



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ECOSOC High-level segment

General debate on “*Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and the empowerment of women*” (1 July 2010)

STATEMENT

by The Honorable Kilontsi Mpotogomyi (Member of Parliament, Tanzania)

Mr. Chairman,

The world is undergoing a cascade of crises: an economic crisis leading to a rise in unemployment, a serious financial crisis which is undermining the prospects for economic recovery, and a climate crisis that threatens the future of our planet. Time and time again, history has shown us that women are always the most affected by such crises, which only lead to more poverty, violence, unemployment, lack of food and water.

We decided that this year we would evaluate how we have been doing with regard to the development goals we set forth in 2000. Our assessment shows that we are not fulfilling the agreed targets. There have been some positive achievements, but we are still falling short of our development aims. Of the eight MDGs, three are clearly devoted to the improvement of the lives of women and children.

Over the past decade, IPU has undertaken many activities related to the MDGs, with a special emphasis to MDG 3, dealing with gender equality. Why is this MDG such a priority for the IPU? Because we believe that greater political participation by women will have a substantial positive impact on the overall development of society. Let us all be clear that women are key in reducing poverty and food insecurity, that to address women's health is to address general global health, and that to ensure care and education for girls and boys is the only guarantee for a more just future society.

If we are bold, if we have vision and political will, we should seize this current global crisis and use it as a real opportunity to help close the gap between men and women, eliminate discrimination and ensure that national recovery packages create political, economic and social structures that fully accessible to women.

Mr. Chairman,

Based on our conviction that women are the pillar of development, it is with great concern that we are reminded that women's participation in politics and in governance is still far off from what it should be. While women's participation in politics has registered some progress in recent years, it still falls far short of the 30% target set in Beijing 15 years ago. This is a particularly sobering reality that calls for careful consideration and resolute action. Urgent action is required particularly in view of the current context of crisis in which women are vulnerable and development challenged.

Earlier this year the IPU concluded a study on the advances and setbacks of women in parliament and produced, in co-operation with the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, a new edition of the World Map Women in Politics. The conclusions emerging from both publications are quite revealing. As several speakers have already pointed out here, the world average of women in parliaments today is 19%, up from 11.3% in 1995. Yes, some progress has been made, but it has been far too slow. At the current annual growth rate of 0.5 points, the 30% target would only be reached in 2025.

Clearly, there is a lot that remains to be done to eliminate discrimination against women. There is considerable scope for stepping up efforts that include quotas and other temporary special measures, amending systems of political party selection and recruitment, taking action to eliminate gender stereotypes and violence against women, and waging far-reaching awareness campaigns in a systematic manner worldwide.

As far as the IPU is concerned, we have focused attention on helping parliaments build a gender-sensitive national legal framework by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, monitoring its implementation, reviewing discriminatory legislation and passing gender sensitive legislation in cooperation with other key stakeholders such as governmental bodies, UN agencies and civil society organizations.

IPU has joined forces with the Countdown to 2015 Conference on Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival with a view to enhancing parliamentary efforts to promote maternal, newborn and child health in 68 priority countries where 97 per cent of all maternal and child deaths in the world occur. We promote the development and strengthening of health policies and systems, and ensuring a continuum of care to reduce maternal and child mortality. These actions require developing enabling legal frameworks, allocating sufficient funds, and sensitizing and educating populations. IPU's efforts, in cooperation with Countdown partners, have aimed to build political awareness and mobilize parliamentary action in this direction. We are also encouraging our member Parliaments to allocate sufficient funds towards maternal and child survival programmes, and to monitor their implementation.

Curbing violence against women is another major area of work for the IPU. We are working closely with national parliaments and seeking to assist them in their response to this scourge, including by enacting national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, in line with international standards. Parliaments are also urged to allocate adequate resources and monitor implementation.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, I would like to stress that women's political participation not only helps to enhance the effectiveness of institutions such as parliaments but also strengthens their legitimacy. We hope to conclude later this year an innovative research project on gender-sensitive parliaments. The project aims at identifying good practices in gender mainstreaming in parliaments and ways of supporting them in becoming gender-friendly institutions. IPU will help parliament assess their degree of gender-sensitivity and enhance gender mainstreaming in their structures, processes, budgets, planning and work. We look forward to sharing the results of this assessment with the UN, particularly in light of the emerging new gender architecture at the United Nations.

I thank you for your attention.