



The Addis Ababa Declaration on the Enhancement of Women's Participation and Representation in Decision Making Positions

IGAD Women Parliamentary Conference, Addis Ababa, 14 - 16 December 2009

1. Preamble

The IGAD Women Parliamentary Conference, the first of its kind, was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between 14th and 16th December 2009. It was attended by Representative Women Members of Parliament and Leaders of Women Organizations from the six IGAD Member States [Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda] as well as representatives from the African Union Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

The conference was officially opened by the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H.E. Girma Woldegiorgis. The closing was presided by the First Lady, H.E. Azeb Mesfin. The delegates were also addressed by the IGAD Executive Secretary, H.E. Eng Mahboub Maalim, and the Secretary General of the IGAD Inter Parliamentary Union, H.E. Mr. Bourhan Daoud. Among the distinguished participants was the Deputy Speaker of the House of People's Representatives of Ethiopia, Hon Shitaye Minale.

During the three-day conference, the delegates deliberated on the current status of women in decision making positions in the member states with specific focus on the role of political parties, constitutional provisions, the quota systems, local governments and the role of the executive in ensuring the 50/50 target by 2015 (MDG 3). In addition, the conference examined the situational assessment of women in decision-making positions in member states, best practices, and the human rights approach.

These discussions recognized that even under democratically favourable contemporary global conditions, historical, ideological, and strategic characteristics internal and external to the democratic transition process still would exist that make the women's participation and political representation a costly exercise. Characteristics and problems of this sort can be identified and understood through critical, yet constructive analysis focused on certain key elements of the reform strategy - in setting the stage for the evolution of political culture in the sub-region. Hence, there is no simple or immediate identification of transition to human security and human development problems as they actually are in relation to women; there is only a definition of them from a certain perspective and towards a certain 'resolution'. Recognition of this fact would represent a significant improvement in the sub-region's democratic consciousness and practice.

The IGAD women parliamentarians and leaders conveyed their condolences to the Transitional Federal Government and people of Somalia for the loss of 22 precious lives including three cabinet ministers following the brutal terrorist attack in Mogadishu on the 3rd of Dec 2009. Expressing their solidarity with women of Somalia, they condemned the attack and called upon all people of goodwill to add their voices.

The conference also totally endorsed, supported, and highly commended the African Position on Climate Change at the UN Summit in Copenhagen. The participants sent a special message of support to H.E. Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Africa's Spokesperson to the Summit.

2. Challenges to women's participation and representation

Whereas, politics is still a male domain that many women have found unwelcoming or even hostile. Societies in which traditional or patriarchal values remain strong may

frown on women entering politics;

Whereas, women are often more likely than men to face practical barriers to entering politics, including a paucity of financial resources, lower levels of education, less access to information, greater family responsibilities, and a deprivation of rights that has left them with fewer opportunities to acquire political experience;

Whereas, women generally lack the political networks necessary for electoral success;

Whereas, barriers to women's political participation are often magnified in crises societies, which may be characterised by militarism and a volatile security situation;

Whereas, most countries have legal regimes regulating how political parties must be organised, registered and dictate how they must operate;

Whereas, democratic transitions can be explained with reference to two institutional factors: gender responsive political organisations and political rules;

Whereas, the emphasis on women's democratic political cultural development acknowledges that popularly supported, legitimate institutions can be a key to lasting solutions to conflicts; and

Whereas, quotas for women do not discriminate, but may compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats:

3. We, the IGAD Women Parliamentarians, make the following recommendations for the attainment of the 50/50 Target by 2015 (MDG 3):

3.1. On Using Political Parties as Vehicles for Increased Women's Participation and Representation, we recommend that:

3.1.1. Governments, CSOs, and political parties should promote education of girls and women to enable them to participate effectively in party politics;

3.1.2. Political parties and women parliamentary caucuses should encourage and support women to participate in all activities of parties at all levels;

3.1.3. Women parliamentary caucuses and CSOs, should urge political parties and governments to ensure gender parity within their structures;

