

European Parliament resolution on women in international politics (2006/2057(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the principles laid down in Articles 2, 3(2), 13, 137(1)(i), and 141 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union proclaimed in 2000⁽¹⁾, and, in particular, Article 23 thereof, pursuant to which "Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex",
- having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950,
- having regard to the recommendations of the Council of Europe and in particular its resolution and action plan adopted at the 6th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men in Stockholm on 8-9 June 2006, and in particular Part I, point F of the Appendix concerning the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making,
- having regard to the Ministerial Declaration of Athens in 1992 at the European conference on Women in Power, which proclaimed that "women represent half the potential talents and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole",
- having regard to the Ministerial Declaration of Paris in 1999 at the European conference on Women and Men in Power - a caring society, a dynamic economy and a vision for Europe,
- having regard to the Final declaration of the Annual conference of the Network of Parliamentary Committees for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (NCEO) adopted in Rome on 21 November 2003,
- having regard to the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, of March 2000, and in particular its emphasis on the positive impact that gender-sensitive economic policies will have on the overall strategy for growth and competitiveness of the EU,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 March 1995⁽²⁾ and Council Recommendation 96/694/EC of 2 December 1996⁽³⁾ on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process,
- having regard to its resolutions of 18 January 2001⁽⁴⁾ on the Commission report on the implementation of the abovementioned Council Recommendation 96/694 and of 2 March 2000 on women in decision-making⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Ministerial Declaration of the Conference of Ministers of Gender Equality held in Luxembourg on 4 February 2005,
- having regard to the Commission roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010) (**COM(2006)0092**) and in particular its proposal to support a network of women in decision-making,
- having regard to the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, which provides, inter alia, that signatory states shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of their country,
- having regard to the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW, adopted in 1999, stating that individuals or groups of individuals claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set out in the Convention may submit communications under the jurisdiction of a signatory state,
- recalling that the Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1952 provides that women shall be on equal terms with men and shall be, without any discrimination, entitled to vote in all elections, eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies established by national law and entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions established by national law,
- recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, and in particular Article 25 thereof, which provides that every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives and to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections,
- having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing as well as the following outcome documents adopted at the successive UN Beijing + 5 and UN Beijing +10 Special Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration

and the Platform for Action adopted respectively on 9 June 2000 and on 11 March 2005,

- having regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women as a prerequisite to overcoming hunger, poverty and disease, reaching equality at all levels of education and in all areas of work, equal control over resources and equal representation in public and political life,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted on 31 October 2000 ("UNSCR 1325(2000)"), in particular paragraph 1 thereof, which urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict, as well as the Presidential Statement adopted on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of UNSCR 1325(2000) in October 2005,
- having regard to its resolution of 30 November 2000 on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 1 June 2006 on the situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and democratic process in post-conflict countries⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to the Conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting of 23 and 24 May 2005 on the European Security and Defence Policy and to the draft guidelines on the implementation of UNSCR 1325(2000) in the context of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), approved by the European Council on 16 December 2005,
- having regard to the decision by the Norwegian government to introduce by law a 40% quota for women's representation on the governing boards of joint stock companies,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (**A6-0362/2006**),

A. A considering the milestone reached by the 1995 Beijing conference in advancing the gender equality agenda including with regard to women's representation in politics,

B. whereas balanced participation by women and men in the political process and decision-making will more accurately reflect the composition of society and is essential for future generations and the proper functioning of democratic societies,

C. whereas good governance includes respect for fundamental freedoms and treating women's rights as basic fundamental rights,

D. whereas the situation of women in international politics depends primarily on the situation of women nationally and on the strategies for the advancement of women put in place at national level,

E. considering the significant role that the United Nations Secretary-General plays through the UN staffing policy in setting an example for a more gender-balanced political scene worldwide,

F. whereas of the 191 countries that are currently members of the United Nations, only 47 are signatories of and 115 are parties to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 20 December 1952 and whereas, as a result, women cannot fully exercise their political rights and are banned from participating in elections or from holding public office in a number of countries,

