

**FORUM:** Special Conference on Securing and Advancing Democracy 1

**QUESTION OF:** Strengthening the voice and visibility of women in elections

**SUBMITTED BY:** Togo

**CO-SUBMITTERS:** Ghana, European Union, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Guyana, Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Brunei, UNESCO, Lithuania, Cuba, Colombia, Timor-Leste, Fiji, Cyprus, New Zealand, Tunisia, Belarus

SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON SECURING AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY,

*Fully alarmed* about the fact that women don't have an equal voice, visibility, and participation in elections in many countries,

*Pointing out* that as of February 2019, 24.3% of all national parliamentarians globally were women, a slow increase from 11.3% in 1995,

*Noting with regret* that currently in 27 states women account for less than 10% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses,

*Reaffirming* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity of rights, and states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his or her country directly, or through freely chosen representatives, and the right of equal access to public service,

*Defining* free and fair elections as universal adult suffrage, as well as the right to contest in elections provided the candidate follows the eligibility criteria of the country they are contesting in,

*Recognizing* that direct democracy is the ideal form of government since it is essential that the people and government work together for the betterment of society,

*Bearing in mind* that as of February 2019, only 3 countries had 50% or more women in single or lower houses of parliament, these countries being Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia,

*Keeping in mind* that women also may face physical violence, verbal abuse, and other forms of bullying; these problems are perpetuated and reinforced by the media, which often places importance on a woman's physical appearance over their political ideologies and suggested policies,

1. Calls for the elimination of structural and legal obstacles that hinder all girls' and women's participation in politics and decision-making, and hold those obstructing them accountable, through the use of laws created to allow women in all nations to vote and be part of political matters;
2. Authorize states to establish quotas, to begin with, a voluntary quota and gradually move on to a standard quota, if states agree to collaborate with UN Women, that:
  - a) Countries applying the voluntary quota should submit a report after each election that includes:
    - i. The percentage of female voters among all female citizens,
    - ii. The percentage of female electives in the upper/lower house and the distribution of ministry departments,
  - b) Countries should agree to accept feedback and suggestions from UN Women after receiving their reports, yet, suggestions should have limits such as but not limited to:
    - i. Comments and suggestions for improvements should focus on the change in the percentage of female participants,
    - ii. Sanctions should not be applied toward state governments;
3. Calls for national electoral regulations to be promoted in member nations that will allow for;

- a) Evidence through solid data that shows the participation of women in elections to assure the rights of women in elections,
  - b) Shield women from electoral related economic, physical, psychological and sexual violence by
    - i. Installing election booths only for women,
    - ii. Instructing women, how to protect themselves from violence through government provided self-defense courses funded by the UN,
    - iii. Increasing the appearance of security services at polling booths;
4. Further calls for countries with a disparity, at or above 20%, in women's participation in the upper house and the lower house (the percentage can be further discussed) to adopt regulations to assist the balanced increase of female members, such as, but not limited to:
- a) Establishing quotas for both the upper and lower houses,
  - b) Accepting suggestions from international organizations on the development of female participation,
  - c) Learning from states that have achieved in a rather balanced distribution of houses;
5. Encourages all member states to sign a treaty that will agree on a collective development plan to provide voting rights to women around the world equally by setting goals, such as but not limited to:
- a) Improving the conditions in countries where voting is still a big difficulty for women by, but not limited to:
    - i. Revising laws that require women to get permission from their guardian to be able to vote, and allow for women to vote independently,
    - ii. Creating secure and safe polling locations to prevent Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) and make them feel confident that they won't face retaliation for their vote.
    - iii. Providing safe transportation for women to polling sites to avoid the discouragement women face while walking or taking public transport long distances;
  - b) Increasing the percentage of participation of women in elections at least up to 50% in five years to make the elections trustworthy and valuable by,
    - i. Working with UN Women to ensure that the governments are taking steps in the right direction,
    - ii. Keeping in contact with government officials by the UN to ensure their process is working sufficiently,
    - iii. Cooperating with UN Women, Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) to support and help women,
6. Recommends all member states to raise awareness of women's rights, especially the new generation to educate them, specifically about how women have equal voting rights and the benefits of female participation in elections by methods such as but not limited to:
- a) Implementing Public Service Announcements (PSA's), positive advertisements and broadcasting speeches made on the matter on TV and radio,
  - b) Publishing articles in newspapers and magazines about the latest developments,
  - c) Creating social media campaigns by related NGOs;
7. Further recommends that the countries of the UN take certain measures to ensure gender equality in politics, such as, but not limited to:
- a) Looking into governments and their quota of women, to make sure they are meeting the agreed upon quotas,
  - b) Encourage political parties to work against sexism, to include women in decision making and to break down barriers,
  - c) Raise the awareness and importance of women's role in government.

