REPORT

Online discussion on
Women, political participation and decision-making in Africa

September 4 – October 14, 2007

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I. Background

1.   The online discussion "Women, political participation and decision-making in Africa" was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in cooperation with the E-Network of National Gender Equality Machineries in Africa, from 4 September to 14 October 2007. Elizabeth Powley moderated the discussion and drafted this report.

2.   The online discussion covered the following themes during a six-week period:

- Week 1: Assessing the current level of women's participation in decision-making in Africa
- Week 2: Women's participation in politics: national policies and mechanisms
- Week 3: Women's participation in politics: social and cultural pressures
- Week 4: Women's participation in other decision-making processes: education, private sector, civil society, and media
- Week 5: Building alliances with women in decision-making positions
- Week 6: Other issues, wrap up and recommendations

3.   The Division for the Advancement of Women invited interested individuals and groups to participate in the online discussion. Over 800 individuals (83 per cent women and 17 per cent men) from more than 90 countries registered for the discussion. The organizational distribution showed the greatest percentage of participants from the NGO sector (40 per cent), followed by the United Nations (17 per cent), academia (12 per cent), and governments (10 per cent). Geographically, Africa (70 per cent) had the highest representation, followed by Europe (11 per cent), and North America (10 per cent).

4.   During the discussion, a total of 216 messages were posted by 118 different participants. The discussion was conducted in both English and French. Additional statistics concerning the online discussion and the demographics of the discussion participants, their organizational backgrounds, and countries of origin can be found in Annexes 1 and 2.

5.   Over the past two decades, significant commitments to women's participation in decision-making have been made at the international level. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) called on governments to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) reiterated the need to increase the representation of women. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) affirmed the need to include women in decision-making with regard to issues of peace and security. In 2006, the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions on the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes.

6.   Other important commitments related to women's political participation in Africa include: Article 4 (l) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Dakar Platform for Action (1994); the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); and the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004). The Governments of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) committed to ensuring that women occupy at least 30 per cent of the positions in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005.

7.   In 2006, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), organized a workshop to establish the E-Network for National Gender Equality Machineries in Africa. This online discussion was designed to serve the representatives of the E-Network.

8.   The report does not aim to give comprehensive coverage of all inputs received but rather provides an overview of the discussion, with some illustrative examples of contributions. All postings can be consulted at http://esaconf.un.org/WB/?boardID=politicalparticipationafrica.

II. Theme one: Assessing the current level of women's participation in decision-making in Africa

A. Background

9.   The first topic of discussion was the level of women's participation in decision-making in Africa. The discussion centered, unless specifically noted, on women's participation in *political* decision-making, as elected and appointed officials.

10.   In recent years, women's participation in politics and decision-making in Africa has received significant attention. The 2005 election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia was an important milestone. The 2003 parliamentary election in Rwanda resulted in a lower house of parliament that is 48.8 per cent female. That country now ranks first in the world in terms of women in national parliaments.

11.   Despite such high profile achievements, however, women remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions across the continent. Eliane Hervo-Akendengué, Public Information Officer of the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) cautioned that, *"The election of Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to the Presidency of Liberia, and dedication of President Kagame [of Rwanda] to women's decision-making can give the impression that mentalities have changed on the continent. In fact, a lot remains to be done."*

12.   Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) indicates that, on average, women comprise 17 per cent of parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa as of November 2007, which is about the same as the global average. The figure for Africa is almost six points up, however, in comparison to 2000 when the average was 11.3 per cent.

13.   The use of quotas (particularly at the national level) is expanding in sub-Saharan Africa. Data from International IDEA shows that more than 20 Africa countries have adopted mandatory or voluntary quotas. There are a variety of types of quotas utilized; for example, some African countries have constitutionally mandated quotas (Rwanda, Tanzania), while others have voluntary political party quotas (South Africa, Mozambique).

14.   Women –particularly young women and women from marginalized groups– report that they have difficulty engaging in or influencing the policy process in their countries. Women face a variety of barriers to their participation in politics and decision-making –discriminatory political structures, as well as social, economic, and cultural barriers. These issues were examined thoroughly throughout the six weeks of discussion. Participants addressed different levels of

government (national, local), as well as different types of leadership (elected and appointed, civil servants, etc.).

B. Summary of the discussion

15.   The moderator started the week with a set of questions to solicit participants' views on (i) the status of women's leadership in various countries; (ii) the involvement of women leaders in regional organizations and/or coalitions; (iii) the importance of women's participation in decision-making; (iv) whether it is more important to increase the number of women in top positions or to support people (men or women) in leadership positions who are committed to gender equality policies; and (v) the priorities in participants' countries for increasing women's participation and better representing women's concerns.

(i) The status of women's leadership in various countries

16.   This topic generated a significant number of responses, which allowed for some general comparisons between countries with regard to the status of women's leadership, and an overview of the challenges women face.

17.   The continent of Africa has one female head of state, in Liberia. At the ministerial level, South Africa, Guinea-Bissau, and Rwanda lead the continent. In those countries, women comprise more than 35 per cent of ministerial posts. In the majority of African countries, however, women hold less than 20 per cent of ministerial positions. Among women ministers, the most common portfolios are family, children, youth, elderly, handicapped, social affairs, women's affairs, gender equality, and education.[1]

18.   With regard to national parliaments, Rwanda leads the world with a lower house that is 48.8 per cent female. As stated above, however, data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union indicates that, on average, women still comprise less than 18 per cent of parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa.

19.   Participants from across African submitted statistical information from their countries regarding the status of women's participation in political decision-making. The submissions included data from the parliamentary, ministerial, judicial, and municipal levels and generally supported the international analysis and trends described above. It was difficult to thoroughly analyze the quantitative data submitted by participants, however, as there was inconsistency in terms of levels of government, years cited, and terminology (sub-ministerial level, minister of state, ministry directors).

20.   Qualitative assessments of the level of women's participation ranged from "very nascent" and "quite weak" (Nigeria) to "visible and entrenched" (Liberia).

21.   Most participants focused their comments on women's national-level leadership. However, Enshrah Ahmed, the Gender Advisor for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), highlighted women's participation at the local level in Sierra Leone. Although there are 19 women among 124 parliamentarians and three women out of 21 ministers, women comprise 50 per cent of the local level, "Ward Development Councils" in that country. An explanation for the large number of women at the local level was not given, but it would appear to indicate a positive trend for the "next generation" of women leaders in Sierra Leone.

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[1] Based on the map "Women in politics: 2005", Inter-Parliamentary Union and Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations.

22.   Participants acknowledged that the overall trend toward increased political participation of women in Africa is good. But more needs to be done as, for example Meron Genene from Ethiopia explained, to support elected women and improve their ability to influence policy: *"Generally, I would say efforts are being made to increase women's participation in leadership ...but a lot remains to be done in building the elected women's capacity and increas[ing] the quality of their participation and voice to influence policies and actions in favor of women."* Another participant Annie Matundu-Mbambia from the Democratic Republic of the Congo cautioned that the participation of women in leadership at the national level is not enough; women at all levels must be empowered. National level participation *"must be accompanied by a comprehensive consciousness-raising campaign, and civil and political education that would allow women to know their rights."* Both of these strategies –training elected women at the national level and conducting civil and political education at the grassroots level– are an important complement to efforts to increase the number of women in national government.

(ii) The involvement of women leaders in regional organizations and/or coalitions

23.   Several regional and sub-regional organizations in Africa have made progress in terms of women's participation in decision-making, at least at the level of policy commitments. For example, fifty per cent of the African Union's Commission Leaders are women. In 2007, the African Union held a conference to discuss popularizing and implementing its "Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa," a 2004 statement that committed the African Union to gender parity. Sub-regional institutions, such as the East African Legislative Assembly, have internal regulations that mandate women's participation. There are also women's networks associated with a variety of sub-regions. Women parliamentarians from southern Africa, for example, work together as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Women's Parliamentary Network.

24.   An examination of the effectiveness or impact such regional and subregional organizations and African institutions that have created mechanisms for women's advancement would be worthwhile. Very few participants in this discussion, however, mentioned regional or sub-regional governmental organizations.

25.   Participants' comments were focused on coalitions of non-governmental actors. Networks of women's NGOs, for example, featured heavily in the online discussion. The emphasis on NGOs reflected the composition of registered discussion participants of which forty per cent represented NGOs.

26.   With regard to NGOs, Ndeye Astou Sylla from Senegal mentioned, for example, the *"Network of National Rural Women that was organized in the sub-region and adopted a strategy for rural women's participation in local elections and in decision-making positions."* A participant from the Democratic Republic of the Congo suggested that many women are active in civil society because in that sector *"there is more freedom than in the public institutions."* Yvonne Matuturu from the UNESCO office in Burundi, however, remarked that women's participation in regional organizations *"is rather timid."* Resource constraints were cited as one reason why women weren't more engaged with regional or cross-border activities.

(iii) Why women's participation in decision-making is important

27.   Women's participation in decision-making is not only advantageous for women themselves, but for development and democracy in general. The agreed conclusions on "the equal

participation of women and men in decision-making processes" adopted by the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women assert "that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved, and that women's equal participation is a necessary condition for women's and girls' interests to be taken into account and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning." (paragraph 1)

28.   Advocates of women's participation made a variety of arguments about why women's participation is important. Some participants pointed out that women have specific needs and interests that are better represented by other women. Others posited that women's leadership styles are different and that their consultative and cooperative approaches would change politics for the better. Other participants focused on the fact that the lack of women in elected offices undermines democracy. There was also a conversation about the need for women to participate in decision-making so that they can serve as role models to the next generation of girls and boys. For others, women's participation was a matter of human rights. Each of these arguments is discussed below.

29.   Many participants pointed out that women in leadership positions are more likely to represent the needs and interests of other women. Binta Diakité from Mali said, *"Women's participation in politics is very, very important. Women defend their own interests better than anyone else."* Another participant from Mali, Yaba Tamboura, expanded this argument to include other vulnerable groups: Women *"are better able to take into account the problems of the entire population, particularly [those of] women, children, and the handicapped."* This argument –that women have different policy priorities than men and are more likely to represent women's interests– is borne out by research around the world.[2]

30.   Christine Gisuku Njeru from Kenya provided a specific example of women legislators acting on behalf of other women: *"It was not until a woman (nominated member Hon. Njoki Ndungu) moved the House that a Sexual Offences Law was finally enacted in 2006."* Rwanda provides another example, where a gender-based violence bill was introduced into the parliament in August 2006 only after women were elected to nearly 50 per cent of seats in the lower house.