G. whereas, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of the 43961 members of parliaments worldwide (lower house and upper house combined), only 16.4% are women (i.e. 7,195); whereas Scandinavian countries have the highest number of female MPs (40%), followed by the Americas (19,6%) and Europe (OSCE countries, excluding Scandinavian countries) for an average of 16,9 %, slightly above sub-Saharan African (16,4%), Asia (16.3%) the Pacific (12%) and the Arab States (8.3%),

H. whereas these percentages indicate a democratic deficit both at European level and in the wider international context,

I. whereas, in spite of the existence of de jure equality in most European countries and worldwide, de facto inequalities remain regarding the distribution of power, responsibilities and access to economic, social and cultural resources between women and men, owing to the persistence of prevailing gender roles and their impact in the unequal sharing of family responsibilities and the reconciling of family and professional lives for most women,

J. whereas despite Community and national legislation introduced over the past 30 years, the gender pay gap across the EU remains on average 15% for jobs of equal value,

K. whereas more women than men now hold a university degree,

L. whereas a requirement to introduce gender-balanced candidate lists would not be effective if the women were all placed at the bottom of the lists and whereas a perfectly zippered list may not achieve the desired results if the country uses an "open list" voting system, which allows voters to change the order of the candidates on the list,

M. having regard to the crucial role played by political parties in preventing an increase in or in increasing women's representation in politics through various means; noting that while more and more political parties claim that their general membership is gender balanced, the upper levels of political parties seldom reflect this, with only 11% of party leaders worldwide being women,

N. noting with great interest that a whole range of other tools are available to ensure increased participation of women in politics, such as positive discrimination measures aiming at ensuring women's presence and activity in parliaments and other elected positions,

O. stressing that countries that have been the scene of conflict and have had their electoral systems designed and elections organized by the UN are more likely to have more women holding elected office because of the UN imposition of a more balanced gender representation;

P. considering the importance of changing the cultural acceptance of balanced decision-making through awareness-raising campaigns and whereas achieving gender balance in politics often requires changes in public attitudes,

Q. bearing in mind the fact that the sharing of family responsibilities between women and men has an impact on the full participation of women in politics,

R. recognising the key role of non-governmental and voluntary associations in attempting to influence society as a whole to accept a more equitable gender balance in politics,

S. considering that women can and have made a positive contribution to bringing about a culture of change on gender issues and on essential societal and political issues as a whole through their involvement at grassroots level,

T. considering the importance of early education and training to ensure that women develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to fully participate in society and politics,

U. considering the contribution made by women in shedding light on the particular needs of women so that future policy integrates a gender perspective and better serves democracy as a whole,

V. stressing that women's recognition by their peers for their positive contribution to international politics is essential in contributing to a more gender-balanced political culture and noting that only 12 of the 92 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates have been women,

1. Recalls that it has already been recognised at European level - in its abovementioned resolution of 2 March 2000 - that balanced participation by both sexes in decision-making is an essential condition for democracy;

2. Notes that recent elections have brought women to the highest functions as Heads of State and Government in some Member States and third countries;

3. Congratulates the Heads of Government that have used objective and non-discriminatory criteria for the selection of the members of their cabinets;

4. Deeply regrets that in spite of a large number of political statements and recommendations, programmes of actions adopted worldwide and specific legislation introduced at national level, inequality and gender discrimination and under-representation of women in politics still persist in Europe and worldwide; notes in particular that the percentage of women elected to the European Parliament ranges from 58% to 0% depending on the Member State (with an average slightly above 30%) and that the percentage of women elected to the Member States' national parliaments varies between 45% and 9%;

5. Draws attention to the fact that the low level of participation by women in centres of decision-making and governance is often linked to problems with combining work and family life, to the unequal distribution of family responsibilities and to discrimination at work and in occupational training;

6. Stresses the need to look beyond numbers, and actually focus on how women active in politics influence the shaping of governance and conflict resolution, and how they contribute towards ensuring that governance reforms, accountability and the rule of law are highly placed on the political agenda at national and international level;

