

Beyond Beijing: Towards Gender Equality in Politics

**Parliamentary Event
on the occasion of the 49th session of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

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Madame Chairperson, Senator Joan Fraser, President of the Coordinating Committee on Women Parliamentarians
Excellencies and distinguished Delegates
Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Keynote Speaker

I am delighted to have the opportunity to take part in the Inaugural Session of this important parliamentary event: "Beyond Beijing: Towards Gender Equality in Politics", which the Inter-parliamentary Union is organizing in collaboration with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. I wish to welcome all distinguished participants from all regions of the world to the United Nations and thank you for your commitment to this important topic. The holding of this event during the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, makes an important contribution by enhancing attention to the critical issue of women's political participation.

I want to begin by commending the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly's consideration and adoption of a resolution on the ten-year review of implementation the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Third Standing Committee in September last year. I would also like to recognize the importance of the work of the Inter

many different contexts, not least in highlighting the remaining serious gaps and challenges in implementing the Critical Area of Concern from the Beijing Platform for Action – Women in Decision-making.

The ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action clearly shows that, despite political recognition of the fundamental right of women and men to participate in political and public life, the gap between de jure and de facto equality in the area of power and decision-making remains wide. While the proportion of seats held by women in legislative bodies is the highest world average reached to date, and continues a trend of gradual but sustained growth, the pace of change is clearly far too slow. Only 14 countries have at least 30 percent representation of women in parliament, which had been established as a target for 1995, and is still not achieved ten years later. This is one of the key challenges facing us in the decade to come.

One encouraging development is the fact that a number of post-conflict countries have highlighted and addressed the importance of including women in reconstruction processes, and of their participation in new democratic institutions. As a result, Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Eritrea - appear in the top 30 countries with regard to women's participation in legislative bodies, averaging between 25 and 30 percent of women legislators. It is heartening that Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in parliament in the world and I would like to congratulate the women and men of Rwanda for this important achievement.

The Inter-parliamentary Union already plays a critical role at national, regional and global levels by promoting women's increased participation in parliaments and in providing much needed statistics on women's representation in parliaments. as a t7ition ofTj -3w Tywer a

Parliaments - including through standing committees on gender equality or caucuses of women parliamentarian - in promoting gender equality perspectives, reviewing legislative proposals for gender impact and monitoring government performance in meeting gender equality goals. Among their recommendations, the experts called for