31.   Some participants pointed out that women have a different approach, a more consultative or cooperative leadership style. Participant John Peter Amara from Sierra Leone alluded to this different approach: *"Nations that exclude women from decision-making or are content with low levels of participation by women are not only unwisely and unnecessarily depriving themselves of a rich reservoir of talent, experience and wisdom, they are also missing out on the qualitatively different approach that women bring to the decision-making process."* There was not consensus on this point, however. Some participants argued that women are not qualitatively different; once they achieve national-level leadership posts, they govern and act as men. Others felt that women politicians too easily forgot their roots and their female constituents. Kavulani Lukalo writing from the UK about Kenya warned, *"unless women politicians are ready and willing to make their presence felt … they become part of an elitist social class."* One argument suggests that women must be represented in numbers large enough to achieve critical mass in order to have an impact on the institutions in which they serve. If women are present in large numbers, they will be able to have an impact and govern differently.

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[2] See for example, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2000). *Politics: Women's Insight*. New York: Liaison Office with the United Nations; Lovenduski, J. and A. Karam (2007). *Women Parliamentarians Making a Difference in Politics*. New York: UNIFEM and Heinrich Boll Foundation.

32.   Other participants put forward the argument that, in order to be democratic, governments had to include women, who are often more than 50 per cent of the population. Grace Nambuusi from Uganda said, *"Democracy at its core is all about representation and resources. When women, who make up the majority of the population, are under-represented in decision-making they do not benefit equally from the county's economy and social pie."* Following this line of argument, any nation that does not take steps to include both men and women in its government cannot be considered fully democratic.

33.   There were also contributions about the need for women to participate in decision-making so that they can serve as role models to the next generation of girls and boys. Jocelynne Scutt's comment from Australia was representative: *"If men alone are seen to be making decisions of public importance, then girls and boys, women and men can be led into believing that women have no legitimate place in such decision-making. This then has a self-fulfilling effect, meaning that girls and women do not see themselves as 'important' decision-makers and neither do men and boys; and men and boys are legitimated in 'keeping women and girls out' of decision-making positions."*

34.   For others, women's participation is a matter of human rights. As Marie Louise Pambu from Democratic Republic of the Congo put it, *"Every citizen has the right to enjoy fundamental rights and fulfill responsibilities ... how I hope that one day women will create a vital space for their leadership, which is in fact a duty of citizens!"* She sites the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security to support her case that women have a right to participate in the leadership of her country.

35.   Participants raised all of these different arguments in the course of the online discussion. The positions are, of course, not mutually exclusive or independent of each other. Advocates for women's participation can use a variety of arguments about why women's participation is important to make their case. Women's exclusion from decision-making processes is simultaneously an injustice, an attack on democracy, and a signal that women's issues will not be prominently featured in the political arena.

(iv) Whether it is more important to increase the number of women in top positions or to support people (men or women) in leadership positions who are committed to gender equality policies

36.   For more than twenty years, the international women's movement has focused on achieving a critical mass –with the target set at 30 per cent– in leadership positions. More recently, however, there has been an emphasis on moving beyond numbers to examine policy outcomes. The publication *Women in Parliaments: Beyond Numbers* (IDEA 1998, revised 2005), for instance, argues that the "quality of representation" is just as important as the numbers.

37.   There was spirited debate about this topic –whether it is still necessary to focus on the numbers of women in elected and appointed office, or whether we are "beyond numbers" at this point. Should women instead focus on supporting leaders, regardless of whether they are male or female, who are committed to gender equality policies? The arguments presented by participants are outlined here.

38.   The majority of participants weighed in on the side of quality. As Joan Oviawe from Nigeria put it, *"Ultimately, I'd rather support men and women in leadership positions who are*

committed to gender equality policies." Beatrice Fri Bime, writing about Cameroon from The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Geneva, Switzerland, concurred, *"My priority is quality. As much as we want quantity, we need results to maintain credibility and sustainability."* Wangari Muange from Kenya was emphatic: *"Numbers is not the issue, what issues are articulated is what matters."*

39.   A minority of participants argued that quantity was more important than quality. Kwachu Justine Ngum from Cameroon, one of those, noted, *"My priority is to increase the number of women in top political positions … if the number of women in top political position is increased, [there will be] increase[d] faith in women political participation … [and passage] of legislation that favors women …"* In her view, by requiring or mandating a minimum level for women's participation, there will be positive policy outcomes for women.

40.   Others who argued for numbers did so but only as a first step. They said that quantity must come first, but only so that women would have an opportunity to demonstrate their quality, or gain experience and eventually be able to deliver in terms of quality. Amy Hanes from the United States said, *"I see it as a process of evolution … [numbers] often unfortunately must come before we see quality."*

41.   Other participants argued that both quality and quantity are necessary at the same time, and that the question itself sets up a false dichotomy. In the words of Jocelynne Scutt from Australia: *"We need to prioritize both. It is vital that the number of women in decision-making positions increase to become equal with the number of men in those positions … At the same time we particularly need to support women who are committed to sex/gender equality policies. Otherwise getting women into positions of power defeats the [purpose]."*

42.   Ultimately, participants prioritized gender-sensitive policies regardless of who authors them, men or women. Few believe, however, that this can happen without a critical mass of women. For example, Colette Florence Mebada from Cameroon argued for both: *"I support both [quantity and quality], that is to say we must increase the number of women in decision-making to have a critical mass of women capable of introducing change."*

43.   From the moderator's point of view, numbers should be the first advocacy goal because women are more likely to have an impact on policies if they have a strong collective voice and sizeable representation, and because seeing women in leadership can change public attitudes about what leadership should "look like". Only once they are present in large numbers will women have the ability to affect lasting change.

(v) The priorities for countries to increase women's participation and better represent women's concerns

44.   Despite the debate outlined above and participants' desire to focus on the *quality* of representation, the most commonly cited priority in this discussion was increasing the *number* of women in elected and appointed office. Specifically, the top priority was the introduction of quotas for women's representation or, in countries that already have quotas, the implementation of those quotas.

45.   Other commonly cited priorities included: Finding strategies for working with men on gender equality issues; developing gender action plans (national strategies); educating girl children as the next generation; challenging traditional attitudes and beliefs that limit women's

advancement; empowering women at the local level; and reviewing policies to ensure gender-sensitivity. These were addressed over the course of the six weeks and feature below.

III. Theme two: Women's participation in politics: national policies and mechanisms

A. Background

46.   At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, governments emphasized that "women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." The Platform for Action defined two strategic objectives: (a) ensure women's equal access to and full participation in all power structures and decision- making; and (b) increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

47.   According to the E-Network of National Gender Equality Machineries, all countries in Africa have established national mechanisms for the advancement of women. These machineries vary, however, in composition, size, mandate, and, therefore in effectiveness.

48.   A review of various national policies and mechanisms designed to increase women's participation in politics is important for peer learning, knowledge management, and the collection of good practices.

B. Summary of the discussion

49.   The moderator started the second week with a set of questions soliciting participants' views on national policies and mechanisms that can be used to increase women's participation in politics. Specifically, participants examined the role of (i) electoral systems, (ii) quotas, (iii) political parties, (iv) attempts to mobilize women voters, and (v) national gender equality policies, strategies and programmes to strengthen women's political participation.

50.   Despite existing international frameworks and national mechanisms for the promotion of women's participation in decision-making, participants expressed concern that efforts were haphazard or ad hoc. Participants strongly recommended that policies should have built-in accountability measures.

(i) Electoral systems

51.   Research demonstrates that certain electoral systems are more conducive to women's entry into parliaments than others and that the most conducive electoral system for women's portfolio is a "List Proportional Representation (PR)" system. In a List PR system, each electoral district has more than one member, each party presents a list of candidates for multi-member districts, and

there is proportional representation (as opposed to "winner-take-all"). Other types of systems include the constituency-based system, "First-Past-the-Post," and mixed systems.[3]

52.   A variety of electoral systems are employed across Africa. South Africa, for instance, has a PR system, while Tanzania has a constituency-based system. Seychelles is an example of an African country that has a mixed PR and constituency-based system.

53.   The common theme in all contributions on this topic was the need for women to remain vigilant and understand the ways in which systems can be discriminatory. Theodore Mbainaissem from Chad, for example, explained that proportional representation is not in itself beneficial to women. Women must be at the top of the lists in order to succeed: *"The electoral system adopted by the Chad for the last election is the proportional representation system. A list of the candidates by electoral district is presented to the local population to vote. Every list has a person at the top or head of the list. To be elected, a woman needs to be at the top of the list. An example: in a district with three seats, if the political party presents five candidates, and if by chance two are elected, the other three are substitutes. The substitutes do not progress to the national assembly unless the first two are unfit. This system is favorable for the women only if they are at the head of the lists (in the top two)."*

54.   Participants commented on the need for training of women and the electorate in general to better understand the electoral system in their respective countries. It is important to note that these proposed trainings are often time-sensitive. In many post-conflict countries in Africa there is a window of opportunity for women to advocate for gender equality issues during the drafting of a new, post-conflict constitution. This is an important moment for women activists to propose the design of electoral systems that are favorable to women. Once an electoral system is enshrined in a constitution (or election law), it is much more difficult for women to influence or change it.

(ii) Quotas

55.   Quotas are widely seen as the single most effective policy tool for increasing women's political participation. The use of quotas (particularly at the national level) is expanding in sub-Saharan Africa. Data from International IDEA shows that more than 20 Africa countries have adopted mandatory or voluntary quotas.[4]

56.   As discussed above, research has demonstrated that unless an underrepresented group is represented in numbers large enough to reach "critical mass," its ability to influence policy change is limited. Thirty per cent, a proportion based on social science research about critical mass, is a commonly cited target for women's participation in decision-making. The majority of countries that enact quotas set them at levels between 20 and 30 per cent in order to achieve critical mass. Liberia, for example, adopted registration guidelines for political party and independent candidates in 2005 which established a 30 per cent quota for women on electoral lists.

57.   There are a variety of types of quotas –those mandated by a constitution, those mandated by legislation, and those that are voluntary on the part of political parties. Participants shared the status of quotas in their countries. The examples provided ranged from no quotas (Zambia), to

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[3] For a comprehensive comparison and analysis of electoral systems, see Larserud, S. and R. Taphorn (20087). *Designing for Equality: Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas.* Stockholm, Sweden: International IDEA.

4 For an overview of quotas in Africa, see Ballington, J. (ed) (2004. *The Implementation of Quotas: The African Experience*. Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance – IDEA.

voluntary quotas (South Africa), to quotas that are legislated but not enforced (Democratic Republic of the Congo), to constitutional mandates that have been implemented (Rwanda).

58.   The moderator encouraged discussion on the following questions: What has been the impact of quotas at different levels? Do quotas provide opportunities or unintentionally set limits on women's representation? Is the commonly cited target of 30 per cent an appropriate level? What other measures have been used to increase women's political participation? How can their effectiveness be assessed? Not all of these questions were sufficiently addressed in the course of the discussion.