7. Stresses that the low proportion of women in politics deprives Europe of a precious human potential;

8. Supports the work carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union towards a more gender-balanced political scene;
9. Welcomes the inclusion of the issue of equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels in the work programme of the CEDAW for 2006 and is looking forward to its findings and recommendations; requests that the Commission and the Council Presidency brief the Parliament on the CEDAW negotiations;
10. Regrets that women are under-represented as Special and Personal Representatives and Envoys and Personal and Special Advisers of the United Nations Secretary-General and in other high-level positions in the United Nations as a whole;
11. Encourages the UN Secretary-General to appoint more women to the positions of Special and Personal Representative and Envoy, and Personal and Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General; stresses that it would be appropriate for UN Member States to submit names of female candidates alongside those of male candidates when the UN Secretary-General is considering filling such high-level positions;
12. Encourages UN Security-Council delegations to include women, to ensure a gender focus in all peace-keeping, conflict resolution or peace building missions, and also to meet women's organisations at local level while on visits to conflict areas;
13. Welcomes the Council's decision to send out a questionnaire to the Member States requesting information on the steps they have taken towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325(2000); calls on the Council to share its findings with the Parliament;
14. Strongly encourages the inclusion of female police, civilian and military officers in EU and UN peace-keeping missions in order to enhance communication with women in local communities and local communities in general;
15. Regrets that there is only one woman currently serving as Personal Representative of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) out of 14 positions of EU Special Representative/Personal Representative/Special Envoy or Special Coordinator⁽⁸⁾; urges the EU High Representative for the CFSP to appoint more women to the positions of Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Representative or Special Envoy; calls upon the EU High Representative for the CFSP to request that Member States submit to him the names of female candidates alongside those of male candidates when he is considering filling such high-level positions;
16. Calls upon the EU's High Representative for the CFSP, the Commission and all the Member States to recruit more women as civilian, military and police officers, and to appoint a gender focal point in all ESDP missions, as initiated in the EUFOR mission for the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
17. Strongly encourages gender-specific training for all staff deployed as part of ESDP missions; also encourages the publication of a gender tool-kit dedicated to the implications of gender in conflict and post-conflict situations for all staff forming part of ESDP operations;
18. Welcomes the higher number of women commissioners under Commission President Barroso but deplores the fact that full parity is not yet attained at Commissioner level so as to set an example in Europe and worldwide;
19. Welcomes the Commission's new roadmap for equality between men and women, in particular its decision to promote a network of women in decision-making;
20. Welcomes the fact that a European Institute for Gender Equality is to be created, which should take the initiative to promote greater representation of women in international politics;
21. Calls on the Commission to keep it regularly informed of the progress of the work of the Commissioners Group on Fundamental rights, Anti-discrimination and Equal opportunities;
22. Deplores the fact that out of 107 Commission delegations and offices in third-countries, only 7 women are currently serving at the level of Head of such delegations; urges the Commission to appoint more women to top positions in external delegations;
23. Calls on the Commission to use the EU external relations and development and cooperation policy instruments as vectors for the promotion of women in politics, in particular the participation of women as voters and political candidates, the inclusion of gender issues on political parties' programmes during election campaigns, including in its dealings with other regional organisations, in particular with respect to capacity-building;
24. Calls on the Commission to increase its support for projects designed to ensure women's participation in political life in and outside the EU, namely in developing countries;

