



IS PARLIAMENT OPEN TO WOMEN? AN APPRAISAL

Conference for Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies

Dealing with Gender Equality
GENEVA, CICG, 28-29 September 2009

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

The theme of women's access to and participation in parliaments is timely in the run-up to the 15th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action commits states to promote gender equality and to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies. The Conference will appraise progress made in terms of women's parliamentary participation across the world since Beijing, and take stock of concrete steps and special measures that have been taken to open parliaments up to the participation of women. The role of political parties, the influence of money in politics and the effects of quotas and electoral systems will be considered, together with the ways in which women parliamentarians are changing politics and redefining political priorities to include the concerns and priorities of women.

The two-day event will provide a forum for members of parliament to debate and take stock of progress made, and identify future priorities for realising the goal of equality in politics. The topics on the agenda will be introduced by members of parliament and/or experts and representatives of the international community.

2. PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

The provisional programme of the Seminar is attached.

3. ORGANIZATION OF PROCEEDINGS

Members of parliament and/or experts and representatives of international organizations will introduce the topics on the agenda. The emphasis will be on discussion, and everything will be done to leave ample time for a free exchange of views.

In accordance with IPU practice, all participants will have equal speaking rights. In order for the discussions to be as fruitful and diverse as possible, the following arrangements will be made:

- (a) There will be no list of speakers on any agenda item. After an agenda item has been introduced by the resource persons, the floor will be open to participants for questions and comments.
- (b) Experience has shown that pre-prepared statements are not suited to this kind of event. Subject to arrangements that the Chair may decide to make depending on the circumstances, oral statements may be allowed but should not exceed five minutes. Participants may, however, speak several times on each item, particularly to respond to other statements.
- (c) The IPU Secretariat will prepare a report on the proceedings of the Seminar, for distribution to the participating parliaments, the IPU governing bodies and interested organizations.

4. PARTICIPATION

All national parliaments are invited to this event. It is proposed that delegations be composed of two parliamentarians who are members of committees dealing directly or indirectly with the status of women and gender equality issues or who are experts in this field, along with their advisers. Where possible, the principle of gender balance should be respected in the composition of delegations.

5. LANGUAGES

The Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union will provide simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Documents will be distributed in English and, when possible, in French.

6. VENUE AND DATES

The Seminar will be held on 28 and 29 September 2009 at the Centre international de conférences (CICG) in Geneva.

7. REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES

The parliaments participating in the Seminar **are kindly requested to make known the composition of their delegations before 18 September 2009 on the attached registration form.**

This information should be sent to the following address:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ▶ Inter-Parliamentary Union | Telephone: +41 22 919 41 50 |
| Chemin du Pommier, N° 5 | Fax: +41 22 919 41 60 |
| Case postale 330 | E-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org |
| 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex / Geneva | |
| Switzerland | |

8. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Delegates will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements.

9. VISAS

Strict regulations are in force regarding entry into Switzerland and entry is refused to persons not holding the required visa. Delegates requiring an entry visa must obtain one from the Swiss consulate or diplomatic mission in their country of residence.

Since mid-December 2008, Switzerland has applied the **Schengen regulations** concerning the issuance of visas. For further information, please refer to the Informative Note on the implementation of Schengen-Dublin available on the website of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intorg/un/unge/gepri/manvis/manvi2.html>

Please also note that Geneva Airport is located on the Swiss-French border and also has a French entry point. Some flights arriving from Paris or other French airports to Geneva are therefore considered as domestic flights. Delegates travelling via France must therefore also check with the competent French authorities to ascertain whether a French or Schengen visa is required for travel through a French airport en route to Geneva.

In recent years, it has been noted that more and more delegations request assistance with entry visas for Switzerland and often such requests are sent at a very late stage. While the IPU will continue to assist delegates, your attention is drawn to the fact that the Swiss authorities require that a clear time frame be respected.

Any delegations in need of assistance must therefore send their requests as soon as possible, and in any case no later than **three weeks prior** to the date of arrival. The following details should be provided: full name, date and place of birth, nationality, type of national passport and number (date of issue and expiry), date of arrival and flight number. There is no guarantee that last-minute requests, especially those falling over weekends when the corresponding Swiss services are closed, can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Please note that, following Switzerland's entry into the Schengen area, visas can no longer be issued upon arrival at Geneva Airport **save for very exceptional cases** where delegates have been unable to obtain a visa from the Swiss consulate or mission in their country of residence. The IPU Secretariat cannot be of any assistance whatsoever in such cases.

10. HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Matters concerning hotel accommodations are to be handled by the participants, either through their country's mission in Geneva, through their preferred tourist operator or through the Geneva Tourist Office. Should delegations wish to use the services offered by the Geneva Tourist Office, they are kindly requested to use the attached hotel reservation form. Attention is drawn to the fact that, in keeping with the practice of all hotels in Geneva, only reservation forms returned with details of a credit card as a guarantee will be confirmed. The hotel reservation form should be returned directly to the Geneva Tourist Office by no later than **11 September 2009**, with copy to the IPU Secretariat.

11. TRANSPORTATION IN GENEVA

No transportation services will be provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

12. RECEPTION

A reception for participants will be hosted.