



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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IPU Statement

Interactive dialogue
Working Group on the issue of
discrimination against women in law
and in practice
Human Rights Council
35th session

Geneva, 8 June 2017

Mr. President,

The Inter-Parliamentary Union welcomes the report of the Working Group, focusing on best practices in eliminating discrimination and ensuring women's empowerment.

We share the view that women's participation in decision-making is key to ensuring other rights. However, women's political participation remains much too low. Women account for only 23.3 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide. This is a mere 0.7-percentage-point increase since last year. At this pace, it would take another 50 years for us to reach gender parity in parliament.

Now, how do we break the glass ceiling?

First, by adopting legislation on electoral quotas, which can be a real game changer when they have ambitious targets and are backed by strong political will and robust implementation measures. Countries like Rwanda and Bolivia have now achieved parity through such quotas.

Second, we must challenge mindsets and stereotypes, which perpetuate the idea that politics is a man's business. For this, we need to sensitize the population at large and build on role models – both women in leadership and men who proudly take on their share of family and care responsibilities.

Lastly, we need to institutionalize change and make our institutions gender-sensitive. Here again, strong policies and legislation are required. A recent IPU study revealed that over 80 per cent of the women MPs surveyed had been subjected to some form of psychological violence, such as insults, intimidation and sexist remarks. This is a pattern that can be found all over the world. However, in many places parliament has begun to legislate against this scourge and to adopt a zero-tolerance policy on sexism and violence against women in politics.

The IPU encourages the Working Group to pursue its important work, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, and to continue to build on best practices aimed at eliminating the various obstacles to women's contribution to the decisions that impact the lives of people today and those of future generations.

Thank you Mr. President.