



Eighth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament

GENDER EQUALITY: A SINE QUA NON FOR SDGS

Venue: Ballroom, ONE UN New York Hotel
New York City
12-13 November 2013

Report of the Eighth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament

We Women Speakers of Parliament, meeting on the occasion of the Eighth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament on 13 November in New York, have come together to discuss the next generation of development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - with a view to ensuring that gender equality as an objective is adequately taken into account and remains at the heart of all development efforts in our societies.

Our debates resulted in agreement on the following priorities and objectives:

1. The inclusion of gender equality as a stand-alone SDG is necessary to make gender equality a priority for all of our countries and one of the benchmarks of progress against which our countries' development and growth will be measured. In order to be effective, such a goal needs to include clear and have concrete sub-objectives, with its first priority being to end violence against women. This is an issue that concerns all countries across the world and one that limits women's development. Economic rights and the economic empowerment of women, as well as women's representation and participation in decision-making spheres, whether public or private, including the family, were also highlighted.
2. A stand-alone goal is, however, insufficient. The drivers of gender inequality are too complex to be addressed through a single stand-alone goal. Gender equality as an objective has to be mainstreamed throughout all the other SDGs. It is impossible to achieve inter alia environmental, labour, health and educational objectives without including gender equality.
3. Gender equality must not be understood as women's equality but rather as a means of correcting inequalities between men and women. Gender equality is a societal priority which concerns us all.
4. It is important for goals and objectives to be accompanied by measurable indicators. The United Nations recently developed a set of more than 50 indicators to measure progress in the field of gender equality, which must be used. Yet despite the existence of indicators, data is not necessarily available and our countries need to invest in enhancing their research and statistical capacities and implement time-use surveys.
5. To be effective and properly implemented, the development of the SDGs should be the result of an inclusive process in which parliaments play an active role. For too long parliaments have been marginalized from major decision-making processes, whether at the United Nations or in the economic and financial arenas. Parliaments and their Speakers need to reclaim that space. Parliaments should be recognized as stakeholders and key players both nationally and internationally. The IPU should serve as the main platform to convey parliament's collective voice at the international level.

6. To achieve gender equality and well-being, current economic models and paradigms have to be challenged and revisited. We are societies not economies and economies should serve societies, not vice versa.

7. The current economic model of development needs to change radically and women must work towards that goal too. The model is flawed/defective and not sustainable in the long run, as it is stripping the Earth of its resources and in the end will make all people worse off. Gender equality that is achieved on the same terms as the current model will advance some women but still leave many others – women and men – behind. We need a development model that is centred on human development and well-being, one that does not see growth as the ultimate goal. More holistic measurements of sustainable development are needed and gross domestic product (GDP) is at best one of many indicators of a society's well-being. All people - women and men - must work towards achieving a more humane society.
8. Much remains to be done to redress glaring imbalances in the way the economy that we have today works for or against women. Public policy should focus not only on facilitating the contribution of women to the economy, as either workers or entrepreneurs, but also on constructing an economy that helps advance the rights of women all around. It should also seek to facilitate a balance between private and professional responsibilities and encourage men to play a more important role in family/care responsibilities. National accounting systems should reflect the value of unpaid work that women perform, which is vital to keeping any economy running. The benefits of economic growth, in whatever form it takes, need to be better distributed across the board, between women and men, but also between workers and employers. More public investment is needed to support education and health for all, but for true equality to take root more comprehensive structural reforms are needed. Policies must directly tackle poverty and all the factors that contribute to it, including discrimination against women. Women do not necessarily share the same interests as they are also divided along social and economic lines. Yet they also have much in common and are all at risk of similar forms of discrimination, particularly violence.
9. Our societies' governance structures need to respond to the needs of men and women and include both. Democratic governance means representation, participation, accountability and transparency. A democratic parliament is one that is effective in legislating and delivering for the people - men and women. It is one that that has reformed and transformed itself into an institution that embodies and delivers on gender equality, building on the strong participation of women. It is also a gender-sensitive one.
10. As Women Speakers of Parliament, we need to take the lead, display the courage to challenge existing systems, open doors for the next generation and push forward the gender equality agenda. Political will is key.
11. We want the IPU to follow up these conclusions and help ensure that they are included in the decision-making processes and discussions related to the SDGs. We therefore welcome the fact that the IPU will contribute to the UN General Assembly open working group discussions on gender and SDGs. We look to the IPU to assist parliaments by collecting information and research on existing indicators and indexes related to assessing growth as well as methodologies that have been developed to account for women's unpaid work. We urge the IPU to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all of its work and meetings. Similarly, we welcome the plans that are being developed for the

Preparatory Committee of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament to specifically debate how to mainstream gender in the Conference. .

We also discussed the format, objectives and purpose of our Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament.

1. We agreed on the importance of meeting and the need for us to have a space of our own to exchange and support each another. We are thankful to the IPU for facilitating such an initiative and would like to see it continue.
2. We also agreed that our Meeting sought to provide a space to share good practices with each other, advance the gender agenda on the international scene and influence global decision-making mechanisms and processes.
3. We considered that the Meeting should for now take place on an annual basis, either in New York, in conjunction with another IPU or UN meeting, or in a country at the invitation of a woman Speaker. We welcomed the invitation from Ecuador to host the 2014 Meeting. We also welcomed the suggestion that the 2015 Meeting be held in conjunction with the Fourth Conference of Speakers of Parliament.
4. We highlighted that it might be interesting for women Speakers from the same region to meet, possibly on an informal basis.
5. We also agreed on the idea of including Women Deputy Speakers in our meetings and would need to discuss further the related modalities.
6. We highlighted the importance of maintaining contacts in-between meetings and have asked the IPU to facilitate such contacts.

New York, 13 November 2013