3.1.4. Governments and political parties should criminalize corruption at all levels and forms, but more especially during electioneering;

3.1.5. Women parliamentary caucuses should work with CSOs, and development partners to document impact and value addition of women representation to increase public confidence;

3.1.6. Wherever necessary, CSOs, and development partners should encourage governments to create mechanisms for candidates from marginalized groups, such as women, youth and the disabled to access financial assistance for representational activities;

3.2. On Ensuring Greater Women Representation at all levels, we recommend that:

3.2.1. Women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs and development partners should advocate for change of laws [national and regional] to ensure increased women participation;

3.2.2. Governments, political parties, women politicians and CSOs, should empower women economically to enable them to organize their political campaigns and compete effectively;

3.2.3. Women politicians in local governments, the civil society and development partners should monitor and document impact and value addition [e.g. improved quality of life] of women representation to sensitize the general public on the advantages and benefits of voting for women;

3.2.4. Women politicians and their associations, CSOs, and development partners should continue to work very closely to educate and sensitize the general public on the need for increased women representation;

- 3.2.5.** Women organizations, other CSOs, and development partners should train women candidates on public speaking and resource mobilization skills to effectively contest at local level;
- 3.2.6.** Governments, women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs, and development partners should educate more girls and young women at all levels in order to be empowered to participate effectively in politics at all levels;
- 3.3. On Utilizing Constitutional Provisions, we recommend that:**
 - 3.3.1.** Governments, women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs, and development partners should follow up the constitutional provisions and affirmative actions and ensure their full implementation;
 - 3.3.2.** Governments, political parties, women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs, and development partners should mobilize more resources for women to fill the political seats provided for them in the constitutions, where applicable;
 - 3.3.3.** Governments, political parties, women parliamentary caucuses, the civil society and development partners should raise greater awareness especially among the rural populations and the womenfolk to encourage them to participate in politics;
 - 3.3.4.** Women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs, and development partners should work with the IGAD Inter Parliamentary Union to create a network of women parliamentarians to share experiences and encourage women in the region to support each other;
- 3.4. On Tapping on the Quota System, we recommend that:**
 - 3.4.1.** Where the system exists, women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs, and development partners should advocate for it to be enshrined in the constitutions and laws, be implemented, monitored and evaluated;
 - 3.4.2.** Governments and development partners should provide adequate financial resources to support the implementation of the system when needed;
- 3.5. On Increasing Appointment of Women in the Executive and the Judiciary, we recommend that:**
 - 3.5.1.** CSOs and development partners should lobby IGAD and AU to follow up their member states to ratify and domesticate the Maputo Protocol and other continental conventions as well as international instruments including CEDAW;
 - 3.5.2.** Parliamentary committees on equal opportunities should be established to vet appointments at all levels;
 - 3.5.3.** Political parties, governments, women parliamentary caucuses, CSOs and development partners should sensitize, train and equip women with necessary skills and resources to contest for all political positions;
- 3.6. On Civic Education, we recommend that:**
 - 3.6.1.** Where it does not exist, governments should build civic education into their countries' educational system so that when children reach voting age they will already understand the basis of the national and local political and electoral systems;
 - 3.6.2.** Where it does not exist, CSOs, women parliamentary caucuses and development partners should ensure a continuing programme of civic education linked to electoral processes to enable women participate in elections in a well-informed manner;
- 3.7. We further recommend that the IGAD Secretariat works with the Member States and development partners to:**
 - 3.7.1.** Develop and implement a regional strategy that would ensure that gender parity becomes a priority of all governments in the region and build political will that supports widespread women participation;
 - 3.7.2.** Establish an M&E mechanism to track the process of attaining gender parity, record and report the progress made;
 - 3.7.3.** Create a regional women parliamentary caucus for greater representation of women and implementation of international conventions/protocols;

- 3.7.4.** Harmonize laws on violence against women including those prohibiting all gender based violence and female genital mutilation in the region.

Done at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 16th December 2009