



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Commission on the Status of Women

**STATEMENT by Senator Pia Cayetano (Philippines), President of the IPU
Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians**
United Nations, 3 March 2010

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure for me to take the floor on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. My name is Pia Cayetano, and I am a Senator from the Philippines and President of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

Yesterday, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women organized its sixth annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the Commission on the Status of Women. Our meeting focused on the *Role of parliaments in enforcing gender equality and women's rights: 15 years after Beijing*, and brought together over 140 parliamentarians from 50 countries. We thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having taken the time out of your busy schedule to come and address our group yesterday.

I would like to thank the UN Division for the Advancement of Women for its ongoing cooperation, and stress once again how useful it is for us parliamentarians to participate in the work of the Commission, follow its debates and learn from the wealth of information, exchanges and meetings that the CSW generates. This also allows us to go back home with a much better understanding of the overall UN process and the commitment to help ensure national follow-up to the decisions that have been taken here.

Our meeting yesterday focused on two main issues: the first was a review of the progress and setbacks in relation to women's access to parliaments over the past fifteen years. The second issue we addressed was how to review and address discriminatory legislation, and develop a more gender sensitive legal framework.

Mr. Chairman, I will report now on some of the main results from our meeting:

- We noted that although the global **proportion of women in parliament** has reached an all-time high of 18.8%, a huge challenge remains in that over one-quarter of parliamentary chambers have less than 10 percent women members. The initial target of 30% women in leadership positions remains far off, and we sought to answer the question, is parliament really open to women?
- In terms of access to parliaments, we noted that **gender quotas** have been crucial to the advancement of women in politics. Of the 44 chambers that now boast more than 30% women members, nearly all employ some type of gender quota. Yet we agreed that quotas alone cannot address all the obstacles that women in politics encounter, especially when they enter male dominated parliaments. Other issues such as current

models of campaign financing, electoral and political violence, prejudice and discrimination, remain at the core of women's exclusion and marginalization in the political sphere. Nevertheless, under certain conditions, quotas have resulted in amazing historical jumps in women's political participation.

- Often in the absence of quotas, or where there is weak enforcement, a lack of formalization of **recruitment processes** can hamper women's chances of election. In addition, even if there is a constitutional guarantee for gender equality, these may have little impact if they are not reflected and translated in electoral and political party laws.
- We noted that **political parties** are the main gatekeepers into parliament, but all too often they represent the bottle-neck to women's access to political life. They are critical in ensuring not only the nomination of women as election candidates, but also ensuring that they are placed in winnable positions on election lists. Participation of women in all other key positions such as economic decision-making and in the scientific research sector should also be promoted.

Mr Chairman,

On the second main issue, we discussed the existence of many **discriminatory laws**, even in countries where international conventions, such as CEDAW, have been ratified. Parliaments must review and amend these discriminatory laws and ensure that new legislation complies with international commitments.

Fifteen years after Beijing, the question of systematic follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the measures agreed in the Platform for Action, is still pending.

The role of parliaments in **overseeing the implementation** of legislation related to gender mainstreaming needs to be consolidated. Parliamentary mechanisms such as committees on gender equality should be established and tools, such as gender-sensitive budgeting, should be further developed to improve the oversight functions of parliamentarians. The work of committees should be regularly evaluated and we should consider exchanges between parliaments to build capacities and share experiences.

We underscored the importance of undertaking audits and **gender impact analyses** of legislation to ensure compliance with international conventions, including CEDAW. We also heard about novel initiatives, such as establishing specialised committees, which could be tasked with auditing expenditures to promote gender equality.

Finally, we also emphasized the necessity of **collaborating and building partnerships** with a range of stakeholders, including national women's machineries to monitor the implementation of laws, and civil society to support and promote the implementation of gender equality policies. In addition, participants highlighted that it was necessary to cultivate a mutually advantageous relationship with the media. Underpinning all efforts is the pressing need to engage and collaborate with men as partners for change.

Let me end by highlighting the interest expressed by the many parliamentarians present yesterday to continue to be involved in the work of the UN. They expressed their commitment to follow up on some of the debates and conclusions held during our meeting in their respective countries. We are convinced that if each of us plays our part, progress can be achieved.

Thank you.