59.   For those countries with quotas, the biggest challenge identified by participants is implementation. The existence of quotas is not enough; quotas can be ineffectual, interpreted in unfavorable ways, and ignored altogether. Cathy Solonyo from the Democratic Republic of the Congo wrote, "*Although the principle of parity and women's representation was enshrined in the constitution and written into the election law, the will of political parties still prevails because there are no sanctions for not adhering to the law if they do not list a sufficient number of women on the electoral lists*." Uju Obiora from Nigeria said, "*The quota system is so commonly referred to in Nigeria. The last administration which ended last May promised to be committed to 30 per cent but did not achieve close to half of it. With the present administration it is not yet clear if there will be much commitment to a quota system as appointments made so far had even fewer women.*"

60.   Others echoed these concerns. Elizabeth Awate from Sudan asserted, "*Despite the fact that the Southern Sudan constitution granted women with 25 per cent representation as an affirmative action to redress imbalances little is being done to achieve that at all levels.*" And Theodore Mbainaissem from Chad added, "*It is true that the quota system is often used in Chad but in my opinion, the system is not effective because the proposed quota is not respected.*"

61.   Few alternatives to quota other than the enforcement of existing laws, were offered to increase women's participation in elected office. Some participants, however, called for the training of women candidates, which was further examined as a topic in Week Three. And several participants suggested that women needed to lobby political parties to adopt gender-sensitive policies and regulations. This strategy is discussed in the next section.

(iii) Political Parties

62.   Before women can campaign for elected office and in order to have a wider range of options; they must often first campaign for recognition within their own political parties, except in the rare situations where there are separate women's parties, or as in Rwanda where there are separate women's ballots.

63.   The discussion generated many responses about the constraints faced by women within political parties. The constraints include the under-representation of women in the leadership of political parties, the lack of internal guidelines or gender equality policies within parties, discrimination in candidate selection, and unfavorable placement of women candidates on parties' candidate lists. Financing for women's campaigns was also raised by participants as a major challenge.

64.   Participants explained how women face difficulty in influencing the leadership and policies of their own political parties. Marie-Claire Faray of the Democratic Republic of the Congo provided this illustrative example, "*The system of nomination in the parties is dominated*

by male chauvinism. The access to training and funds is discriminatory towards women. [Women] are portrayed as wife, mistress, girlfriend or mother; [thus] illustrating how strongly the role of women is affected by the existing retrograde patriarchal mentality. For example, during the general assembly as well as the congresses of the political parties women are often relegated to protocol status (catering and cleaning duties, decoration and organization of the room, etc.). Regardless of their political knowledge or competence, few women are involved in thematic preparation, coordination, initiation or development of policies or action plans/ projects."

65.   The challenges that women face are a combination of both direct discrimination and structural barriers, such as the hours that meetings are held, which can conflict with women's other responsibilities toward their families. As Uju Obiora from Nigeria explained, *"Women have not been able to influence the platforms of political parties. [The] party nomination system in Nigeria is yet to become objective. Women are yet to be recognized and appreciated even at party levels. This is evidenced in the discrimination meted against them within political parties. Women are excluded by [the] fixing [of] caucus meetings at ungodly hours and through traditional and cultural norms."*

66.   Several participants submitted examples of strategies that have been employed in their countries to overcome these barriers. Most of these examples had to do with provisions for enforcing equitable behavior on the part of political parties. Peace Uwineza of Rwanda explained that in her country, *"the law that guides the formation of political parties also sets a condition for the representation of women in the leadership of the party before a party is registered."* Bernadette Kayirangwa, a participant from Rwanda, provided an example from Mali, where the number of women elected is used as criteria for determining funding levels for financing political parties.

67.   Rebecca Boghuma from Cameroon offered a strategy aimed at demonstrating the power of the female electorate by lobbying parties to establish "women's wings." She suggested, *"One important strategy is to sensitize, and educate political leaders on the numerical strength and reliability of women if they are brought to the center of politics and empowered. [Women] should be allowed to organize and manage their own wings within a political formation."*

(iv) Mobilizing Women Voters

68.   Though several participants mentioned programmes that encourage women to become candidates, or leadership training programmes for women candidates, most participants indicated that there are not enough efforts to mobilize women voters, or provide civic education programmes for women at the grassroots level.

69.   Many participants raised concerns about the lack of ongoing civic education programmes, or even voter education in advance of elections. Marie-Claire Faray from the Democratic Republic of the Congo described the lack of such education in her country: *"During the 2006 electoral process, it was regrettable to observe that civic education for women voters was terribly neglected."* Bernadette Kayirangwa from Rwanda said that in her country there have been *"no special measures targeted at voters",* but that the Ministry for Gender Equality supported information and awareness campaigns to mobilize women candidates.

70.   In other places, women's NGOs conduct outreach to voters. Uju Obiora from Nigeria explained, *"The only efforts at mobilizing women voters in Nigeria are done by women focused or gender- sensitive NGOs."*

71.   Throughout the six weeks of discussion, participants repeatedly commented that women do not recognize their own power as voters. Civic education is needed to inform the population of their rights and responsibilities, what they can expect from elected officials, and how constituents can hold candidates accountable. Peace Uwineza of Rwanda remarked, *"Until women understand their role and impact as an electorate, change may remain distant."*

72.   Even more problematic, according to participants in this discussion is the ways in which women voters sometimes undermine women candidates and officials, or vote against their own interests. Women voters are not immune from the cultural and traditional attitudes that hold other women back. Rutendo Dendamera Mazhambe in Zimbabwe noted: *"Despite the fact that Zimbabwean women make up the majority of voters, they still look down upon each other and still continue to vote for men."* Agnes Oloye in Nigeria added, *"And even the women are not helping matters. Since statistics show that women are [the majority] in the country, if the women can come together as a body and vote for women … and [with] the little support that they can get from men as a sister, a mother, a wife, then women would be seen in elected positions."*

(v) National Gender Equality Policies, Strategies, and Programmes

73.   A variety of national gender equality policies and programmes were mentioned in this discussion, such as gender equality programmes in all ministries (Mary Kimathi, Kenya), a national gender mainstreaming bill (Uju Obiora, Nigeria), and gender responsive budgeting (Betty Aol Ocan, Uganda).

74.   The critique of national policies that most participants provided was very similar to the critique of quotas –the problem lies with implementation. Ligaya Castor, a participant from the Philippines provided this example. *"Our law mandates all government agency to allocate or set aside 5 per cent of its total budget for gender and development. However, there is no set rule how or for what kind of gender and development projects this amount should be spent. There should be a clear mandate."*

75.   Similarly, participants raised concern about policies that are enacted without mechanisms for monitoring. Marie-Claire Faray from the Democratic Republic of the Congo pointed out, *"The Democratic Republic of the Congo adopted the "Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa" in Addis Ababa in 2004 … [And] Article 14 of the DRC constitution states that women have the right to equitable representation within the national, provincial and local institutions. However, equality policies are only perceived as an orientation/principle; as there are no national action plans of application with inciting and coercive measures to enforce as well as to monitor the adherence."* Tamala Tonga Kambikambi, writing from Zambia, described the same problem. *"Zambia has a National Gender Policy in place but there is as yet no proper implementation strategy, [which makes] monitoring its tenets a big challenge."*

76.   Participants expressed great disappointment with the lack of implementation of international law and domestic policies that should guarantee women's participation. Women have not yet succeeded in consistently holding governments accountable on this issue.

IV. Theme three: Women's participation in politics: social and cultural pressures

A. Background

77.   Discrimination, economic dependency, gender-based violence, and other abuses prevent women from enjoying their rights and entering politics. The 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2006) adopted agreed conclusions on the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes which "expressed concern at the serious and persistent obstacles, which were many and varied in nature, that still hindered the advancement of women and further affected their participation in decision-making processes, including, inter alia, the persistent feminization of poverty, the lack of equal access to health, education, training and employment, armed conflict, the lack of security and natural disasters." (paragraph 11)

78.   African women face social and cultural barriers to their participation in public life, in the form of economic and legal limitations, traditional gender roles, family responsibilities and demands on their time, cultural and religious taboos, and lack of education and access to resources.

79.   Jacqueline Oubida from Burkina Faso expressed it this way: *"the social and economic conditions of women impact their participation in decision-making positions. The deeply rooted socio-cultural practices and beliefs, illiteracy, and the division of labor prevent women from active participation in community life … The full realization of women's human rights [is a] pre-requisite for women's [participation in] decision-making."*

80.   Writing from Mali, Djingarey Maiga said, *"Although almost all countries in Africa have constitutional provisions which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, legal discrimination remains -especially, but not only, in personal laws and laws deriving from patriarchal interpretations of custom, culture and religion."*

B. Summary of the discussion

81.   The moderator started the week with a set of questions to participants, requesting their views on the social and cultural pressures on women, as well as on measures how to create an environment that encourages women's political participation. Specifically, participants were asked to address the role of (i) culture, (ii) media, (iii) training efforts, and (iv) support for women once they are elected into office.

(i) Culture

82.   Contributions to the discussion indicated, overwhelmingly, that patriarchy is pervasive and dominates all aspects of society. Selamawit Abebe from Ethiopia said most succinctly what most participants, across the continent, expressed: *"Women are considered subordinate to men and second class members/citizens both in the family and in the society."*

83.   There was a robust discussion about the barriers to women's entry into politics; illiteracy and economic dependency were the most commonly cited challenges. Closely related to those two issues are the responsibility that women have for their households and the cultural expectations that inhibit their experience outside the private sphere. They lack the time to participate in politics.

