

How to Promote Women's Access to Mandates and Other Important Political Functions

*Speech by Karin Junker
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Remember: the gender mainstreaming principle, which was an issue in Warsaw, was implemented in the action platform of the **UN Women's World Conference 1995 in Beijing**. It is a methodology as a kind of top-down-process, which should be used in all political processes and of all stakeholders at all levels, but it is not a tool. One of the tools in the Beijing's platform is the need of a at least thirty per cent participation of women in all decision processes, of course in mandates and other important functions - not only in politics, also everywhere in the society, economy, science, media and so on.

Of course it is still a long way to gender equality in politics but since Beijing we are on a good way, like the figures of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in its latest report "Women in Parliament in 2012", show. In 1995 the world average of women in parliaments was 11.3 per cent - in 2012 already 20.3 per cent. On the top of the list is not **Europe**, there are **the Americas**, especially **Latin America**.

World and Regional Averages of Women in all chambers of Parliaments, 1995 and 2012 in percentage:

World: 11.3 - 20.3

Americas: 12.7 - 24.1

Europe: 13.3 - 23.2

Sub-Saharan Africa: 9.8 - 20.4

Asia: 13.3 - 17.9

Pacific: 7.7 - 15.3

Arab States: 4.3 - 13.2

Even the **Arab states** are on the very end of the list, they received gradually the largest growth. The **Nordic countries** achieved in Europe the highest participation rate for women (1995: 36.4 per cent; 2012 42.0 per cent), but they are not the champions - this is **Rwanda** with 56 per cent (until the election in September 2013). **Burundi** and **Uganda** have also a female parliamentary representation at over 30 per cent. What makes **Rwanda** and its neighbour states so successful? It seems to me it is a combination of important changes in the society after civil wars and conflict situations and specific tools like quotas (30 per cent in each country). Dr. Agnes Matilda Kalibata, the minister for agriculture in **Rwanda**, says: "Bringing women out of the home and fields has been essential to our rebuilding".

Here the newcomers in the 30-per cent plus club: **Algeria** (31.6 per cent), **Mexico** (lower house: 36.8 per cent, upper house 32.8 per cent), **Senegal** (42.7 per cent), **Serbia** (32.4 per cent) and **Timor-Leste** (38.5 per cent). In 2012, 33 lower houses and 17 upper houses had reached at least 30 per cent threshold. Quotas are always a quite effective tool to promote women candidates.

Quota might be foreseen and enforced by law, or might be encouraged to be adopted by political parties. Another difference is whether they are applied only at national level or at a local one.

For example, **South Africa** is a country that uses a mixed system. It does not have legislated quotas at the national level, but only at a sub-national one. At a national level there are voluntary quotas for political parties and one party has a 50% quota. As a result, at the last national elections, women counted 42% of the seats. The same happens in countries as **Namibia** (quotas at subnational level and voluntary quotas that sometimes reach the threshold of 50%) and **Argentina** (where quota are applied at all levels, for political parties it varies from 30 to 50%).

Quota Projects and IPU demonstrated that "women continued to fare better when either legislated or voluntary quotas were used". A report by UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) found that 17 of the 59 countries that held elections in 2011 had introduced quotas and, in those 17, women gained 27% of parliamentary seats, compared with 16% in those without quotas. Indeed the first positions include countries where legislated quotas are in place as Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa. Sweden does not have legislated quotas but voluntary ones. It must be said that almost all parties adopted a 50% quotas and women and men are alternated in the list and sometimes 2 women and 2 men should be on the top of the list.

The chances for women candidates depend also on the electoral system. Of majority electoral systems normally gain men with a participation of 90 and more per cent. Mixed systems provide for women candidates a better chance, see in **Libya** where women won only 3.4 per cent of the majority-seats but 45 per cent of the PR-seats (= proportional representation electoral system). The result in **South Korea** is similar: 7 per cent majority-seats, 42 per cent of PR-seats won of women.

