



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT



**PACIFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON ADVANCING WOMEN'S
REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENTS**

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

19 – 21 April, 2006

FINAL OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

PREAMBLE

Noting that the representation of women in politics is critical to achieving democracy, the wellbeing of communities and improving the status of women, parliamentarians, ministers, national directors and civil society organisation delegates from Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, at the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation in Parliaments held in Rarotonga, from 19-21 April 2006, endorsed the following outcomes.

Despite international commitments to gender equality; notably CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and UNSCR1325, women's participation in decision making and women's representation in Pacific parliaments is amongst the lowest in the world. We note with concern that most Governments have yet to realise these commitments and allocate necessary financial and technical resources. We also note with concern the decline in direct donor support to advancing women in politics.

Recalling the Auckland 2004 Forum Leaders call to address the low levels of women in decision-making, within the framework of the Pacific Plan and consistent with the Pacific Platform for Action and its emerging critical areas of concern;

Considering the findings and recommendations from PIFS and UNIFEM commissioned research on barriers to women's political representation; taking into account the importance of engaging men, women and youth in communities, and the media, to advance women's representation in parliament;

Emphasising the need to strengthen partnerships between National Women's Machineries, Ministers, Members of Parliament, civil society, regional and international organisations and the donor community, to build political will to address the issue of women's political representation;

The meeting endorsed the need to urgently address barriers to women's representation and participation in Pacific parliaments through the following Regional and National actions:

REGIONAL ACTIONS

I. PIFS to establish a monitoring centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics and decision-making in Forum Island Countries. The monitoring centre would:

- 1) Coordinate, collect, analyse and disseminate data on the political, socio-economic and legal status of women in FICs in partnership with international and regional intergovernmental, national institutions and non-governmental institutions and partners such as UNIFEM, SPC Pacific Women's Bureau, UNDP including the Pacific Sub Regional Centre (PSRC) and Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and the University of the South Pacific.
- 2) Maintain a database on the status of women in the region which is accessible to the public, and exchange data on a regular basis with countries, regional and international partners.
- 3) Establish and maintain an electronic network throughout the region.
- 4) Provide policy advice to the respective divisions of the Forum Secretariat and the Pacific Plan Office on achieving political and economic equality of women and men, drawing on relevant research, networks and national input.
- 5) Providing policy advice and working closely with the Forum Member Countries on implementing special measures to increase women's representation in parliaments.

II PIFS to initiate and coordinate sub-regional workshops on special measures and electoral reform to promote the political representation of women with international and regional partners and selected FICs.

The workshops should:

- bring together countries which have commonalities
- include key decision-makers and stakeholders
- be organised with national, regional and international partners with specialisation in these areas
- use indigenous researchers; and
- where feasible, be extended to include Pacific Forum Observers.

III PIFS to facilitate in collaboration with regional partners and donors, the continuity of support, including funding and legal advice, to Member Countries, National Women's Machineries and Non Government Organisations to enable special measures to be pursued.

IV PIFS with national and regional partners to initiate and/or support for further research on:

- barriers and opportunities for women's representation and participation in decision-making
- local government and traditional leadership including the roles of women;
- voting patterns; and family voting
- linkages between women, politics and media

Research endorsed by PIFS should be tabled with the respective national parliaments.

- V Regional agencies and stakeholders including SPC, PIFS, USP, UNIFEM and UNDP (including PSRC and RRRT) and PINA are encouraged to support Pacific media and women in politics initiatives aimed at increasing quality coverage of the current status of women in Pacific politics, and challenging negative stereotypes about women as political leaders.**
- VI The importance of gender related issues such as increasing the proportion of women in decision-making positions, especially parliament, be included on the Forum Leaders agenda in 2007. PIFS and member countries to follow through on this action.**
- VII PIFS in collaboration with IPU, IDEA and CPA to assemble toolkit materials on women's representation and participation which could include:**
- summary of electoral systems impact on women's participation
 - best practice in pre-election training of candidates
 - support network for elected women MPs
 - how to use the media as well as support the media in promoting women in politics/decision-making.
- VIII Countries to consider the role of youth parliaments and other measures in fostering young women leaders and their understanding of the constitutional process in country.**

NATIONAL ACTIONS

Governments, legislatures and other state entities are urged to consider:

- IX The introduction of reserved seats to fast-track women's representation in Parliament, especially in countries with weak political party systems or without political parties.**
- X The adoption of voluntary party quotas or quotas established by legislation particularly in countries with strong political party systems.**
- XI. Electoral reform away from single member constituencies towards multi-member constituencies with the intention of encouraging larger numbers of successful women candidates.**
- XII. Enacting legal quotas, where there are existing constitutional provisions for special measures for women.**
- XIII Actions taken at the national level should be matched with special measures for enhancing women's representation at the local level whether through both formal or informal institutions.**

- XIV Support for efforts to create an enabling environment that supplements institutional reforms to promote increased participation of women in politics. This would include engagement of civil society organisations, politicians, private sector and the community at large.
- XV Increased resourcing through gender budgeting for the implementation of measures to advance women's political representation as mandated by CEDAW, the BPA, the PPA and national commitments.
- XVI The adoption, review and/or implementation of campaign financing provisions or legislation in support of women's political representation.
- XVII Review of legislative and or policy environment for freedom of expression and information to assist political campaigns and voter education, advocacy on national issues, and partnerships towards a stronger voice and representation for Pacific women in the political life and governance of their nations.
- XVIII Strengthening relevant data collection agencies to collect, analyse and publish sex disaggregated data to inform monitoring of women's participation in political life.
- XIX Providing capacity building to parliamentarians and parliaments to provide enabling environment to address gender equality and equity issues.
- XX Promote the adoption of structural changes within parliament to advance gender equality and equity such as specialised committees or parliamentary caucuses.