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when appropriate, acting upon criticisms, requirements and demands of their publics, constituencies or the electorate.

3.   The experts agreed that women's participation and representation in decision-making bodies involves their enhanced presence as well as their empowerment through participation. They emphasized that women's political leadership and accountability are key cross-cutting issues. The expert group also emphasized the importance of studying these four concepts systematically at *all* levels of governance and across a full range of decision-making levels.

Why more women: Rationale, numbers, and beyond numbers

4.   Both practitioners and scholars agree that it is of utmost importance to have equal numbers of women and men in political office for a variety of reasons. The experts emphasized the following arguments for this position:

- The justice argument – women account for approximately half the population and therefore have the right to be represented as such.
- The interest argument – the interests of men and women are different and even conflicting and therefore women are needed in representative institutions to articulate the interests of women.
- The symbolic argument - women are attracted to political life if they have role models in the arena.
- The democracy argument – the equal representation of women and men enhances democratization of governance in both transitional and consolidated democracies.

5.   The experts noted that in the last ten years there has been progress towards the equal representation of men and women in decision-making. As of September 2005, the global average for women in parliaments stands at 16.0 percent. Additionally, women have achieved 30 percent representation or more in national parliaments in 19 countries. However, progress has been uneven and slow and in some cases there have been significant setbacks. Twenty-two countries out of 167 had reversals in women's representation in parliaments, while ten remained static.

6.   The experts agreed that the equal presence of women and men in decision-making institutions is important, but they noted that there is a need to assess the contexts and conditions in which their equal presence can become effective in empowering women and men, and thereby sustain democracy, or, as many experts and activists assert, to go 'Beyond Numbers'.

7.   Reflecting a consensus in the scientific community, the experts at the meeting agreed that to study the issue of women's and men's equal political participation it is important to distinguish between descriptive and substantive representation.

- *Descriptive (Numerical) Representation* is where the individual represents a group by the virtue of sharing similar characteristics with the group such as race, sex, age, ethnicity or geographical area.

- *Substantive representation* is where the individual seeks to advance a particular group's policy preferences and interests, without necessarily being a member of the group as defined by race, sex, ethnicity, etc. In more concrete terms, substantive representation is about the impact of women in decision-making positions on policy formulation and implementation on gender mainstreaming or policies that are focus specifically on.

8.   As the numbers show, women's descriptive representation is on the rise, albeit all too slowly. With respect to substantive representation, experts noted that there is some evidence that women representatives do attempt to address women's basic needs, are approached by women's groups to address their concerns and that on the whole, women representatives are less corrupt and therefore bring some degree of credibility to governance in the eyes of the electorate.

9.   Experts pointed out that effective gender mainstreaming and gender equality policy depends in large part on national machineries having the ability to represent women and women's interests. The experts also asserted out that women's movements should also be seen as having a representational role to play; both in terms of substantive and descriptive representation.

10.   Reflecting the emerging consensus in the gender and politics research community, the expert group emphasized that men also have a crucial role to play in enhancing women's representation and participation. As allies, they can support women's initiatives and movements in their efforts towards equality. As major 'gatekeepers' of policy-making institutions, men can leverage women into positions of power either through direct selection and appointment or through putting pressure on other men.

11.   From a more general perspective, the experts noted that equal participation of women and men in decision-making institutions was a key element in the democratization of governance. By effectively increasing the descriptive and substantive representation of women in political life at all levels, the potential for change in political practices—and therefore in outcomes--towards the empowerment of women can be better realized; thereby promoting a more democratic and just society.

Increasing the number of women in decision-making: A focus on national legislatures

12.   Given the importance of national legislatures, the expert group focused on the processes, factors and mechanisms by which women gain entry into elected offices in legislative bodies. The following factors were identified as influential in promoting women's presence in legislatures:

- *The type of electoral system* –Research consistently shows that women's representation is highest in countries using proportional representation (PR) systems.

- *Political Parties* The impact of different types of party organizations and their internal culture, including clientelist parties, patronage-based parties and programmatic based parties, affect the influence of women within the party. Political parties are the major 'gatekeepers' in determining who will be candidates in elected office. They also play a critical role in advancing or impeding women's participation in decision-making bodies. The experts noted that parties may develop incentives to attract women to the party such as providing funding to run an election campaign, providing access to networks, training and skills development for women candidates to stand for election, or setting targets within the party for a certain number of executive positions to be held by women.

- *Quotas* Defined as a mandatory percentage of women candidates for public elections, quotas are seen to have been an effective tool to increase women's access to decision-making. Sixteen of the twenty countries that have reached the target of 30 percent women in national legislatures use some type of quota. The experts outlined the various types of quota systems and the ways in which they have contributed to increasing women's presence in elected office.