As Meima Sirleaf-Karneh from Liberia put it, *"The burden of caring for the family makes it impossible for women to stand out in public life even though [they are] qualified and capable."* Charles Vandi from Sierra Leone explained, *"Women are highly constrained in active participation in politics and other decision-making positions in Sierra Leone ... Time is a major constraint which makes it almost impossible for them ... This is [exacerbated] by the excessive domestic chores performed by women in the household ... The patriarchal factor is another big setback for women. Sierra Leone remains a male-dominated society and politics has been regarded as male domain issue."*

84.   Many participants provided specific examples of traditional attitudes that prevent women's engagement in politics and decision-making. In many cultures, women who take on active roles in public life are suspect. Ncube Nomagugu Gwaba from Zimbabwe explained, *"In our so-called culture a woman's place is in the kitchen. A woman has to support the husband all the time. Once a woman starts to be an effective leader she will be labeled a prostitute."* The same label applies in Nigeria, according to Priscilla M Achakpa: *"Even the few [women] that are educated find it difficult to join politics due to the fact that most men will not allow their wives to join politics. Women in politics are considered to be free or loose."*

85.   Justine Uvuza from Rwanda explained how such attitudes hold women back: *"Women are still facing a lot of challenges related to social and cultural pressures. The perceived traditional roles of men and women have not changed in relation to daily practice. The working environment for women is still unfriendly at both working and societal levels due to gender stereotypes and patriarchal structures. Women leaders and professionals are still faced with traditional roles and also have to meet work/professional expectations. Neither their husbands nor their male relatives have succumbed to the changes ushered in by the era of gender equality promotion. For women to be able to perform on an equal footing with men, they have to walk extra miles."*

86.   Participants were careful to point out that traditional practices and attitudes are more common in rural and isolated areas. Urban, educated women are however not immune from these pressures. Mariam Toure Keita from Mali explains that even elite women face these challenges. *"The weight of the tradition, the Malian culture, and the religion are cultural barriers ... Certain husbands refuse to eat meals other than the ones prepared by their wives. Even certain women [government] ministers and directors submit to this dictate of culture and society. Tradition has for a long time hindered the participation of the women ... Even to register the children for school, the priority was first given to the boy because the destiny of the girl was sealed. The traditional social barriers are the most tenacious ones and require more work and behavior change is difficult and slow to come."*

87.   Cultural barriers are among the most difficult to remove, as they are often subtly enforced by both men and women. They are seen as immutable. Despite these challenges, participants recalled that culture changed over time and that the oppression of women was not a permanent condition. As Ncube Nomagugu Gwaba from Zimbabwe summarized, *"Unless people start to realize that culture is dynamic, women will always be the voters not the [elected candidates]."*

88.   A few specific strategies aimed at changing the culture were suggested. The most common suggestion was training programmes aimed at changing attitudes and creating an "enabling environment" for women's empowerment. For example, Selamawit Abebe from Ethiopia suggested working with schools and youth: *"Train cadres of women/girls starting from high schools to advocate for popular participation of women in politics and influence the school*

curricula in this line." Rokhaya Paquita from the Central African Republic called on development partners and funders to *"support actions that reinforce the capacity of women to improve their position in decision-making, particularly women's participation in politics."*

89.   Djingarey Maiga of Mali noted, that, to overcome cultural and religious barriers, it would be necessary to *"re-write and reconstruct views about women, men, and gender roles."* To do this, she proposed several strategies, such as *"advocacy with religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local opinion leaders … so as to sensitize them to the need for and utility of women's public political participation."* She also suggested using positive examples from history and religious traditions to *"build on, develop, and mobilize the alternative interpretations in all faiths which valorize women and recognize women's rights."*

(ii) Media

90.   Participants agreed that the media can be a very important force in shaping cultural attitudes. Marie-Claire Faray from the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted, however, that in the *"media and music industries"* more time is spent on *"female stereotyping (beauty image and submissive roles)"* than on serious topics like women's political participation. TV and radio "soap operas" and music videos of women dancing were cited as more popular than programmes featuring women politicians.

91.   Other participants shared successful experiences. In Rwanda, for example women parliamentarians used a radio campaign to encourage people to vote for women candidates in the local elections of 2006. Angelina Mtowa, a participant from Tanzania described several efforts to use the media to promote women's political participation: *"In Tanzania, there are many media supports for women's political participation. We have the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA), the Media Institute of Southern Africa, and other radio and television [programmes] that promote the participation of women in politics. TAMWA is offering training of members so that they can improve their professional excellency, empowering women with different skills so that they can analyze gender, economic, political, social and cultural issues for the purposes of effecting positive change in the country … It also publishes its own registered magazine (Sauti ya Siti) which comes out four times a year. It has also published several leaflets, pamphlets, posters and booklets on the same agenda – gender violence and human rights …"*

92.   Participants suggested that women's organizations should lobby for better representation of women in the media –as journalists, on editorial boards, and in programming. Gender-sensitive programming that includes positive images of women's political participation should be developed. A strategy proposed by Djingarey Maiga of Mali was to *"identify, document, and make information on [female] role models accessible through the mass media."*

(iii) Training

93.   The discussion evidenced overwhelming support for education –literacy programmes, girls' education, and civic education– as part of a long-term strategy to increase women's participation in politics.

94.   The fact that training programmes often only targeted elite women was raised in the discussion. Marie-Claire Faray of the Democratic Republic of the Congo said, *"Many trainings have been and are offered to Congolese women politicians, particularly with the international community currently assisting the development of democracy in the Democratic Republic of the*

Congo. Some female politicians are really excellent. However, it seems the trainings are often mainly offered to leaders or candidates. The questions I am asking are the following: Are these trainings applied? How applicable are they? Can they be reproduced or are they reproduced at the grassroots level?

95.   There was a strong preference among participants for long-term programmes, as opposed to ad hoc training, and for programmes that reach out beyond capital cities and include strategies for reaching under-served populations. Angelina Mtowa from Tanzania provided an example of a multifaceted programme conducted in her country that reached women candidates and voters in an attempt to increase not only the number of women elected, but also to draw attention to gender issues in the campaign. She explained: *"activities planned by NGOs included providing support for women candidates of all parties, promoting gender-sensitive electoral laws and regulations, and lobbying political parties to adopt more gender-sensitive platforms and support women contestants for constituency seats."* A conference organized for 400 male and female participants from rural and urban areas. *"Participants shared skills, strategies and ideas pertaining to gender and elections, including the inclusion of gender issues in campaigns, ways to support women candidates, and long term processes of promoting women's involvement in decision-making."* This programme also included the creation of *"a database of women political aspirants ... for the purpose of continuing capacity building and monitoring achievements."*

96.   The consensus among participants was that those organizations that design and fund training programmes must make an effort to reach the grassroots level, including by using a training-of-trainers approach to ensure that women in rural areas are reached. There was also general agreement that long-term training programmes, as well as the involvement of both men and women were needed to create a positive climate for change.

(iv) Support for Elected Women

97.   The online discussion on this topic highlighted the concern that participants have for women in elected and appointed office. Often isolated, and facing enormous social pressure, this "pioneer generation" of women leaders faces extremely high expectations for their performance by both women and men. Justine Uvuza from Rwanda described the situation: *"The Rwandan women leaders are expected by society to be perfect. Any mistake or failure in performance by one female leader is attributed to all women. These expectations are not only by the male community, but also by the female community."*

98.   Women who join political parties, even those with a background in civil society and those with a significant female constituency, can become isolated because of the pressures of the job. Marie-Claire Faray of the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained, *"By joining well established or big political parties/coalition, women leaders of the civil society became trapped, distracted and dispersed; not able to continue adequately to support women at the grassroots level, to campaign for women's rights and better participation; without facing being labeled as troublemakers; many in the past were arrested, facing long term imprisonment."*

99.   Djingarey Maiga from Mali identified a lack of *"political networks, mentors, and role models"* as a challenge that women face. Women often do not have access to the *"informal cultural activities"* that allow men to network extensively, such as going to *"bars and drinking together."* To combat this problem, she recommends *"identifying existing networks and making that information known [to women], developing both individual and organizational mentoring*

relationships, identifying role models and possible mentors ... [and] encouraging support for newer women entering politic[s]." An analysis of women's networks is discussed in detail in Theme Five below.

V. Theme four: Women's participation in other decision-making processes - education, private sector, civil society, and media

A. Background

100.   Although this discussion focused primarily on women's participation in political decision-making, the fourth week presented an opportunity to consider other sectors. Women's inclusion or exclusion from the political sector cannot be seen independently from women's role in other areas such as education, the private sector, civil society and the media. The participation of women in decision-making processes in different sectors strengthens the status of women in a society and creates better synergies among different actors working on gender equality issues.

B. Summary of the discussion

101.   The moderator started the discussion in the fourth week by asking participants to consider women's participation in decision-making positions *outside* of the formal political sector. In particular, the following sectors were considered: (i) education, (ii) private sector, (iii) civil society, and (iv) media. Participants were asked to consider what women's experience in decision-making had been in each of the sectors, how easy or difficult it was for women to achieve senior positions, what obstacles women faced, and what the impact of women's leadership was in these areas.

102.   Participants who contributed to the discussion observed that it was important to recognize women's leadership outside the formal political sector, both because women have sometimes had more success in other sectors, and also because their influence in these sectors can be used to influence the political process.

103.   Participants reported many challenges, but also found that women had been most successful in leading civil society organizations. Participants saw positive trends in terms of women's participation in decision-making in education and the private sector, but not with regard to the media.

(i) Education

104.   According to the World Bank,[5] the education of girls contributes to decline mortality rates and fertility rates, and improves the health and education prospects of the next generation. The UN Millennium Development Goals include commitments to universal primary education and to gender equality. Africa has made some progress toward achieving this goal. Enrollment figures are improving, and the gap/ratio between girls' and boys' enrollment is narrowing. In sub-Saharan Africa in 2005, the World Bank found that 83.6 girls for every 100 boys were enrolled in primary school. Primary school enrollment figures do not tell the whole story, however. The gap in higher

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[5] Mason, A. and E.M. King (2001). *Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice,* Washington: The World Bank.

levels is more dramatic. For many women, the lack of leadership capacity is due to discrimination in access to education and training.

105.   Participants discussed the importance of girls' education to social and economic development, as well as political participation. There were many positive reports about increasing enrollment of girls in primary schools. Anecdotally, these support the statistical information available. For example, Raveloarisoa Noro Lalao from Madagascar reports, *"The participation of the woman in education is on the right track. The Ministry has plans for girls who lack schooling and has planned education sessions on family life for the population, particularly women."*

106.   In general, however, respondents reported that at the higher levels of education (secondary and tertiary), the participation of women lags behind. In the teaching profession, women are represented as primary school teachers, but not as head of universities and very few as professors. Baudouin Schombe from the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributed this observation: *"In the primary and secondary schools, the women rival the men. But in the training colleges, women do not express themselves a lot. I have not seen female rectors of universities."* According to participants, several governments in Africa (including Benin, Rwanda, South Africa) have women Ministers of Education.

107.   Given the long-term nature of social change and the relatively weak status of women in many African countries, participants called for continued efforts to sensitize women and men, provide literacy training, and promote the education of girls. Change will not come only through policies or laws, but will require a transformation in attitudes. As Grace Nambuusi from Uganda explained, *"The whole value system prevalent in politics has to be changed, which currently exists within the male dominated system ... The belief that women are weak, sexual objects must be changed. These types of beliefs are deeply rooted in our society. The main task is to change the traditional beliefs of people through positive promotion of the values of women, [including] through sensitization of the women, especially in the rural areas."* According to participants, several governments in Africa (including Benin, Rwanda, South Africa) have women Ministers of Education.

108.   Education is of paramount importance if the goal is long-term social change. Bruno Mupinganayi from the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained it this way, *"To reduce the problem, we must have a strong campaign of information and training. The education of African women in general, and Congolese women in particular, is necessary for the management of politics so that they know that taking part in decision-making positions is a right and a duty for them.... This necessitates the education of women and especially girls to prepare them for this noble task."*

109.   Justine Uvuza from Rwanda explained that even students' choices of subjects can reflect social attitudes and traditional biases: *"Despite the government's efforts to achieve gender equality in education, there is continued domination of male students in science and technological courses while women are found in education and health care related courses. This [demonstrates] the influence of the perceived traditional roles of men and women. There is need to ensure that both male and female students enroll in courses that match their interests and capabilities, so that they are able to apply their knowledge in their future careers and at the same time, to be competitive with their counterparts from the opposite sex."* The difference in subjects for boys and girls reflects historical biases. If girls are only prepared to pursue traditional roles careers, they will continue to have problems accessing leadership and decision-making positions.