25. Recommends that its competent committee establish and support permanent and regular cooperation between female Parliamentarians from all over the world; calls for resources to be provided so that the Women's Forum under the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, and similar "fora" in other Parliamentary Assemblies in which the EU participates, may take place and conduct joint initiatives;
26. Calls on the Member States and the Commission where appropriate to promote educational programmes to make citizens, with particular attention to young people, aware of the equal rights of women to participate fully in political life from an early age;
27. Calls on the future European Institute for Gender Equality to report regularly to the European Parliament about its collection of data and the impact of national parity legislation and gender equality policies carried out by Member States and the best practices of European and national political parties;
28. Calls on the future European Institute for Gender Equality to monitor and evaluate progress in achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public life across Europe by setting up and applying indicators for monitoring and evaluation based on internationally comparable gender-segregated data, and then to publish reports on the measures taken and progress made in women's involvement in decision-making and disseminate these reports widely;
29. Calls on the future European Institute for Gender Equality to liaise with independent bodies, such as a parity observatory or a special independent mediation body established at national level, with a view to monitoring governmental policies in the field of balanced participation of women and men in political and public life;
30. Encourages the future European Institute for Gender Equality to collaborate with research institutions to further study the barriers to women's access to high-level public appointments and political life, including through research on stereotypes of women in politics;
31. Encourages the future European Institute for Gender Equality to look beyond numbers, and actually measure how women influence political agendas, at both national and international level, namely in promoting good governance, accountability and the rule of law;
32. Acknowledges that states are the main motor for effective change in political representation; urges all states to follow up on their commitments made under the Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing in September 1995 and during the Beijing +5 and Beijing + 10 meetings, as well as their commitments under international law, in particular with regards the implementation of UNSCR 1325(2000) and the Lisbon Strategy;
33. Calls on all Member States to encourage women to apply for high-level positions on the international scene and urges Member States to provide names of female candidates along the names of male candidates for high-level positions in international negotiations and policy making, namely in international organisations;
34. Calls on the Commission to analyse and disseminate best practices on international and national measures aimed at enhancing the participation of women in the highest-level positions of international politics;
35. Calls on Member States to attract, train and appoint more women to diplomatic careers and to promote gender balance for their delegations to the United Nations and other international meetings and conferences;
36. Calls on the Member States raise public awareness in their countries with a view to ending negative societal attitudes about women's capacity to participate equally in the political process at national and international levels; encourages Member States to promote the goal of gender balance in all public positions;
37. Calls on the Member States to put in place measures aiming at the reconciliation of social, family and professional life in line with the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002 and the Lisbon Strategy, thereby creating an enabling environment for women's full participation in politics;
38. Calls on the Member States to adopt appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to support elected representatives in the reconciliation of their family and public responsibilities and, in particular, encourage parliaments and local and regional authorities to ensure that their timetables and working methods enable elected representatives of both sexes to reconcile their work and family life;
39. Calls on the Member States to offer women more training opportunities to enable them to acquire the skills needed to make it easier to pursue a career in politics and attain high-level posts;
40. Calls on political parties across Europe to promote balanced participation of both sexes on their lists of candidates;
41. Encourages political parties across Europe to remove all barriers that, directly or indirectly, discriminate against

the participation of women, in order to ensure that women have the right to participate fully at all levels of decision-making in all internal policy-making structures and nominating processes and in the leadership of political parties on equal terms with men;

42. Encourages competent authorities to provide political training, including training in public speaking, to women and men who wish to get involved in politics;

43. Urges political parties to include qualified women and men on party lists for elective office;

44. Encourages political parties to appeal to women to participate and vote in elections and to raise awareness of the specific needs and aspirations of women in their party programmes;

45. Encourages its inter-parliamentary delegations and Committee missions and delegations to take into consideration, within the framework of their activities, the issue of gender equality and sufficient female representation in their institutional cooperation;

46. Reaffirms its commitment to its gender mainstreaming approach and to a gender-balanced representation on all delegations and missions, including election observation missions;

47. Encourages election observation missions headed by some of its Members to be particularly attentive to the issue of women's participation in political campaigns, be it as candidates or as voters;

48. Encourages the promotion of young women in civil society organizations to enable them to acquire experience, skills and capacities that are transferable to the field of political participation;

49. Encourages the establishment of NGOs, particularly those aiming to promote female empowerment, that provide training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking skills, use of information and communication technologies, confidence-building and political campaigning and the support of such NGOs where they exist;

50. Encourages the media to recognize the importance of women's participation in the political process, provide fair and balanced coverage of male and female candidates and also to pay attention to the impact of party programmes on promoting women's needs and rights and democratic representation;

51. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the other EU institutions and bodies, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of members of the UN, and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.