

Beijing goals on women in politics still unmet, new report finds

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Taking stock of women's political participation today gives cause for guarded satisfaction. Fifteen years after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, overall improvements have been registered in parliamentary and executive spheres of government. Still, the target of gender balance in politics is far off in too many countries. In the words of Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), "Things have certainly improved, but not nearly as much as we would want them to".

This is the main conclusion of a new survey on progress and setbacks of women in parliament released by the IPU. The survey is being published along with a new *World Map of Women in Politics 2010*, a poster-size map produced in cooperation with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women showing the number of women politicians by country and region.

Parliaments

By the start of 2010, the global average for the proportion of women parliamentarians reached a high of 18.8 per cent, compared to 1995, when it stood at 11.3 per cent. This equates to an average 0.5 percentage point gain per year. Ms. Rachel Mayanja, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues, noted that ECOSOC had set a target of 30 per cent women in leadership positions to be met by 1995. "We are a far cry from this goal. But we are determined to finish the Beijing agenda. We cannot afford any further delays in action to achieve the gender equality goals, including for women's political participation."

While overall progress has been slow, some countries have progressed at a much faster pace than others. The number of parliamentary chambers reaching the 30-per-cent target now stands at 44 (16.7%) spread across 38 countries. This is a six-fold increase over 1995, when just seven chambers in seven countries achieved this goal. The range of 30 per cent-plus chambers is diverse and includes 16 in Europe, 13 in the Americas, 11 in Africa and four in the Asia-Pacific region. The number of chambers with a membership of 10 per cent or less women members has more than halved, from 62 per cent in 1995 to 27 per cent today.

However, it is clear that challenges to women's political empowerment remain in all regions. In several parliaments there have only ever been a handful of women, and the number of parliamentary chambers where no women have seats has not shown any dramatic decline, dropping from 13 in 1995 to 10 today. Women's advancement into leadership positions in parliament has been much slower than the improvement in access to parliament. From 24 in 1995, there were 35 women Presiding Officers at the helm of parliaments at the start of 2010.

Ministerial positions

For women in the Executive and Heads of State, overall progress is even slower than at the parliamentary level. As shown in the World Map, women count for just nine out of the 151 elected Heads of State (6%) in 2010, up from just eight women leaders in 2005.

On average, women hold 16 per cent of ministerial posts. In total, 30 countries have more than 30 per cent women members, with Cape Verde, Finland, Norway and Spain achieving over 50 per cent women ministers. At the other end of the spectrum, the number of countries with no women ministers has increased — from 13 in 2008 to 16 in 2010. The majority of these States are found in the Arab region, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

Compared with 2008, there is more diversification in terms of the portfolios held by women. As with previous years, however, women tend to dominate portfolios related to social affairs, children and youth, women's affairs, and increasingly the environment.

Detailed information on our dedicated web page at:

<http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/csw10.htm>

Established in 1889 and with its Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPU - the oldest multilateral political organization in the world - currently brings together more than 150 affiliated national parliaments and eight associated regional assemblies. The world organization of parliaments also has an Office in New York, which acts as its Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

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