



Bringing equality into a public life: trends and perspectives for participation and decision making in a new development context:

Subregional consultation for Central Asia and the Central Asian Women Leaders' Dialogue to prepare for

CSW 65 session, 23 February 2021

Recommendations

The general purpose of the consultations was to take stock of the progress in the Central Asia sub-region in terms of women's political participation and the elimination of violence, to discuss the main challenges and obstacles, and to make recommendations of actions to be undertaken to effect change. The participants shared the challenges and opportunities for achieving women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence in an inclusive participatory manner. Intergenerational and intersectional perspectives were also included in the discussion. The consultation included representatives from national gender equality mechanisms, parliaments, government ministries, electoral commissions, civil society, youth movements, and the gender expert community. The list of participants is presented at Annex 1.

Some of the recommendations made during the consultation were highlighted by many participants and as such these recommendations shall be considered to have weight in the outcome of the consultation. These key recommendations, for instance, the need to create regional networks and communication platforms for women elected officials and women civil society leaders to share their experiences, network, and develop gender equality policies together, surfaced as clear, key recommendations from the consultation. Another key recommendation was that gender quotas should be adopted for all levels of government, and that quota legislation should be fully implemented, enforced, and enforcement 'gaps' in existing legislation removed. An additional key recommendation was the need to provide young women with meaningful opportunities to engage in the political sphere to build skills and networks that would propel them into leadership positions today or in the future. A key recommendation was made that women politicians should support gender equality legislation and create opportunities for other women to become leaders. Another key recommendation is that more needs to be done to create meaningful partnerships between politicians, political parties, governments with the civil society and expert community who can provide expert input and ideas into policy making for gender equality. Other recommendations were notable for their novel approach. These recommendations included promoting positive portrayals of women leaders through social media, that a pro-bono Council for Women's Rights

be established for Central Asia, and that specific indicators and a database for monitoring violence against women in politics be developed.

The following complete set of recommendations brought forth by participants during the consultation are framed around the key CSW themes posed during the consultation:

To create a more inclusive and enabling environment in which all women could participate in public life it was recommended that:

- Regional cooperation and collaboration should be promoted, including the development of regional networks and platforms to learn from each other and share experiences. It was noted that the Central Asian Women's Leaders Network Caucus is newly established.
- A shared databank be launched to exchange rapidly best practices and lessons learned between countries related to ongoing governmental measures to protect women's and children's rights.
- Leadership training programs for women should be launched, also with a mentorship component to showcase role models for young people.
- Women and girls of all backgrounds, including women with disabilities, rural women, young women, LGBTIQ, and women from other underrepresented groups, be included and considered in political and public life, dialogues and networks.
- Anti-discriminatory laws be enacted in countries without such laws.
- Skills development and access to tools including Internet and connectivity should be considered since a large portions or groups of women remain disconnected from political life, because they do not have internet access or technological skills.
- Gender is incorporated as a cross-cutting issue in all government implemented programmes.
- Women in power be more catalytic in advancing the equality agenda.
- Men be included and engaged in creating a more inclusive and enabling environment so that all women can participate in public and political life.

To fast-track progress and achieve equal power sharing between women and men it was recommended that:

- Governments should implement quotas for women at all levels of government, including local government, parliaments, and Ministerial positions, to create conditions for full gender parity.
- Existing legislation on increasing women's participation needs to be fully implemented, and at times strengthened, to be effective.
- Enforcement mechanisms should be implemented or the subject of new legislation.
- Enforcement gaps should be closed, including ensuring that when women resign from a position that they are replaced by another woman.
- Encourage the engagement of women in decision-making at all levels and in all sectors.
- Evidence based research be used more widely in policy making and that studies be conducted and built upon.
- Gender councils, such as women's caucuses, be established in Parliaments as a mechanism for enhancing the strength of women politicians, organizing policy priorities, collaboration, and sharing experiences.
- National women's caucuses should meet and discuss with other women's caucuses/councils in the region.

- Support and capacity building be provided to women politicians, including in the parliament, to build their skills.
- Elected women should create conditions that support other women and advocate that women enter public and political life at all levels including in the local councils.
- Both international experts and national experts should support these interventions as expertise is also available from within Central Asian states.

To secure women's civil society activism for national and global transformative change on gender equality it was recommended that:

- Create an enabling legal environment for the registration and setting up of women's organizations.
- Partnerships are built between women's civil society organizations, political parties and women in politics.
- A pro bono council for women's rights in Central Asia be created.
- Buttress solidarity among women's organizations specializing in various issues, not only on gender equality.