110.   Nirmala Nababsing from Mauritius made the connection between the education system and women's political leadership: *"The participation of women in politics depends on the type of education that we provide to them and the role that they are required to play at home. The education system should encourage girls to develop self-confidence and become more assertive, to develop their analytical skills and their ability to [voice] their opinions."*

(ii) Private Sector / Entrepreneurs

111.   Anecdotal evidence from the online discussion participants indicates that African women are primarily employed in the informal sector of the economy. They are not leading major private sector institutions or businesses in large numbers.

112.   Women entrepreneurs often do not have access to market information and analysis, to training opportunities, to suppliers and products to the same extent as men. Women also face the dual burden of household and work responsibilities, and they must often overcome traditional and cultural expectations about gender roles in order to engage in the private sector. Women face more difficulties accessing loans and other resources.

113.   Participants pointed out the challenges faced by women in their countries. Milsania de Sousa Tavares from Cape Verde explained the barriers that prevent women from entering the formal economy. *"Women's unemployment is caused by the low levels of literacy and other cultural and social factors such as the tradition of women's care responsibilities in the home. Reproductive and care work is still not included in economic accounts despite its obvious contribution to the development of the country."* Furthermore, she made the link between women's economic status and their lack of participation in political leadership: *"In Cape Verde, domestic work continues to be considered a female role and a sign of subordination. Women and girls face many home responsibilities that limit their time to [undertake] other kinds of productive work or study. These factors, in addition to the low level of women's participation in decision-making processes, constrain women's opportunities to access power."*

114.   Nirmala Nababsing from Mauritius identified some positive developments, but also highlighted many barriers: *"The participation of women in economic activity has been growing as women have acceded to new posts at senior and middle levels in the Government and to a lesser extent in the private sector. But it is believed that there are still certain disparities in the labor market. The statistics indicate that unemployment rate is higher among women – 59 per cent as compared to 41 per cent for men. The length of time it takes for a woman to secure employment is two times as long as it takes for a man to get a job. The majority of women are employed in low skilled jobs of repetitive nature ... there are persistent forms of bias against women in hiring practices."*

115.   Justine Uvuza from Rwanda painted this picture of a slowly improving economic situation for women: *"Despite positive trends [in the political arena] ... there is still a gender imbalance in the top echelons of the private sector and in the labor market generally ... Though women working in the paid labor force in Rwanda are primarily concentrated in the agriculture and the informal sectors, the female employment rate in Rwanda is slowly improving with the growing recognition of the central role women play in economic and social development. Women are ... moving at a slow rate to small business opportunities and paid work in Kigali [the capital] ... However, there is still a lot to do because disparities persist in career development, employment status, how much*

women get paid compared to men. [Women are also] severely constrained by the limited change in the gendered division of labor in the household."

116. Overall, participants noted positive trends in women's economic empowerment and engagement in the private sector. Baudouin Schobe in the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted, *"Women are much more active in the informal economy. The banking system still does not give opportunities to all entrepreneurs [equally]. Women are the most affected [by this discrimination.] Nevertheless, the association of business women is getting more and more organized at the national level to address the challenges faced by women in business."* Grace Nambuusi from Uganda also noted more engagement by women: *"There are an increasing number of women in the private sector in Uganda. Women have invested in small enterprises such as small shops in town selling clothes, shoes, saloons, micro-finance and so on. Women in urban and rural areas are provided with small loans on request to start up small-scale businesses so that they can a living or even pay school fees for their children and buy food at home."*

(iii) Civil Society

117. Women's leadership in civil society is well documented.[6] In some instances, women turn to civil society –and in particular non-governmental organizations– because they face such constraints when entering formal politics. In other cases, women choose to enter civil society because they feel they can have a bigger impact, or they feel that the sector is less corrupt.

118. Baudouin Schombe from the Democratic Republic of the Congo emphasized that *"[civil society] is the area of society where women are the most active. Notably in the effort to combat gender-based violence, the management of post-conflict, human rights violations, reproductive health, the environment, health, and education …these women's organizations are acknowledged by the official institutions and consulted in most of the negotiations on national, regional, and international planning."*

119. That women's civil society groups are consulted during the policy planning process is crucial. Grace Nambuusi from Uganda concurred with this assessment: *"Women through civil society are able to influence the political process since they have been collaborating with the people at the grass roots [level]."* According to participants in this discussion, many civil society activists are able to gain political leverage because of the grassroots constituencies that they represent.

120. The discussion did not generate statistics about how many women are in *senior* leadership positions within civil society, or whether they are active in organizations other than women's organizations (for example, NGOs that work on land rights or health issues).

121. The evidence presented in the discussion would suggest that civil society is more open to women's leadership than many sectors. However, it must be noted that civil society work is often volunteer-based, or under-paid, or non-official. This means that women in this sector remain outside power structures. The lack of funding and under- or un-paid work in the civil society sector also perpetuates the notion that women's work is less valuable, as well as women's economically disadvantaged status.

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[6] Anderlini, S.N. and J. El-Bushra (2004). "Civil Society". In *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action.* UK: International Alert and Women Waging Peace - Hunt Alternatives Fund.

122.   Of the four sectors (education, civil society, private sector, and media) discussed during this week, participants were most positive about women's participation in decision-making in civil society. According to many, women are in the majority in this sector and can influence politics from their positions in civil society. *As example, Justine Uvuza from Rwanda pointed out that in Rwanda individual women or women in associations have tried to work closely with women in politics whether individually or through forums and vise versa. Just like other post conflict countries, the aftermath of the 1994 genocide ushered in an era of civil society organizations dominated by women's associations and associations promoting women's rights. This was followed by a strong campaign of women's participation in all areas of life but more so the political field. Women at all levels have worked together to highlight women's needs for change, and development. For example, to augment the number of women in decision-making; (legislature and local government especially), women in associations through an umbrella of women NGOs (Pro-Femmes), the National women Council, the Forum for Rwanda Women Parliamentarians, and Women in the Executive represented by the Ministry of Gender, formed an alliance to mobilize, train and campaign for an increase in the number of women at all levels of decision-making. Though Rwandan women are blessed with a political will, they realized that there is need by women themselves to articulate, highlight, and lobby for their needs and rights. Most of the gender responsive laws in Rwanda have been introduced by women in political forums and developed in close collaboration with women in civil society.*

(iv) Media

123.   Most media companies throughout the world are owned and managed by men. Men control access to information, editorial boards, decisions about what "makes" news, and journalism assignments, including decisions about how resources will be spent and what stories will be investigated.

124.   Research has shown that the images of women in the media –even women leaders– are often stereotypical and undermine their job performance. At a conference in South Africa in November 2007, for instance, African women politicians encouraged journalists not to portray women as "predominantly mothers, grandmothers, and wives," ignoring their professional lives.[7]

125.   Women politicians and activists have also exhorted journalists "*to question why government was not implementing protocols they had signed which committed them to increasing the number of women in decision-making structures … Many governments presented rosy pictures of progress they had made in regard to these protocols, yet nothing was happening at grass roots level. 'They are safe (in doing so) because the media is not playing their rightful watchdog role,"* noted Jan Moolman of Women'sNet, a South African non-profit organization.

126.   Research from Africa indicates that women's participation in the media sector is limited. For example, a 2003 study of women and the media in twelve southern African countries

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[7] See Kwamboka Oyaro (2007). *Money, Media, and Tradition Complicate Women's Political Aspirations. The challenges confronting women politicians in Africa were given an airing recently during a press conference in South Africa's commercial hub, Johannesburg.* Johannesburg, South Africa: Inter Press Service News Agency. Available online from: http://www.ipsnews.net.

conducted by the Media Institute of Southern Africa and Gender Links found that women constitute only seventeen per cent of sources in political stories.[8]

127.   Participants' contributions indicated that women's participation in decision-making the media is limited, but a few positive examples were provided: two women are directors in RTNC/Radio Television National Congolese (Marcel J. Kamba, Democratic Republic of the Congo); a radio station in Uganda promotes women's programming, Radio Mama FM (Grace Nambuusi, Uganda); and in Cape Verde, *"despite the prevalence of men in decision-making decisions, women have gained more employment opportunities in the media. Advances have also been made in terms of eliminating sexist and stereotyped advertising." (Milsania de Sousa Tavares, Cape Verde)*

128.   The majority of participants indicated, however, that women's participation was extremely limited in their countries. Theodore Mbainaissem of Chad said that *"Women are the least represented in the media sector. In the national media there are fewer than a dozen women journalists. One was nominated for chief of the national radio. Television has some women presenters. The private press has the same problem. There is only one woman owner of a private newspaper. There are certain women trained in media in school but they do not succeed in the press."* Grace Nambuusi from Uganda echoed this concern. With the exception of Mama FM, a women's radio station, *"women are not so much in leadership positions [in the media]."*

129.   Participants were less optimistic about women's participation in the media than in the other sectors examined. Because of the reach and influence of media, this poses a significant challenge to women's empowerment and their role in decision-making positions.

VI. Theme five: Building alliances with women in decision-making positions

A. Background

130.   Women face enormous barriers to their entry into politics. Once elected or appointed, they may face additional barriers to their performance, including discrimination, stereotyping, the double burden of family and public life, and being a "token" woman in office.

131.   In order to be effective in this environment, women must develop strong constituencies that demonstrate their legitimacy, and network with allies (women and men) to strengthen their positions and protect their interests. Although the traditional social networks of male elites often exclude women, denying them access to power and information, in many countries women have become adept at forging alliances to promote their political agendas. Some examples were explored in the online discussion.

B. Summary of the discussion

132.   The moderator began the discussion by asking participants to reflect on the various types of alliances that exist among women in decision-making processes. The online discussion presented many opportunities to discuss the barriers to women's participation. This theme allowed

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[8] Mufune, J. (2003). *Gender and media baseline study: monitoring the media in Southern Africa*. Windhoek: Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Media Women's Associations from the Southern African Development Corporation (SADC).

participants to reflect on how women are performing, the networks that support them, and ways to evaluate the effectiveness of networks and alliances.

133. This discussion allowed participants to further develop ideas that had been emerging over the course of the discussion. As the discussion evolved, three types of links or alliances emerged clearly: (i) links among elected women, (ii) links between women in government and women in civil society, and (iii) links between elected officials and voters. A discussion of each of these follows.

(i) Links among elected women

134. One effective strategy for women in parliaments is the development of legislative caucuses on women's and gender equality issues. Elected women can come together, regardless of their political party affiliation, to work on issues of common concern to women. Women's caucuses can also be a focal point for training, communication, and other logistical support to women parliamentarians. They can make women more effective, individually as legislators, and collectively in order to act on women's issues.

135. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians in Rwanda (a cross-party women's political caucus), for example, drafted and introduced a bill on gender-based violence in August 2006. Working together, and deliberately recruiting male allies and co-sponsors for their bill, the caucus was able to push an agenda that would not have been possible for individual members of parliament working alone.

136. Links of this type in Mali are very nascent, says participant Yaba Tambouram. *"There is cooperation between women of political parties at the level of the Assembly. The women have worked together on some activities to promote women, but there is not a formal link ... The links are new and therefore we cannot evaluate their effect for the time being."*

(ii) Links between women in government and women in civil society

137. Links between women in government and women in local civil society organizations – either formal associations or informal relationships– are critical. Women in civil society rely on women in government to advance their interests, and to be their voice in official policy making. Women's organizations can also strengthen the position of women in government by providing them with data and information from the grassroots, and demonstrating that elected women have widespread support and an active constituency. This relationship is legitimizing for both groups.

138. Justine Uvuza from Rwanda highlighted the coordination between women in government and women in civil society, and gave an example of its effectiveness. *"In Rwanda individual women or women in associations have tried to work closely with women in politics ... Women at all levels have worked together to highlight women's needs for change, and development. For example, to augment the number of women in decision-making (legislature and local government especially), women in associations through an umbrella of women NGOs, the National Women's Council, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and ... the Ministry of Gender Equality formed an alliance to mobilize, train, and campaign for an increase in the number of women at all decision-making levels ... Most of the gender-responsive laws in Rwanda have been introduced by women in political forums and developed in close collaboration with women in civil society."*

139. Difficulty in forging links was highlighted by a colleague from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to the reasons that were discussed in previous weeks –the

disempowerment, and the barriers– women are inhibited by their daily struggles from creating effective links and participating actively in political life. Jeanine Gabrielle Ngungu from the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained, *"In my country, experience shows that many women are trying to help communities with solutions to their challenges, but they need to take care of themselves and their survival. They need to get organized and become more competitive; they need a true power and community support for their approaches. But who is going to do this? Raped and victimized women are marginalized and it is difficult for them to address the vital questions of their communities … It is important to underscore the fact that power is masculine ... Women have fewer chances to participate due to their small numbers in the political arena. The few women in decision-making positions must respond politically, and the women's social movement is almost non-existent (not powerful)."*

(iii) Links between elected officials and voters

140.   This discussion allowed participants to return to an issue they had raised in the second week of discussion. Many participants had commented that women voters were not particularly engaged, that the electorate did not recognize its own power, or that not enough civic education programmes were targeted at voters. One way that women in government, particularly elected women, can combat this problem is to develop formal mechanisms for providing feedback to voters. Meetings with constituents and sensitization campaigns on legislative priorities or explanations of new government policies can engage and empower voters. Joseph Kerline from the Democratic Republic of the Congo explains the responsibility of elite women: *"Intellectuals, with a certain economic, political and cultural power, have advantages linked to their power of expression in mass media and to their capacity to be close to certain leaders of the country. By considering that they are often the persons consulted by the international organizations or even by the government, they are in a good position to raise awareness among the Congolese on the reality of the situation. These women must actively listen to the needs of those who do not have access to participation, to bring them appropriate and essential help."*

141.   The burden does not however rest solely with the women in government. Voters must organize, define their priorities, and find ways to hold elected officials accountable. As Miriam Rahedi from Kenya explained, *"The irony in Kenya is that women comprise the majority of voters. What they need, therefore, is voter education..."* Some countries have organizations of women voters, or NGOs that monitor elected officials and publicize their records –strengths and weaknesses– on women's issues. Participants did not provide specific examples of this type of organizations in Africa, but did call –repeatedly– for training that would empower voters and help the electorate to understand their potential power. For example, Djingarey Maiga explained, *"The language of political and electoral systems is often … difficult to understand, especially for people with little formal education."* She therefore called for efforts to *"build the capacity of girls and women [through] awareness, training, [and] information in political literacy. This should be long-term and continuous, and not focused around election times."* Civic education programmes like the one she described should emphasize the ways in which voters can hold elected officials accountable on issues of concern to women.

142.   The challenges, particularly in poverty-ridden and insecure areas, are immense. Olga C. Daguia from Benin pointed out that the ability of women in politics to connect with constituencies is threatened by land and food insecurity, underdevelopment, and the difficulty of reaching rural areas. Insecurity (food, political, or military) threatens many African countries and have a

disproportionate effect on women, significantly limiting their freedom of movement, and their ability to engage in the political sector. *"There are several links/alliances between the women in politics ... [But] land insecurity is growing in Benin. Alliances / links and their value will be effective only when the instability of the land does not impede development any more. In Benin land insecurity undermines development and the citizens sag under the weight of despair ... Women have to get organized better, they must have equal power and continue their struggle and encourage each other."*

143.   One effective mechanism that can aid women leaders in the development of links and improving their communication is information technologies, particularly the Internet. Women in Africa still face significant challenges in terms of reliable access and connectivity. Marcel J. Kamba, a participant from the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained, *"Now, with the presence of information technology, especially the Internet, there is assistance in lifting people out of ignorance. Because it is easy to send a message to many people, it gives the same power to find solutions to many people, even to find financing. Women have many connections, but they are only connections, and this isn't enough, these needs to be accompanied by financing [for their activities]. Then women need to speak, the institutions based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo need publicity ...This will help Congolese women recover from the challenges they face today."*

144.   For the most part, participants did not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the political alliances that they identified. They did, however, feel that alliances and links such as those described in this discussion can help to overcome barriers that women face, such as under-representation, lack of access to male social networks, and lack of access to the media.

VII. Theme six: Wrap-up, emerging issues, and recommendations

145.   The final week of the discussion was reserved for summarizing the discussion, highlighting emerging issues and additional concerns. The moderator also asked participants to submit policy recommendations based on the six weeks of discussion. Recommendations were directed at a range of stakeholders –governments, women parliamentarians, political parties, women in civil society, funders, and the media.

(i) Wrap-up

146.   The online discussion on "Women, political participation and decision-making in Africa" provided a forum for a thorough discussion of the challenges women face in trying to enter leadership positions. The discussion covered assessment of the status of women's leadership in the first week, examination of national policies and mechanisms to promote women's participation in the second week, social and cultural pressures women face and the types of support they need in the third week, women's participation in other, non-political sectors in the fourth week, and different types of alliances and networks women have created in the fifth week.

147.   The summary in the sixth week touched on many of the themes that the larger discussion did –why women's participation is important, the different types of participation (elected officials and civil society), and the persistent barriers to participation. Bruno Mupinganayi from the Democratic Republic of the Congo provided a summary of the discussion, with a country-specific example. He said, *"The participation of women in decision-making is a legitimate and democratic*

measure to increase popular participation in government ... Women can participate in decision-making processes by being elected or by creating associations in the framework of civil society. In these ways, women gain the information that allows them to evaluate policies in their countries and propose solutions. In African countries and particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the engagement of women in the political parties and in the civil society is weak. This was the basis of the performance of women in the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2006. Women faced huge challenges in getting information that would allow them to participate in the decision-making processes and the political activity of their country."

148.   There were a variety of opinions offered over the course of the discussion about why women's participation is important –for women, and for democratic processes. Participants pointed out that women have the fundamental right to participate in the systems that govern them; women are 50 per cent or more of the population; excluding women is undemocratic; women are more likely to represent women's concerns; women's leadership styles are more collaborative (evidenced in the cross-party links that women forge); and women are needed in leadership positions to serve as role models for other women and girls.

149.   One contentious issue that arose over the course of the discussion was the performance of women in elected office. Some participants expressed frustration with women leaders who were not sufficiently connected to the grassroots population, and their female constituents. This demonstrated that women's expectations of women leaders are very high. It is not enough for women politicians to act like their male colleagues, more is expected of them. As Justine Uvuza from Rwanda said, *"One of the things that came out of these discussions was the fact that some women in decision-making are not accountable to women ... This area needs more research and analysis; aren't we demanding a lot from these women, aren't they facing challenges that we may not be aware of, do we know the working environment they are facing, are we supporting them, what about their capacity?"* These questions led to discussion of an important issue, namely the needs of women in decision-making positions, and a better understanding of what might be preventing them from being champions for other women. More effort is put into trying to get women into politics than into understanding their experiences once they are elected or appointed, and to identify ways to support women in these roles.

150.   Over the course of the discussion, there was strong agreement on the following issues: the nature of the barriers to women's participation; the challenge of implementing existing laws and policies that purport to guarantee women's participation; the use of quotas as the most important strategy for increasing women's political participation; and civil society as the sector with the most robust participation of women. There was also a general consensus on the need for women in elected office to build linkages with other women in government, with women in civil society, and with their own constituents, in order to better represent women's priorities and needs and strengthen their own voices as elected representatives.

151.   Grace Nambuusi from Uganda noted, like the majority of participants in this discussion, that women advance pro-peace and pro-development agendas. In her view, women's participation is not just important for women, but will benefit the whole society. *"Women need to learn about politics, its impacts and its positive consequences. They must understand the importance of their vote. Everyone must realize that women are essential parts of a political system that is free from corruption and exploitation. The voices of women will help in strengthening democracy and will also lead to a peaceful, developed, just and fair society."* Her view is supported by emerging

evidence which shows that women legislators are more likely to pass legislation protecting children and families, and more likely to invest in health care and education.

(ii) Other emerging issues

152.   Several emerging issues were identified in the final week: the need to more closely examine the impact of agriculture and food insecurity on women's political participation in Africa; the responsibilities of international organizations and funders to provide positive role models; the need to form alliances with male colleagues in order to promote gender-sensitive policies; and the need to address gender-based violence, specifically around election campaigns. Each of these will require more research and investigation.

153.   With the majority of women on the African continent engaged in agricultural production, land rights and land tenure are critical areas for women and are linked to women's prospects for political leadership. The majority of women in Africa cannot afford to engage in political activity, because they cannot afford to leave the land, if they hope to feed their children and provide for their families. As Daguia Casimilia from Benin stated, *"There are a lot of women in the rural areas that tend the crops. Once the problem of land is resolved, women will show what they are capable of."* More analysis needs to be done to understand the links between women's agricultural production, lack of access to education and economic opportunities and resources, and (relative) lack of political participation.

