless of electoral system.
- *Strong legislation and policy:* Higher numbers of women in parliament generally contribute to stronger attention to women's issues.
 - A 2008 study of UK politics, for example, confirms that since the number of women in parliament doubled to 18.2% since the 1997 election, issues of particular importance to women – such as childcare and social protection – have received more attention.
- *Strong implementation:* Even when the political will does exist, many governments do not have the capacity, resources, or know-how to ensure that gender equality policies are carried out.

III. Constraints:

There are a number of factors which constrain women's participation in political life and decision-making, including:

- The lack of financial resources of women and women's groups to cover participation costs, a problem that is more acute in remote regions;
- illiteracy and limited access to education and the same work opportunities as men;
- discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and negative stereotypes perpetuated in the family and in public life;
- the competing needs family and the burden of other responsibilities, which are still largely assumed by women, and who accordingly lack the availability to participate in public life.

IV. Some recommended actions to increase women's participation in political decision-making in the Mediterranean:

A. Actions for Governments, Legislative Bodies and Election Commissions:

1. Take affirmative action to achieve the minimum 30% target of women in local, provincial and national governments;
2. Promote more balanced participation by women and men at all levels in government;
3. Establish gender caucuses in local, provincial and national governments, to enable awareness raising, lobbying, and bringing a gender perspective to bear on matters being debated;
4. Review the electoral system in view of the evidence that proportional representation increases women's chances of getting elected;
5. Provide remuneration for local government councilors, and child care facilities to enable women to participate;
6. Review the working hours and prevailing culture of parliament with a view to making them more gender-sensitive;
7. Alert all those involved in education and training to the importance of an image of women's role in society which is free of prejudice and discriminatory stereotypes, a more balanced sharing of professional, domestic and social responsibilities between women and men and more balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process;
8. Encourage girls and women to take part and express themselves in education and training activities as actively and fully as boys and men;
9. Encourage and support efforts of associations and organizations to promote women's access to the decision-making process;
10. Promote or improve the collection and publication of statistics on the representation of women and men at all levels of the decision-making process;
11. Support, develop and encourage quantitative and qualitative studies on the legal, social or cultural obstacles impeding access to the decision-making process for persons of either sex.

B. Actions for Political Parties:

1. Ensure that high numbers of women candidates contest elections, including 'safe seats';
2. Ensure gender parity in the selection of candidates for internal party offices and external positions;
3. Provide financial support for women contesting elections;
4. Provide leadership training for women in public speaking, use of the media, negotiation, parliamentary procedures and mechanisms, etc;
5. Produce gender-sensitive voter education and election campaign materials, which promote women's equal participation in elections at all levels;
6. Encourage women to enter community-based organisations and local government as a first step to representative politics.

C. Actions for Civil Society:

1. Promote networking between NGOs, academic institutions, governmental bodies and intergovernmental organisations, to lobby for change and raise public awareness;
2. Set up all-party gender caucuses, to promote gender issues across party lines and promote networking among women politicians from different political parties;
3. Offer training and mentoring programmes for women interested in politics;

4. Devise, launch and promote public campaigns to alert public opinion to the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making;
5. Monitor media coverage of women candidates and politicians, and gender issues in the political agenda.

2008

Percentage of elected woman in the National Assemblies of PAM countries *Pourcentage de femmes élues dans les assemblées parlementaires des pays membres de l'APM*

Country - Pays	Assembly - Assemblée	%	Last update Dernier mise à jour
Albania - Albanie	Parliament - Parlement	7,14	19/11/2008
Algeria - Algérie	National People's Assembly Assemblée Populaire Nationale	7,71	10/10/2008
	Council of the Nation Conseil de la Nation	2,94	10/10/2008
	Average-Moyenne	5,32	
Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosnie-Herzégovine	House of Representatives Chambre des représentants	11,90	10/10/2008
	House of Peoples Chambre des Peuples	13,33	10/10/2008
	Average-Moyenne	12,61	
Croatia - Croatie	Parliament - Parlement	20,92	2/9/2008
Cyprus - Chypre	House of Representatives Chambre des Représentants	14,29	12/1/2009
Egypt- Egypte	People's Assembly – Assemblée du Peuple	1,81	2/9/2008
	Shoura Assembly – Assemblée de la Choura	6,82	10/10/2008
	Average-Moyenne	4,31	
France	National Assembly – Assemblée Nationale	18,20	2/9/2008
	Senate - Sénat	21 ,87	10/10/2008
	Average-Moyenne	20,03	

Greece - Grèce	Hellenic Parliament – Parlement Hellénique	14,67	11/11/2008
Israel	Parliament - Parlement	17,50	25/2/2009
Italy - Italie	Chamber of Deputies – Chambre des Députés	21,27	2/9/2008
	Senate - Sénat	18,01	19/11/2008
	Average-Moyenne	19,64	
Jordan - Jordanie	House of Representatives Chambre des Représentants	6,36	26/1/2009
	Senate - Sénat	12,73	19/11/2008
	Average-Moyenne	9,54	
Lebanon - Liban	National Assembly – Assemblée Nationale	4,69	3/9/2008
Libyan Arab Jamahitiya République Arabe Libyenne	General People's Congress Congrès général du Peuple	7,69	14/1/2009
Malta - Malte	House of Representatives Chambre des Représentants	8,70	15/12/2008
Monaco	National Council – Conseil de la Nation	25,00	14/11/2008
Montenegro - Monténégro	Parliament - Parlement	11,11	10/10/2008
Morocco - Maroc	House of Representatives Chambre des Représentants	10,46	28/1/2009
	House of Councillors Chambre des Conseillers	1,11	3/2/2009
	Average-Moyenne	5,78	
Palestine	Not available Non Disponible		
Portugal	Assembly of the Republic Assemblée de la République	28,26	3/9/2008
Serbia - Serbie	National Assembly – Assemblée Nationale	21,60	2/12/2008
Slovenia - Slovénie	National Assembly – Assemblée Nationale	13,33	29/1/2009
	National Council – Conseil National	2,50	11/11/2008

	Average-Moyenne	7,91	
Syrian Arab Republic <i>République Arabe Syrienne</i>	People's Assembly Assemblée du Peuple	12,40	3/9/2008
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <i>Ex-République Yougoslave de Macédoine</i>	Assembly of the Republic Assemblée de la République	31,67	25/2/2009
Tunisia - Tunisie	Chamber of Councillors Chambre des Conseillers	15,18	10/10/2008
	Chamber of Deputies – Chambre des Députés	22,75	17/10/2008
	Average-Moyenne	18,96	
Turkey - Turquie	Grand National Assembly Grande Assemblée Nationale	9,11	14/11/2008
PAM Member Countries <i>Pays Membres de l'APM</i>		14,11	
World average <i>Moyenne mondiale</i>		18,04	