

## **FAWCO Human Rights committee: Political Empowerment for Women Information Sheet**

Political empowerment is one of the most important steps we can take toward solving discrimination against women. The progress we are making is encouraging; many women are overcoming barriers to take their place in political and economic positions of leadership.

Here are just a few:

- Ángel Gurría, Secretary-General of the OECD
- Anna Rossomando, Vice President of the Senate of Italy
- Bidhya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal
- Carrie Lam, Chief Executive of Hong Kong
- Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania
- Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway
- Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission
- Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand
- Katrin Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland
- Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia
- Marie Louise Colera Preca, President of Republic of Malta
- Martha Lucía Ramírez Blanco, Vice President of Colombia
- Mody Al Khalaf, Member of Parliament of Saudi Arabia
- Paula-Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago
- Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Zimbabwe
- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women
- Tadamori Oshima, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan

***The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*** states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the goal of equal participation by women and men in political decision-making. It is widely accepted that the improvement of women's political status is essential for the achievement of transparent, accountable government and sustainable development. While we are making progress in this direction in some arenas, in others we are not.

Less than 10 percent of Heads of State and Government and only around 24 percent of Parliamentarians are women. The OECD, the World Bank and others indicate that countries with more women in positions of political leadership invest more in health and education, and enjoy higher public trust in politicians. Wide variations remain in the average percentages of women parliamentarians in each region:

- *Nordic countries, 42.5 percent;*
- *Americas, 30.6 percent;*
- *Europe including Nordic countries, 28.6 percent;*
- *Europe excluding Nordic countries, 27.2 percent;*
- *Sub-Saharan Africa, 23.9 percent;*
- *Asia, 19.8 percent; Arab States, 19 percent;*
- *the Pacific, 16.3 percent.*

We need to move from rhetoric and promises to verifiable action in our advocacy for women's political empowerment. Women should have full and meaningful participation throughout all phases of policy-making, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation; at all levels in public and private decision-making, particularly in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings.

America now [ranks ninety-eighth](#) in the world for percentage of women in its national legislature, down from 59th in 1998, just behind Kenya and Indonesia, and barely ahead of the United Arab Emirates. Only five governors are women and twenty-four states have never had a female governor. The percentage of women holding statewide and state legislative offices is less than 25 percent. Locally, only twelve of our 100 largest cities have female mayors.

Increasing the number of women in public office will help to ensure that essential public services like health and education benefit all women, men, girls and boys. Women in public office will improve judicial systems so that they guarantee equal legal protection to women and men. Women in public office would help to reduce all forms of violence, particularly against women and children. Women in public office will promote the ratification of women's international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

**Take Action/ Learn More:**

- The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics is an excellent website sponsored by UN Women and UNDP. At <http://iknowpolitics.org/en> you will find an interactive network of women in politics sharing experiences, resources, and advice and collaborating on issues of interest.
- Be inspired by a powerful YouTube video: Women Political Leaders Summit 2019  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-political-leaders-summit-2019-live-stream-video/>
- Reach out to young people to help change the future: FAWCO contributes to girls' education and awareness-raising on women's right to participate in public affairs by promoting the Eleanor Roosevelt Worldwide Leadership Program for girls at Val-Kil New York. <http://www.ervk.org/>
- For more information or to inquire about joining the Political Empowerment for Women Committee of the Human Rights Task Force, please contact Erica Higbie at [politicalempowerment@fawco.org](mailto:politicalempowerment@fawco.org)