154.   Participants also raised the role of international organizations and funders, including the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Several participants felt these actors do not put enough resources into promoting women's participation in decision-making with their own organization. For example, while the international community calls on African countries to increase the number of women in government, the United Nations itself has very few women in highly visible leadership positions. The United Nations fails to serve as a model of women's inclusion, fails to represent the aspirations of its Member States with regard to women's equality, and undermines calls for women's participation in developing countries. Another participant also scrutinized the behavior of donors and international NGOs. Justine Uvuza from Rwanda said, *"The bilateral agencies and NGOs must demonstrate gender [equality] strategies before they are funded or permitted to work in a certain country. Sometimes you find that NGOs which claim to promote gender equality are not gender-responsive in their own institutions, plans and activities."*

155.   Another emerging issue that discussion participants raised was the issue of working with men to promote women's empowerment. There was a consensus among participants that men needed to be engaged as advocates and allies. Marie-Claire Faray of the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted, *"Changing men's mentality towards women seems to be the key."* Marcel Kamba, also from the Democratic Republic of the Congo stated, *"Another thing to do, is to sensitize men, and persuade them to accept [gender-sensitive] laws, as partners in efforts to improve the condition of all, and not to create competition between men and women."*

156.   Gender-based violence, particularly violence during election campaigns, came across in the debate as a serious obstacle for women's participation. It was raised at several points in the online discussion, but not addressed systematically. Abiodun Baiyewua of Nigeria noted, *"Violence and political thuggery has laced Nigeria's political domain and makes it difficult for women to participate safely."*

157.   Marie Rarieya of Kenya provided a specific example of campaign violence: *"Although violence is not limited to women candidates, the majority of women seeking civic and parliamentary electoral positions decry that violence is one of the major obstacles that hinders their participation in civic and parliamentary offices. A recent newspaper article gives some interesting perspectives on this subject. 'When a woman declares an interest in political leadership,' says Professor Jacqueline Adhiambo Oduol, a candidate for the Alego-Usonga parliamentary seat in Western Kenya, 'she must often endure violence and name-calling, often in the presence of her husband, son or brother, intended to embarrass these relatives.' See Women's ENews Correspondent, August 3, 2007. (http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3265). Violence against women, especially during political rallies is a reflection of uneven rights and unequal power relations in our society."*

158.   Other participants alluded to the fact that even women in leadership positions can be victims of violence in their homes. A better understanding of the pervasive nature of gender-based violence, and its relationship to women's leadership is necessary. The 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women highlighted this issues in its agreed conclusions on "equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels" in 2006: "The Commission underlined the importance of the empowerment of women and their effective participation in decision-making and policymaking processes as critical tools to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, and recognized that eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls enabled them to participate equally in decision-making." (paragraph 12)

(iii) Recommendations

159.   The following policy recommendations emerged from participants' contributions to the six week discussion. Only those recommendations that were suggested by more than one individual for increasing the participation of women in decision-making are included here, in an attempt to illustrate the consensus that emerged from the discussion. Individual strategies proposed by single participants were included within the analysis of each theme.

160.   The broad recommendations must be considered within individual country contexts. Recommendations should be adapted accordingly. As Marie-Claire Faray from the Democratic Republic of the Congo remarked at the end of the online discussion, *"Although … a general conclusion is expected to be made, I nevertheless believe that it is very important to address this non-participation of women in the context of each African state's cultural, social, economic and political situation."*

161.   African governments should do more to actively promote women's political participation. Existing policy commitments –such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Security Council Resolution 1325, and the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa– must be implemented. Governments should implement: gender responsive budgets and develop mechanisms to hold all sectors accountable for addressing gender equality issues; establish independent observers (or an office of the "ombudsperson") to monitor all departments to ensure that gender mainstreaming is implemented; establish quotas of at least 30 per cent in all decision-making positions; ensure that policies designed to promote women's participation include accountability measures; and make investments in girls' education beyond primary school.

162.   Women in parliaments in Africa must forge strong links with their constituents and prioritize women's issues, including the promotion and protection of women's rights and the economic and social empowerment of women. Women parliamentarians should: work with women from all political parties to establish a formal women's network to advocate for a common women's agenda; develop legislation that requires political parties to comply with affirmative action policies; and review existing laws and propose amendments to ensure that they are gender-sensitive and respect women's rights.

163.   Political parties must do more to create an enabling environment for the participation of women as voters and candidates. Political parties should: develop mechanisms to increase the number of women in party leadership positions; adopt internal rules that require the party to advance women in 50 per cent of positions in each election; address gender equality issues in their platforms; implement legal provisions related to election expenditures, voter identification, and corrupt practices.

164.   Women who are active in civil society must do more to prepare women and girls for political engagement, and must reach out to women in government to form coalitions. Women's civil society organizations should: form alliances and network with other groups to promote women's political participation (such alliances must be part of an ongoing process, not just formed at the time of elections and disbanded afterward); include men in advocacy efforts and networks on behalf of gender equality issues, including the need to enhance women's political participation; conduct training and sensitization on existing national and international policies to guarantee their implementation; develop monitoring plans to evaluate governments on their implementation of protocols and commitments related to gender equality, and to evaluate elected officials on their commitments to gender-sensitive government.

165.   As identified in this discussion, the media remains a significant barrier to women's leadership. Media outlets should: avoid stereotypical and degrading images of women; fulfill a "watchdog" role with regard to implementation of mechanisms that promote women's participation in decision-making; hold governments accountable for implementing policies that promote women's participation; and include in their programming examples of women's success stories that can serve as inspiration to potential and actual women candidates and make the society aware of women's contributions; report the work of women political leaders.

166.   Development partners, international organizations, and funders wield enormous power in many African countries. They should establish specific funds and programmes to: train and mobilize women voters; train potential women candidates in advance of elections; monitor the performance of elected officials on gender equality policy priorities; and develop country-level databases of women professionals, technical experts, and elected women officials.

Annex 1: Statistics on participation

A: Registrants

Total number of registrations: 771

Total number of participants registered: Distribution by sex

- Male 17%
- Female 83%

Total number of participants registered: By affiliation

- 12%
- 10%
- 40%
- 4%
- 17%
- 17%

Legend:
- Academia
- Government
- Non-governmental organization
- Private sector
- United Nations
- Others
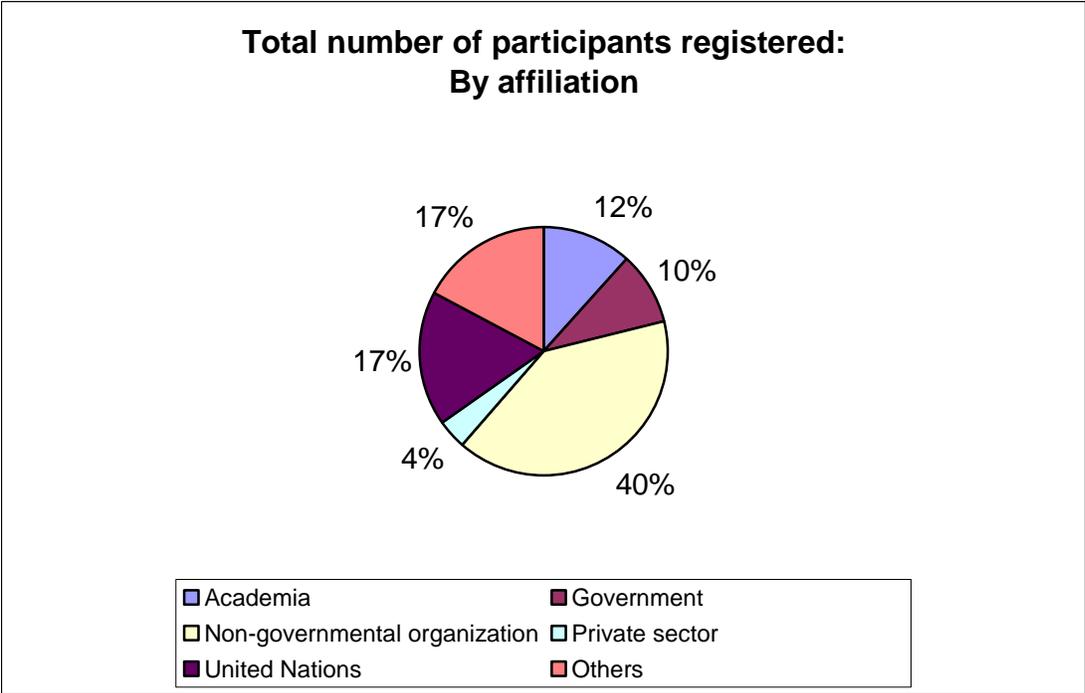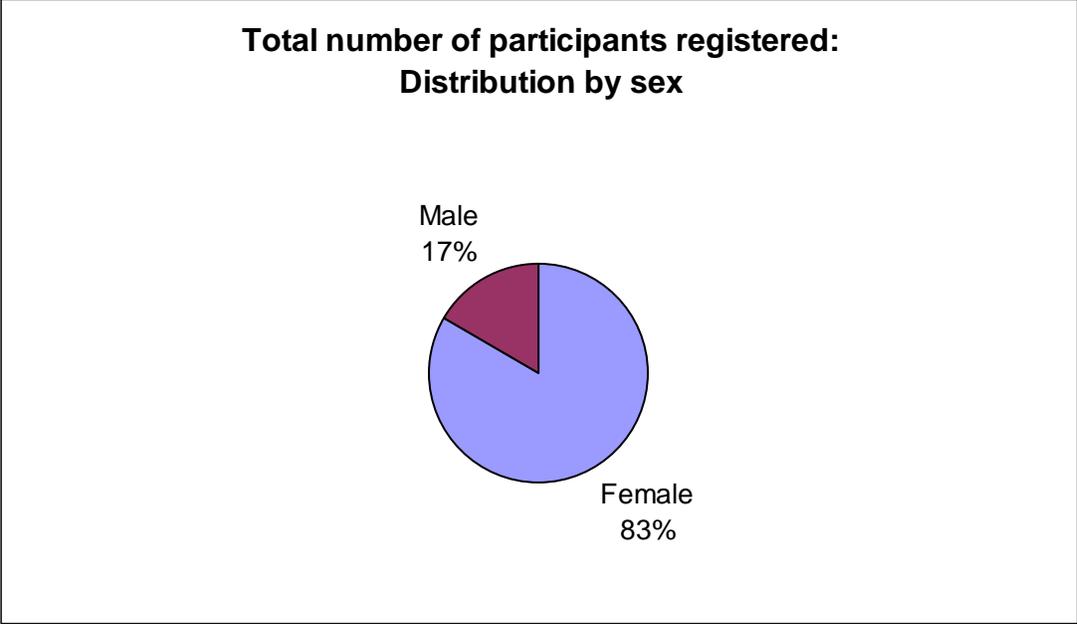
Total number of participants registered: By geographical distribution

Legend:
- Africa
- Europe
- N. America
- Asia/Pacific
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Western Asia
- Not stated