To ensure funding to support women in public life to have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making it was recommended that:

- Gender-based budgeting is implemented.
- Governments provide adequate financing to enforce their gender equality commitments.

To overcome structural obstacles and discriminatory norms about gender roles that constrain women in public life it was recommended that:

- A campaign to raise awareness on gender equality, women's status and the importance of giving power to women be implemented.
- Communication strategies are improved, including the utilization of new technologies, in order to communicate statistics, policies, programmes, to the general public in a format that is accessible and understandable.
- Promote positive portrayals of women's leadership through social media.
- Increase gender-specific awareness and sensitivity of employees in all the branches of government.
- Stereotypes about women's participation in elections are abolished.
- Legal literacy and social inclusion of women is enhanced.
- Expand women's access to ownership and control over all forms of property through economic and financial empowerment, as well as access to technology and micro-finance.

To eliminate violence against women in public and political life that deliberately perpetrated to threaten women's participation it was recommended that:

- Improve gender statistics and develop a database and indicators for monitoring discrimination and violence against women in politics.
- Services and effective remedies to make perpetrators accountable need to be made available for victims of violence against women in politics.

Points from UN entities during the meeting

The general purpose of the consultations was to take stock of the progress in the Central Asia sub-region in terms of women's political participation and the elimination of violence, to discuss the main challenges and obstacles, and to make recommendations of actions to be undertaken to effect change. The participants shared the challenges and opportunities for achieving women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence in an inclusive participatory manner. Intergenerational and intersectional perspectives were also included in the discussion. The consultation included representatives from national gender equality mechanisms, parliaments, government ministries, electoral commissions, civil society, youth movements, and the gender expert community. The following are additional recommended points which were brought forth by UNRCCA, UN Women, UNDP, and UN RC Uzbekistan during the consultation.

United Nations Resident Coordinator to Uzbekistan, Helena Fraser:

- Women's leadership is crucial, especially at times of crisis management.
- Organizational and cultural shift that will enable a meaningful representation of women driven by their effective leadership and acknowledged globally.
- Need proactive strategies to nurture new generations of leaders equipped with skills, capacities and awareness to fulfill strategic objectives and goals as set out in the SDGs, the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW.
- Gender quotas have proven to be the most efficient tool to increase women's representation in legislative and other sectors.
- More leaders should set and deliver gender parity goals, including by means of appointments to all leadership positions at all levels of government.
- Decision-making entities should secure more resources for commissions and committees that promote gender equality, and to ensure more transparency so that members of women's organizations and feminist movements could voice their views.
- There should be more efforts to ensure that public institutions pursue the "zero-tolerance" policy on violence, discrimination and abuse, including by ratifying the ILO Convention Against Violence and Harassment.
- To enable women's full participation, laws, policies and regulations that discriminate against women or violate their fundamental freedoms must be repealed, including laws that limit civic spaces and create obstacles for women's organizations to register, engage in advocacy, receive funding and report on rights issues across the globe.
- There is a need to expand collaboration and joint efforts [between UN, governments, and civil society] to address and overcome existing inequalities, discriminatory practices and norms in the process of designing new forms of participation and decision-making.
- Enhance access to public information for women and their organizations, including through the internet as a fora for information, consultation and debates. Information should be disseminated as widely as possible.
- Social media must enhance its efforts to prevent and counteract online harassment in virtual fora.

Ms. Åsa Regnér, UN Women Deputy Executive Director:

- To facilitate a more inclusive and enabling environment in which all women could participate in public life through more ambitious targets, increased political will, sustainable financing and gender-responsive institutional arrangements

- To implement a 'simplified procedure' to achieve gender equality in leadership and sharing of power
- To safeguard women's civic activism enabling in-depth national and global changes towards gender equality
- To earmark adequate financing to support women's leadership in public life
- To address structural barriers and discriminatory norms regarding gender roles limiting women in public life
- To eliminate violence against women in public and political life and curb threats against women's participation, such as online abuse and cyberbullying.

Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNDP:

- To harness the political and investment impetus to make women both beneficiaries and agents of efforts to build a more sustainable and better world.

Ms. Natalia Gherman, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Central Asia, Head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA):

- Translate gender equality into reality through the law.
- Improve legal standards and their enforcement, and define the powers of responsible entities.
- Combating gender segregation in education and the labour market, and uproot violence against women.

Ms. Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

- Support youth leadership.
- Set up communications spaces and engage various civil society organizations.
- Mobilize innovations and technology, and ensure women's leadership in crisis situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic.