

## Conclusions and recommendations International Seminar Women's Political Rights

Tunisia, 24 -26 October 2016

### Introduction

According to the World Economic Forum of 2016, it will take another 170 years to reach gender parity. Progress is still too slow if we are to realize the full potential of half of humanity within our lifetimes.

In order to advance equal political participation in politics, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) have been working together on the Women Political Rights (WPR) programme, financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The closing conference in October 2017 in Tunisia, attended by politicians and practitioners from Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, identified recommendations to speed up the process towards gender equity. The conference programme followed the three themes of the WPR programme: Gender Stereotypes, Financing for Political Women and Violence against Women in Politics.

#### **1. Violence against women in politics, recommendations:**

- Violence undermines democracy. There can be no equal representation while violence against women in politics continues. Make violence against women visible in political parties, government and Congress visible. It is important to speak out about violence against women.
- Get leadership involved. Identify powerful men and women who are willing to change the current situation. Ensure a robust legal framework on gender equity. Work towards a zero tolerance policy in political parties and political organizations towards all types of violence against women and regularly monitor its advancement. Political parties need to become the first to speak out against the violence perpetrated against their own female politicians.
- Take complaints about physical and psychological violence and harassment seriously, and establish mechanisms to investigate them. Allocate the resources that are necessary to do so. Provide protection for informers and witnesses.
- Support programmes that challenge social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women and against girls and the explicit and tacit approval of violence. Violence in the political sphere often reflects violence in the domestic sphere.
- Get men involved at all levels. Show them that it is important to speak out when women are discriminated against and harassed.
- Invest in violence prevention programming to promote the empowerment of women, gender equitable social norms, non-violent behaviours, and effective non-stigmatizing responses for violence survivors.

- Strengthen coordination between sectors. Integrate the issue of violence against women in politics in capacity building programmes for the health, security, education and justice sectors to build a co-ordinated multi-sectoral response to violence against women in politics.

## **2. Gender stereotypes recommendations:**

- Political parties should invest in scouting women candidates, paying special attention to “double minorities”- women politicians who are also part of another minority that is under-represented in politics. Political parties should actively promote ‘champions’ who can act as role models for other women who are hesitant to enter politics.
- Men and women from political parties should be trained to recognize gender stereotypes so that they can address them. Only by realizing the gender stereotypes we encounter at home, at school, and in the media through advertisements, speeches and images, we can start changing things.
- Women are stronger together: it is necessary to build networks and alliances, both within parties and between women from different political parties. It is also crucial to facilitate dialogue between political and civil society organizations to define joint action for gender equality. There are good examples from Women Caucuses in Congress who jointly define and advance with legislation and policy for equal rights.
- Make use of social media. The campaign #metoo highlights the importance of sharing experiences and bringing them out into the open. Educate the mass media and engage with media owners, because mass media is important in constructing gender stereotypes. Therefore, it is important to work with journalists and media owners to sensitize them in how to formulate questions and describe politicians.
- Building mentorship networks: A woman behind each woman. Create networks of support in the early stage of women’s careers. Set up a system whereby women leaders can share their
- experience, successes and pitfalls with women who are starting their political careers. Support must also be provided to women once they are elected; currently, women tend to leave politics after one term, because of the exclusion and harassment that they face in the job.
- Share the experiences of successful women politician: these women should visit schools, communities, and make their story heard. This way, girls can see that they too can have a career and make a difference. Pay special attention to rural areas where cultural norms are often even more patriarchal and conservative.
- Advocate for the importance of gender sensitive education. It is in schools that gender stereotypes are first repeated and reinforced. If we ensure that school material and teachers actively deconstruct gender stereotypes, a new generation that fights for gender equality will rise.

- Provide positive incentives for TV programmes, announcements and political campaigns that provide a positive image of women and their rights and careers.

### **3. Finance for political women**

Financial resources are a prerequisite for competing in elections. This often represents an obstacle for women who wish to enter into politics, as the socio-economic situation of women in most countries is lower than that of men. This is especially the case in developing countries.

- Limit the amounts that can be spent on campaign financing. Ensure transparency in campaign financing to limit the use of black money and of illegal networks and companies.
- Strengthen the mandate of the Electoral Management Body (EMB) to monitor campaign spending and hold political parties to account regarding their financial reports. Ensure sufficient financial and human resources for the EMBs to be able to effectively implement their task.
- Explore possibilities for financial incentives to increase women's political participation.
- Create support networks of (female) entrepreneurs to increase financial resources for women candidates.
- Ensure that there is a network of female politicians who know about campaign financing, so that it becomes more difficult to hide resources from women. Promote transparency in political party financing.
- Provide financial incentives for political parties to identify women candidates and put them on the list. Gender Electoral Financing and Gender Quota can reinforce each other