Values shown: 70%, 11%, 10%, 6%, 2%, 1%, 0%
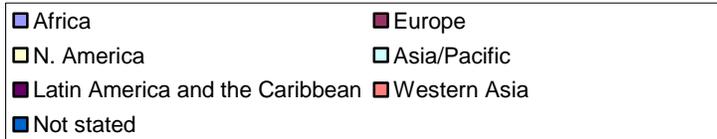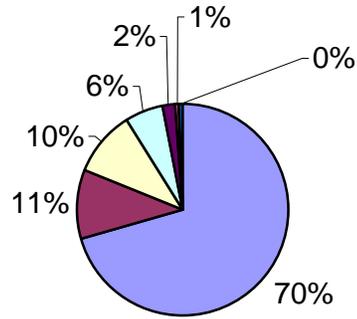
Top 10 nationalities represented in registrants

| Nationality	Registrants
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	59
NIGERIA	57
KENYA	53
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	50
UGANDA	44
CAMEROON	41
SOUTH AFRICA	31
SUDAN	26
CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE	24
ZIMBABWE	22
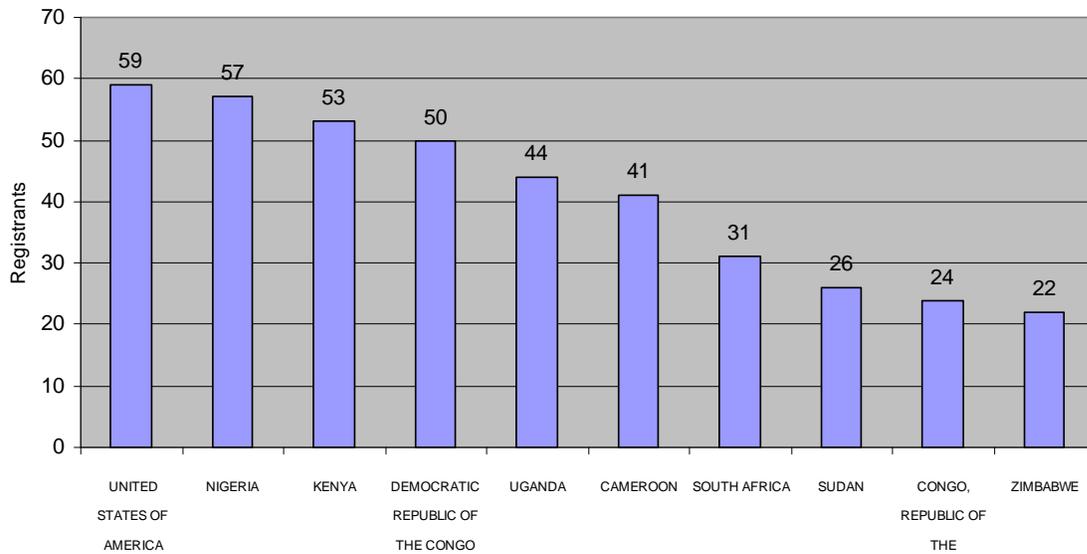
B. Contributors (i.e. registrants who posted at least one message)

Total number of contributors: 118
Total number of postings: 186

Contributors by sex

Male
14%

Female
86%

Contributors by affiliation

7%

2%

20%

13%

11%

47%

☐ Academia   ☐ Fund/Foundation
☐ Government   ☐ Non-governmental organization
☐ United Nations   ☐ Other/None
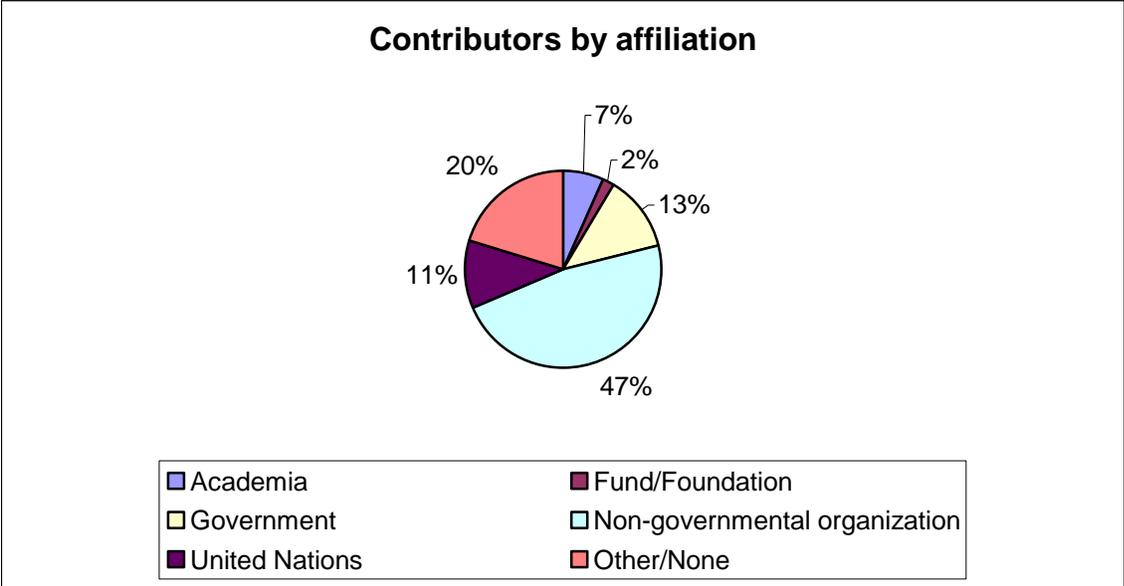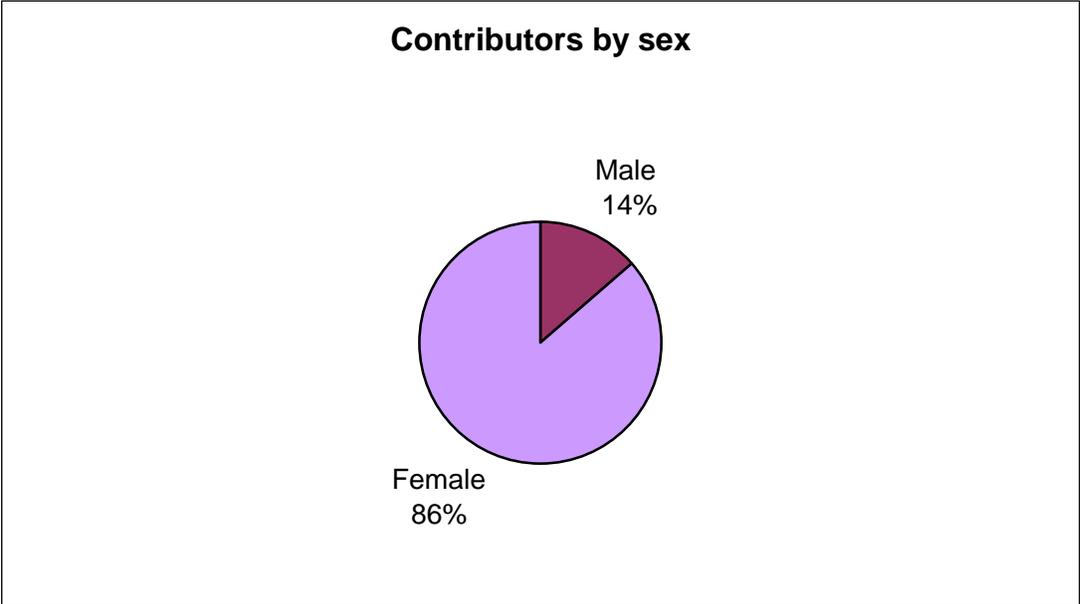
Contributors by geographical distribution

1%
1%
3%
3%
5%
87%
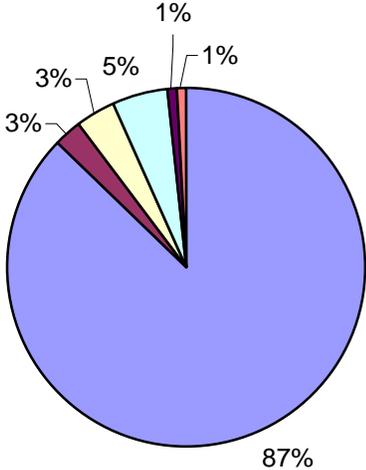
☐ Africa ■ Asia/Pacific ☐ N. America ☐ Europe ■ Latin America and the Caribbean ■ Western Asia

Annex 2: List of related web links

The following list of links is compiled from links mentioned in the online discussion or this report, and/or sent by discussion participants to the discussion moderator by email.

<u>United Nations</u>

Division for the Advancement of Women
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/

WomenWatch
http://www.un.org/womenwatch

Economic Commission for Africa
http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/acgd/default.htm

E-Network of National Gender Equality Machineries in Africa
http://www.uneca.org/daweca/

UNIFEM
http://www.unifem.org/

INSTRAW
http://www.un-instraw.org

<u>International organizations</u>

African Union: see Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Conferences/Past/2006/October/WG/doc.htm

World Bank: see Gender in the World Bank
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/0,,contentMDK:20260
262~menuPK:489120~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:336868,00.html

<u>Political participation</u>

Inter-Parliamentary Union
http://www.ipu.org/

Politics: Women's Insight (IPU, 2000)
http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/womeninsight_en.pdf

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
http://www.idea.int/

"Implementation off Quotas: Experiences of the SADC Parliamentary Forum"
http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_SADC_Nhundu_27_7_2004.pdf

The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences (International IDEA, 2004)
http://www.idea.int/publications/quotas_africa/index.cfm

Women in Parliaments: Beyond Numbers (IDEA 1998, revised 2005),
http://www.idea.int/publications/wip/index.cfm

Designing for Equality (International IDEA, 2007)
http://www.idea.int/publications/designing_for_equality/

International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics
http://www.iknowpolitics.org/

Council of Women World Leader
http://www.womenworldleaders.org

United Cities and Local Governments: see gender library
http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/index.asp

Education

Forum for African Women Educationalists / Forum des Educatrices Africaines
http://www.fawe.org/home/index.asp

International Federation of University Women
http://www.ifuw.org/

A Selected List of Fellowship, Scholarship, Grant, and Other Training Opportunities for African Women Students and Scholars (The Institute for Education of Women in Africa and the Diaspora, 2002)
http://www.kubatana.net/docs/women/021216iewad.pdf

Union of International Associations' Web Resources on Civil Society
http://www.uia.org/civilsoc/links.php

UNESCO: Education
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/

Education for Girls: see Ouagadougou Declaration
http://www.unesco.org/education/information/pdf/283_87.pdf

Media

International Women's Media Foundation
http://www.iwmf.org/

Genderlinks/South Africa
www.genderlinks.org.za

Femlink Pacific
http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/

"Money, Media, and Tradition Complicate Women's Political Aspirations," Inter Press Service
News Agency
http://www.ipsnews.net/

Private Sector

ILO (2004). *Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management*:
www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337

International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank, is committed to
creating opportunities for women in business
www.ifc.org/gem

Civil society

"Civil Society" in *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action*
(Inclusive Security and International Alert, 2004)
http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/26_civil_society.pdf

Other resources

Mentoring: International Federation of Business and Professional Women
http://www.bpw-international.org/services/bpw-services-mentoring.htm