

As the IPU looks at ways to increase the number of women serving in parliaments, we should also recognize that equality means more than simple numbers.

Across the world, including in my country of Canada, women in parliaments need to have real power in decision making process for any of us to claim success.

Therefore, in conjunction with efforts to increase the numbers of women serving in parliaments, the IPU should simultaneously be working to ensure women parliamentarians are free to constructively criticize their own political party or governments – that is, to speak truth to power. The IPU should also be working to ensure women are empowered to put forth legislation on their own accord.

Women must be able to do these things without having to fight through layer after layer of patriarchal roadblocks, or facing reprisal, demotion, harassment, or violence within their political systems for doing so.

Further, access to parliament shouldn't just be for women who are deemed acceptable by the ruling class. A woman's age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious denomination, choice of clothing or hairstyle, marital status, or her number of children should not preclude her from having access to real power.

Without these things in place, the world will never have true gender parity in parliaments.

As this debate concludes I encourage all colleagues here to not accept tokenization as a substitute for women having real political power and undertake all efforts to fight for women to be truly equal participants in our political processes.