

including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as to hold public office at all levels of government (Article 7). States parties agree to take all appropriate measures to overcome historical discrimination against women and obstacles to women's participation in decision-making processes (Article 8), including legislation and temporary special measures (Article 4). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women consistently expresses concern over the low rate of implementation of Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention. In its general recommendation 23 of 1997 the Committee reviewed the persisting barriers to women's participation in political and public life and set out a series of steps for Governments to take in order to abide fully by Articles 7 and 8, urging especially the adoption of temporary special measures in accordance with Article 4 of the Convention.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, brought attention to the persisting inequality between men and women in decision-making. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognize women's unequal share of power and decision-making as one of the twelve critical areas of concern. The Platform for Action outlines concrete actions to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, t

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between a career and child-rearing responsibilities, which leads many of them to opt out of competition for the top-level jobs. At home as well as at work they continue to lack an enabling environment for their career advancement and empowerment. Women are still largely absent from top executive jobs, especially in the traditionally male-dominated spheres of business, science and politics. In national governments where women hold ministerial functions, their portfolios are typically limited to social, family and cultural affairs (IPU 1999).⁴

III. Objectives

The overall objective of the meeting is to analyze the current situation of women in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on their political participation and leadership at the international, national, regional and local levels. The meeting will develop policy recommendations for achieving equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes based on the identification of the most promising practices and lessons learned to date.

The meeting will:

Examine conditions that facilitate women's representation in decision-making processes within the context of current socio-economic and political transformations;

the meeting. The report will be made available at the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

V. Profile of the Participants

The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by 12 experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The expert group meeting will also be attended by observers from Governments, the United Nations, inter-governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and academia.

In selecting the experts, the criteria of geographical and gender balance will be taken into consideration. Experts will include academics and practitioners from relevant fields, in accordance with the objectives identified above. The United Nations will provide travel and daily subsistence allowance to the experts.

VI. Documentation

The documentation for the meeting will include:

A consultant's paper commissioned by the Division for the Advancement of Women (D.A.W.)