- *Training and skills development* In order for quotas to be effective, both women and men need access to training and skills development.

- *Women's movements* were also seen by the experts as being important in the process of increasing the numbers of women in legislatures. sinosition2 Tf 0 Tw (The) 0 TD -0.1164 Tc

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mass of women in elected office as being a crucial factor in their ability to influence policy processes and outcomes, the experts observed that this is not always the case. Recent research suggests that a simple rise in numbers does not necessarily add up to a more effective female presence in parliament. The way in which women enter positions of power can determine whether they will be politically marginalized or become key players in their political organizations and in the decision-making positions in public office that they assume. Studies have shown that the ability of women elected to parliament to act as catalysts of change both among their peers and within their parties depends on other personal characteristics, such as their political career paths (through party and grassroots activism or family ties), their personal ideological and moral preferences, and their degree of loyalty and attachment to the party or constituencies they technically represent.

15.   The experts discussed issues of access at different levels of governance. They noted that while local political arenas are more accessible to women, there are also in some cases high security costs for women who challenge local hierarchies. The experts also agreed that without both financial and socio-political capital, women will not be able to achieve real political power. Thus, together with the understanding of the structural impediments to their participation in decision-making, the emphasis should be on how women strategize, struggle for and succeed in mobilizing these assets to access and function in political arenas effectively.

16.   *Critical Structures* The experts noted that structural elements of each country's political system and environment exert a strong influence on women's effective participation in policy-making. Some particularly important aspects of the political environment were identified:

- the intensity of ideological conflicts and their impact on society, for instance through profound violence and disruption;

- whether gender equality issues are regarded as politically salient;

- the degree to which parties are open to dialogue with social movement actors, particularly the women's movement

- extreme poverty and human suffering and resulting economic and social dislocation.

17.   The experts agreed that decision-makers are more likely to adopt gender equality agendas in situations when, on the one hand, political elites are held responsible for their actions and, on the other hand, women are able and encouraged to participate in civic debates. This dual strategy is needed, because both political elites and civil society need to mobilize around gender equality agendas in order to create sufficient political will to support the equal inclusion of women and men in political decision-making.

18.   *Critical Junctures*--Experts noted that critical junctures such as peace processes, transitions to democracy, and the drafting of new constitutions, provide opportunities for women's participation. During such periods of change and transition, the monopoly of

political parties over policy decisions and the policy formation process in general is relaxed and access expands to non-traditional political actors. These are key moments for the representation of the interests of many different social groups. Such political opportunities are not gender-neutral and women's movements and agencies involved in such processes need to seize these opportunities to push for gender-sensitive reforms.

Such moments also allow temporary coalitions to form between women legislators around very specific issues on which there are no major divergences.

19.   Experts agreed that women's participation in decision-making has implications for promoting gender equality. Women have played an important role in writing and amending constitutions that address the issues of gender equality. Most countries have established national machineries for the advancement of women, often staffed and headed by women, which, in alliance with women legislators and local and regional women's movements have made important gains in terms of removing anachronistic and discriminatory provisions from legal codes and promoting women's rights. The experts noted that women play a key role in formulating and implementing gender equality policies and mainstreaming gender perspectives, particularly through alliances between national policy machineries, women's movement groups and women in public office or through the triangle of empowerment. The experts argued that women decision-makers also have the potential to play key roles in peace-building and socio-economic development.

20.   The experts agreed that despite some important areas of progress in women's impact on policy and decision-making at multiple levels and across multiple arenas, there is still much progress to be made. Profound obstacles remain that impede women's effective representation and participation. The following factors were identified as some of the more prevalent road blocks:

- women's exclusion from male-dominated policy domains, such as the military, macroeconomic policy and foreign affairs;

- the absence of women-friendly environments in political institutions such as parliaments and legislatures;

- regime instability and political violence;

- poverty and social marginalization.

Recommendations

21.   Recommendations for increasing the number of women in decision-making and enhancing their impact on decision-making were made in terms of what steps specific actors needed to take.   The following is a selection of the more important recommendations.

For increasing the number of women:
Government actors should:

- Ensure that in addition to national laws, relevant international instruments relating to full political rights for women, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, are ratified, integrated into national law and implemented, especially in those countries where women are still denied the right to vote and stand for election.
- Review the existing constitutional, political, legislative, and regulatory frameworks

For enhancing the impact women in decision-making

<u>All actors</u> should
- Encourage women to seek

**Civil society actors** should
- Collaborate with women parliamentarians, statutory bodies on gender equality and national mechanisms in the process of articulation and implementation of common gender equality agendas.