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INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND POLITICS COMMUNIQUÉ

1. We, the 49 delegates from 44 Parliaments across the world, came together under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 6-8 November 2012 at the Houses of Parliament in London to discuss Gender Representation in Politics, Parliament and Public Life. Our purposes have been to: focus on best practice, research and innovation to advance gender equality in decision-making; consider the role of different stakeholders in encouraging the participation of women in the political process; explore ways of advancing the social, economic and political position of women through policy and legislation; support women's empowerment at grassroots level through education and economic independence.

2. We **applaud** the achievements of leading women role models in *all* sectors of society.

3. We **endorse** the work of **UN Women** in supporting women and advising governments on the rights of women across sectors, and in raising the profile of gender equality.

4. We **affirm** the imperative of gender equality for progress on social and economic emancipation and development in societies across the world. We **support** the efforts of governments in striving towards Millennium Development Goal 3 **to promote gender equality and empower women**. We **remain concerned** about: all barriers to education for girls, particularly those from the poorest backgrounds, the continuing practices of forced marriage, sexual violence and abuse towards and the trafficking of women and young girls, the cruel practice of female genital mutilation and rape used as a weapon of war and we will **seek** the elimination of them all.

5. We **look forward** to the progression of the post-2015 development framework and **support** the aspiration for gender equality to be mainstreamed in the successor agenda to the MDGs.

6. We **highlight** the benefits to women *and* men of achieving gender equality in representation. In recognising that some progress has been made on parliamentary representation, we **regret** that



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disproportionately low numbers of women in political leadership roles and the continuing tendency to appoint women politicians to gender-stereotypical portfolios.

7. Whilst we **recognise** the limitations of gender quotas we **support** the efforts of Parliaments where quotas have achieved a greater balance of representation, and encourage the use of gender quotas where possible, alongside other measures, as we **aspire** to *parity* in all seats.

8. We **note the success of** gender-budgeting as a means of measuring the impact of national economic policies on women and men, especially in times of global economic instability, and we **highlight** the need for governments to take into account how legislation may impact men and women differently, including, but not exclusively, health, human rights, education, justice and employment; and we **call for** the abolition of all laws and practices which discriminate against women.

9. We **encourage**: mentoring to support candidates and newly elected parliamentarians; advocacy, the raising of awareness, programmes and practical support to address gender imbalance in decision-making roles within civil society, professional networks and associations, political parties and institutions; the continued career development of parliamentarians through peer-to-peer exchanges, participation in seminars, conferences, other fora and capacity-building programmes.

10. We also **encourage** our Parliaments to work harder to be more family friendly by adapting processes, practices and facilities and by sharing best practice through international parliamentary networks.

11. We **encourage** the media to achieve more prominent, balanced and accurate reporting of women in politics and public life and seek to work with it in this regard

12. We **praise and highlight** the work of: the IPU's Gender Partnership Programme, particularly the Gender Sensitive Parliaments project; and the CPA through the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. We **commend** the recently adopted IPU **Plan of Action for Gender Sensitive**



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Parliaments¹; and **strongly encourage** Members to bring this Plan of Action to the attention of their governments and parliaments.

13. We welcome and support the newly established Gender Parliamentary Reference Group on the Agora Portal which will enable: a continuing dialogue on gender issues; the sharing of experience and best practice, case-studies and resources; providing a parliamentary voice on the inter-governmental process, particularly by contributing to the Commission for the Status in Women (CSW) 57 which will take place in March 2013 – the priority theme of which is *Elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls*.

14. In support of the CSW 2013 priority theme we **shall engage** with stakeholders to initiate / revise our respective legislation on violence against women and girls. We **expect** such legislation to identify and fill gaps in national legal frameworks dealing with all forms of violence against women, using current data and best practice as an evidence-based approach to legislative and policy change. Furthermore we **will seek** to hold our governments to account on their responsibilities, policies and action plans to tackle and eliminate violence against women and to **encourage** the allocation of adequate budgets for those initiatives.

Westminster

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¹ <u>http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/127/res-plan.htm</u>



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