

Women still struggle to break through glass ceiling in government, business, academia

International Women's Day marked with focus on women's participation in decision-making

(New York, 8 March 2006) Beyond the recent high-profile elections of women Heads of State and Governments in Chile, Liberia and Germany, progress in bringing women into leadership and decision-making positions around the world remains far too slow, according to a UN report to the Commission on the Status of Women, meeting from 27 February to 10 March.

"The past ten years have seen the fastest growth in the number of women in parliaments, yet even at this rate, parity between women and men in parliaments will not be reached until 2040," said Rachel Mayanja, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, at a press briefing on the occasion of International Women's Day.

In other areas, such as business, academia, civil society, the media and the judiciary, progress is even slower. "Women remain largely invisible, their voices unheard," she said.

Even where women's numerical representation has increased, the report recognizes that this does not automatically ensure attention to gender equality in political processes.

"An increase in the numerical representation of women has to be complemented with increased substantive representation or the possibility of influencing political decision making," says the report.

It recommends more support for women's *effective* participation:

- » Building strategic coalitions and alliances with *critical actors*, including male leaders;
- » Gaining access to *critical structures*, including powerful committees and ministries, including on foreign affairs, defense, finance, justice, trade and industry, and ensuring means to influence critical processes such as budget allocations and expenditure reviews;
- » Seizing *critical junctures or moments*, such as constitutional reform processes, transitions to democracy, and peace processes, where there is increased potential for influencing the decision-making process.

Consideration of women and decision making comes at the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

For further information on the fiftieth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, including the Secretary-General's report, please visit: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/50sess.htm>

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