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Kigali Declaration

Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world

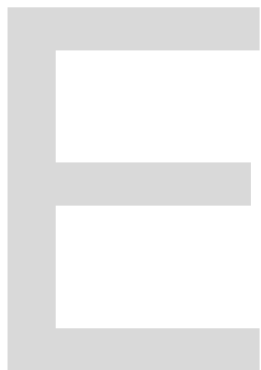
***Endorsed by the 145th IPU Assembly
(Kigali, 15 October 2022)***

We, Members of Parliament from around the world, gathered at the 145th IPU Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda to discuss the theme *Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world*, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the IPU's Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, and to recommit to advance gender equality in our institutions and in society.

We recognize that we live in a special time, wrought with global challenges. After two years of confronting the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that crises are never gender neutral. On the contrary, crises exacerbate existing gender-based inequalities and create new ones, and put vulnerable populations in an even more precarious situation. Women and girls pay a heavy toll in situations of crisis, since gender-based discrimination and violence increase, holding back gender equality and our societies in general.

However, we take confidence knowing that our collective commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality has led to greater attention to and respect for equal rights among men and women, and women's and girls' empowerment. We also believe that the current generation of parliamentarians is more diverse and is therefore showing even more support for the advancement of gender equality and inclusivity.

We affirm that gender equality is essential in confronting pandemics, conflicts, economic recessions and climate change. From the perspective of the economy, gender equality means equal pay, financial inclusion, universal social protection, valuing care work, and protection from discrimination and violence. Equality in the economy also means that more women participate in the work force, leading to greater prosperity and productivity. Gender equality in politics allows us to respond better to crises by taking into account the diverse and intersectional needs of all, thereby delivering more effective results. From the perspective of peace-building and diplomacy, women's leadership is a driving force, as peace agreements signed by female delegates lead to more durable peace. From the perspective of political decision-making, women leaders have been proven to drive more stringent climate action. In short, when responding to global challenges, it is more likely that no one is left behind if women participate and lead.



#IPU145

We note, as seen through our General Debate, that there are advancements in parliaments from around the world from which we can draw inspiration. In Kigali, at this 145th Assembly, we acknowledged that gender equality is a right for everyone, everywhere and agreed to make a step change for gender equality and to make our parliaments gender-sensitive for a more resilient and peaceful world.

To step up our action for gender equality, we will look to address profound structural gender inequalities that are driving vulnerabilities instead of building resilience. To do so, we commit to take the five following key actions:

1. Achieve parity in political decision-making, including by using electoral gender quotas and ensuring that other electoral quotas always have a gender parity provision.
2. Ensure our law-making, law-enforcement, and budgeting are gender-responsive across all policy fields.
3. Put vulnerable populations at the centre of our parliamentary functions of legislation, oversight, resource allocation and representation.
4. End gender-based discrimination, violence and other harmful practices, and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice for all women and girls.
5. Advance equality in caring responsibilities among men and women and set an example in our societies by undertaking 50% of the daily care work for our families, regardless of whether we are male or female MPs.

Driving structural transformational change for gender equality will require us to continue and enhance our action to build gender-sensitive parliaments. It is only by doing so that our parliaments will meet the needs of the modern era, respond to crises and remain resilient. Gender-*ins*sensitive parliaments cannot redress inequalities and vulnerabilities. In contrast, gender-sensitive parliaments, that are by definition more representative and have power, structures and capacities to promote gender equality, are better able to reverse gender inequalities and address vulnerabilities.

In the last decade, we have witnessed progress in gender equality in parliaments, following the roadmap set out by the *Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments*:

- In parliamentary participation and leadership, the proportion of women in parliament has jumped from 20 to 26%. Several parliaments have internal quotas to ensure leadership positions and membership of committees are shared equally among men and women. At present, 23% of Speakers or Presiding Officers of parliament are women.
- Looking at parliamentary infrastructure, 50% of all parliaments currently have a women's caucus and 68% of all parliaments have a women's or gender equality committee.
- In terms of gender-responsive internal policies, 23% of all parliaments now have a gender equality policy in their parliamentary administration.
- There are more family-friendly provisions and measures to facilitate work-life balance such as remote or proxy voting and childcare arrangements.
- The existence, forms and prevalence of violence against women in parliament are now widely acknowledged, and some parliaments have started taking action to eliminate such violence, including by using the IPU *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament*.

Gender-sensitive parliaments are needed now more than ever against a backdrop of ever more urgent political, economic, social and ecological crises, which are themselves gendered. Facing the reality of the climate crisis, this next chapter of gender-sensitive parliaments must also be green, both in how parliaments undertake their daily work, and in parliamentary outputs and outcomes. New technologies and their rapid development have also opened up new opportunities which must be exploited when they support rather than harm gender equality.

Transformative institutional change towards a gender-sensitive parliament does not just happen by itself. It requires political will, leadership, self-questioning, strategic planning, reform, resources and accountability.

Our commitment to gender-sensitive parliaments today must be more ambitious than it was 10 years ago. Looking forward, we pledge the following 10 actions to make many more parliaments gender-sensitive over the next 10 years:

1. Assess the level of gender-sensitivity of our parliaments twice to ensure progress in-between the two milestones.
2. Create a gender-balanced steering committee to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the gender sensitivity assessments that has the power, resources, and mandate to lead reforms.
3. Recognize the individual differences among women and prioritize the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as young women, indigenous women and women with disabilities.
4. Create, resource and empower a gender equality committee or similar body which can effectively hold government and parliament to account, and a women's caucus that can effectively support women MPs in their parliamentary work.
5. Adopt formal rules to establish gender-balance across all parliamentary leadership positions, ensure the parity of participation of women and men across all parliamentary activities, and prohibit single-sex committees and groups.
6. Engage men MPs and other men active in the parliamentary ecosystem to act as allies for gender equality, including by co-sponsoring bills, initiatives and actions with women MPs, across the legislative, oversight and representation fields.
7. Ensure that gender sensitivity, gender equality and gender mainstreaming and budgeting guide all of a parliament's work at all times.
8. Conduct gender audits of legislative, budgetary and oversight actions but also of initiatives aiming to introduce or reform, inter alia, parliamentary technology, measures to make parliaments greener, initiatives to engage citizens' in the work of parliament, and implement the respective recommendations from such audits.
9. Become caring parliaments by providing fully for the caring needs of men and women MPs and staff as they carry out their parliamentary duties.
10. Introduce stringent policies with the objective of zero tolerance of violence against women, sexual harassment and bullying in parliament, and establish independent and efficient grievance procedures with strong sanctions.