

Expert Group Meeting

“Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership”

**organized by
the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

**in collaboration with
the Economic Commission for Africa and the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-7 October 2005**

Opening statement

**Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo
Officer-in-Charge, African Centre
Economic Commission for Africa**

Colleagues from DAW

Distinguished participants

First let me welcome you to Addis Ababa and to UNECA. I hope you travelled well.

I would like to acknowledge this very important expert group meeting on **“Equal participation of women and men in decision making processes with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership”**.

This topic is critical and deserves the attention DAW is giving. Women’s participation in decision-making continues to be an area of concern here in Africa. Whilst a number of declarations and commitments have been made in this region, the figures do not show any meaningful increase. However, due recognition needs to be made of the inroads that have been made in the continent. The AU constitute act is a leading example in which AU has a 50% representation of women commissioners. This needs to be emulated in all our institutions including in the UN.

The SADC Declaration on gender calls for 30% women in decision-making. SADC in August also reaffirmed the decision on gender parity made by the AU. Successes have been recorded by South

Africa, Mozambique and Mauritius – who have more than 30% women in the Cabinet.

Whilst numbers still remain a challenge, we also need to look at the quality of participation. How do we ensure the women that go into decision-making, especially political decision-making can address the relevant issues and foster change? Has women's participation made a difference to decision making?

Women's participation in politics is also curtailed by a lot of other factors such as resources, gender relations of power, party politics among others.

I am glad that this Expert group meeting will interrogate these issues. I do recognize that you might not have all the answers but your recommendations will also go a long way to assist us in ACGD in our programme work. We are represented in this meeting by senior staff of the Division, as we want to share and also learn from the experts who are here. The global perspective will go a long way in giving us some inroads that have been made in other regions.

I want to thank DAW for their continued collaboration with ACGD. I also once again want to congratulate DAW for bringing together

experts to reflect deeply on this important issue. I want to assure DAW of our continued support and collaboration.

I wish you good deliberations.