



Gender Equality: Making a Difference through Parliament

New York, 1 March 2006



A parliamentary event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women on the occasion of the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

ANNOTATED PROGRAMME

9 – 10 a.m. *Registration of participants and distribution of documents*

10 – 10.30 *Inaugural session*
Ms Margaret Mensah-Williams, Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia
Ms Carolyn Hannan, Director, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
Chairperson: Senator Joan Fraser, (Canada), President of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians

10.30 a.m. - 1 p.m. **Session one: Gender Equality: Contribution of parliamentarians**

Key themes: progress and setbacks of women and men in political life; men and women working together in partnership for change; accountability to political parties; positively affecting decision-making; particular contributions of parliamentarians; legislative change and Presiding Officers of Parliaments.

Theme 1: Women in Parliament: Making a difference to decision-making

What has been the impact of the increased presence of women in parliaments on decision-making processes? Has parliamentary work been changed by women's presence, and if so how? What examples of 'best practices' can be found?

Professor Pippa Norris, Harvard University

Theme 2: Partnership in Parliament: Women and men working for change

How do men and women understand the nature of partnership in politics? How can men and women work in partnership to implement change in parliament and collectively strive for gender equality? What specific contributions can men make to affect changes in parliaments? How successful have men been in promoting gender equality and sensitizing parliaments on gender issues?

Mr. Anders Karlsson, Member of the Swedish Riksdagen, Chairman of the Committee on the Labour Market

Ms. Marie C. Wilson, President, White House Project

Theme 3: How Women Speakers of Parliament are affecting change

There are currently some 30 parliamentary chambers that are presided over by women. This session will present the experience of women speakers of parliaments, the challenges they face and their contribution to the process of changing male-dominated parliaments. It will also present some of the findings of the meeting of women speakers of parliament on Gender equality on the legislative agenda: the role of women presiding over parliaments, convened at UN Headquarters for 27 February 2006.

Ms Anne Marie Lizin, Speaker of the Belgian Senate

Ms. Ntlhoi Motsamai, Speaker of the National Assembly of Lesotho, Rapporteur of the Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament (27 February 2006)

General discussion

1 - 3 p.m. **Lunch break**

3 p.m. **Guest speakers**

Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the United Nations General Assembly

H.E. Mrs. Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernández, Chairperson of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

3.30- 5.45 p.m. - Session two: Making a Difference: The Role of Parliamentary Mechanisms

Key themes: gender-sensitive parliaments, institutional change, institutional structures to support change, caucuses and committees, gender mainstreaming, women's issues, links with civil society, sensitization, working with men, and political parties.

Theme 4: Parliamentary Committees for Gender Equality

How many specialized committees on Gender Equality and the Status of Women exist in parliaments today? How effective have these committees been as a parliamentary structure to address gender equality issues? How effectively do they mainstream a gender perspective into the work of the parliament?

Senator Monica Xavier, Uruguay

Theme 5: Women's Parliamentary Caucuses and Civil Society Contributions

What has been the effect of intra- and inter-party parliamentary caucuses in parliaments? Are women able to work collectively for change across party lines in all-party caucuses? How can parliaments and parliamentarians work successfully with civil society organizations?

Ms Khofifah Indar Parawansa, MP, Indonesia

Theme 6: Gender Sensitive Parliaments

What rules, practices and institutions need to change in order to obtain a gender sensitive parliament? How can parliaments function in a way that is sensitive to gender equality issues? How do men and women work together to create a more gender-sensitive Parliament?

Ms Britt Bohlin Ohlsson, MP, Sweden

General discussion

5.45– 6 p.m. **Closing Session**