

PARLIAMENT OF KENYA



THE SENATE

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THE 145th ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

11th to 15th October, 2022
Kigali, Rwanda

Remarks by

Rt. Hon. Amason Jeffah Kingi, EGH, MP
Speaker of the Senate

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On:

Gender Equality and Gender – Sensitive Parliaments as Drivers of Change for a more
resilient and peaceful world

**Madame President,
Honourable Speakers of Member Parliaments & Heads of Delegations,
Honourable Delegates,
Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I wish to register my thanks and those of Parliament of Kenya Delegation to the people, Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Rwanda for hosting the 145th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly.

Honourable Delegates,

2. SDG No. 5 proposes the “*achievement of gender equality and empower all women and girls*” with target 5.1 speaking to ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. If we are to reduce the imbalance that disproportionately affects women and

girls, we need to take up our role as champions for gender equality at national, regional and global levels.

Honourable Delegates,
Equality before the law

3. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 underscores the respect and protection of all rights and especially, gender based rights and ensuring that all forms of discrimination including violence against women are explicitly prohibited. To this end -

- a) Article 28 of the Constitution guarantees every person inherent dignity and the right to have that dignity respected and protected; and
- b) Articles 27(3), Article 27(6) and Article 56 promotes the elimination of discriminative laws, customs and practices relating to women, girls and marginalized groups,

Representation

4. Since the first woman was elected to Parliament in 1969, the political landscape in Kenya for a long time remained predominantly a male affair thus disenfranchising women. Article

97 (1) (b) of the Constitution now provides for the election of 47 women elected from each of the counties to the National Assembly. Article 98 (1)(b) on the composition of the Senate provides for the nomination of sixteen (16) women members. Article 98(1)(c) provides for the nomination of a man and a woman to represent the youth whereas 98(1) (d) provides for the nominations of a man and a woman to represent persons with disabilities in the Senate.

5. With an enlightened public that appreciates the need to break the barriers to involvement of women in public affairs, there has been a steady increase in the number of women in both Houses of Parliament. This has seen the number of women MPs rising from 18 in the 11th Parliament to 21 in the case of the Senate and, for the National Assembly, from 69 in the 11th Parliament to 82 in the 13th Parliament.

Leadership in Parliament

6. The Standing Orders of both Houses support gender equality by obliging parliamentary political parties to observe the need for gender balance in appointing Members to

leadership offices and committees in the House. The current Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and the former Deputy Speaker in the Senate are both women.

7. In the 13th Parliament, women were elected to the positions of the Deputy Majority Party Leader and the Minority Party Whip in the Senate; and the Deputy Majority Party Whip and the Deputy Minority Party Whip in the National Assembly.

Caucus for Women Parliamentarians

Honourable Delegates,

8. In 2002, the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), a caucus for women parliamentarians from both Houses of Parliament was established. The Caucus advocates for women's rights with the vision of a society where women and men are equitably represented in Parliament, decision making in public and private spheres and to promote

sustainable development.¹ KEWOPA has been instrumental on matters on women and other special interest groups like children, PWDs and other marginalized groups.

Equal opportunity for employment of women

9. The Parliamentary Service Commission, constitutional body established to provide services and facilities to Members and staff of Parliament emphasizes achieving constitutional principles of equality in terms of gender, ethnic balance and special interest groups. in employment opportunities. The Parliament of Kenya has established a policy on harassment that protects female Members and staffers from exploitation and work-place vulnerabilities.

Legislation and programmes to Support gender equality

Distinguished delegates,

10. To address the threat of counterproductive socio-cultural attitudes and practices to women's autonomy and wellbeing in Kenya, the Parliament has passed specific legislation

¹ KEWOPA (2019) Strategic Plan 2019-2023

and approved programs towards uplifting the status of women. Notable among these include:-

- a) The Matrimonial Properties Act (2013), the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, the Children Act (2001), the Sexual Offences Act (2006)), the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act (2010), the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2011), and the Marriage Act (2014);
- b) Establishment of government programmes that empower women including -
 - (i) **“UWEZO” Fund** to expand access to finance through grants and credit;
 - (ii) **Women’s Enterprise Fund**, which has benefitted over 800,000 women groups and resulted in the growth of women owned enterprises; and
 - (iii) **National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF)**- that has improved the livelihoods of vulnerable women, youth, and persons with disabilities, children and the elderly.

Honourable Delegates,

11. The following actions may be considered by Parliaments in devising ingenious ways to address gender inequality -

(b) Gender quotas, through which the gender gap can be bridged, especially at the level of political parties;

(c) Elimination of all obstacles to gender equality – by making deliberate efforts to identify and address the root causes of gender inequities and not just the symptoms.

(d) Legislation – that promote equal access for women and men to elective positions.

(e) Mainstreaming gender in parliamentary work and engendering the rules of procedure.

(f) Enhancing participation of women in Parliament – by ensuring that political conversations are inclusive and accommodate the view and positions of both gender;

(g) Awareness campaigns – to address information gap regarding the opportunities and processes for participation of women in legislative work.

(h)Continuous and structured capacity building - that enhance capacity of women parliamentarians on house procedure and rules, legislative development and policy analysis.

CONCLUSION

Honourable Delegates,

12. The pursuit for gender equality means contributing to building a fairer society where governance and social justice are shared value by both men and women. In the words from the late Koffi Annan, former UN Secretary General, *“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”*

Shukran.

**HON. AMASON JEFFAH KINGI, EGH, MP,
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE/LEADER OF KENYA DELEGATION.**