But the role of women in parliaments should not be reduced of winning a seat. Gender equality means also that women must have the same possibilities like men for all important political functions: to become speaker of the parliament (actually 14 per cent), to chair committees, to becomes ministers or even heads of the state or government just like Aminata Toure as current prime minister of **Senegal**. Currently there are two female presidents in charge in **Africa**: the former World Bank expert Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in **Liberia**, who was the first elected and in the meantime re-elected female president **in Africa**, in 2005 competing against the well-known soccer player George Weah and winner of the Nobel peace prize and secondly Joyce Banda in **Malawi**. Forbes placed her as the 47th most powerful women in the world. All together stands for a new kind of politics against the previous political corrupted class.

In Europa we have four heads of state or governments: Angela Merkel in **Germany**, Dalia Grybauskaitė in **Lithuania**, Helle Thorning-Schmidt in **Denmark**, who was also a former member of the European Parliament, and Alenka Bratusek in **Slovenia**. In **South Korea**, following the 2012 election, Park Geun-hye became the first South Korean women elected as president. But the champion again is **Latin America** where female presidents are elected in 40 per cent of the countries (even 60 per cent depending on the next elections in Mexico). Three women are currently heads of state in the region: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina (2007- ; she was re-elected in 2011), Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica (2010-) and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2010-). Portia Simpson-Miller (2007-) in Jamaica and Kamla Persad-Bissessar in Trinidad and Tobago (2010-) are current heads of government.

Gender equality in parliaments and political functions is not only a sign of gender justice. Becoming a politician for a woman is more than a matter of success in political fights. It is especially the representation of half of the population and that means half of the society with its own knowledge, experience and life conditions. Women have different needs and special concerns like equal pay, equal access to education and jobs, social interests, family and children

rights, the fight against sexual harassment and violence included. Women's presence in political bodies is evident for social progress. We can't miss their expertise.

In addition to quota systems and PR-electoral systems effective **sanctions** are also needed. This is not the case in **France** even if there was the 2000 so-named parity law adopted. The parties are requested to table election lists with the same number of women and men. It was quite successful at the regional level, but it is not at the National Assembly. The big parties prefer more or less to lose a lot of money with nominations of a male majority because they must accept financial penalties when they don't fulfil the parity rules. In 2012 the punishment for Sarkozy's Party UMP was cut of more than four million Euros for only fielding 26 per cent women. Among the 280 candidates of the Socialist Party were 106 women.

In **Serbia** the law on the elections of Members of Parliament requires one candidate of the "underrepresented sex" out of three - just with success. Women now account for 32.4 per cent of the seats.

In **Algeria** a constitutional quota sets a minimum number of woman candidates based on the constituency size. If political parties fail to fill this quota, the list is rejected. Despite a fatwa forbidding there was even formed an all-women-list. 7 500 women candidates run in the election and reached more than 30 per cent of the seats.

In **Mexico** on 30 November 2011 the electoral tribunal ruled to enforce full compliance with quota provisions of at least 40 per cent woman of the party nominations including alternates for the 2012 elections - otherwise the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) threatened to refuse the list if it was not changed within 24 hours!

But to have a real chance for political changings with the female expertise the women candidates must have to become elected with a winnable constituency or a winnable place of the list and also the support of the (male and female) voters. Therefore double strategies are needed: internal support for the women candidates and also the mobilizing of voters. All election campaigns must have a special gender budget for trainings, public and media activities, flyers and so on.

Till the election's day on 30th September in **Cameroon** strong efforts are made to support women candidates for the local and parliamentary elections. The Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) started a **woman in power campaign** in summer. The EU and a lot of different NGO's are everywhere engaged in a similar way. Domestic elections observers, international observer missions, national election authorities and also the boards of the polling stations should also have at least 30 per cent of female participants. The European Parliament has to take care for its missions. Some concerns can only be handled between women.

"A lot of men still believe that when you empower a woman, you are empowering her to hurt them," the British journalist Chris Mbunwe says, but he acknowledges "a steady change in the male mind-set: They discovered that there was something lacking - and the women's performance has been key. When a woman says: 'I am going to build a bridge here', she builds it. On councils and in parliament, they are generally more transparent, more accountable."