



# TUNIS FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

24,25,26 APRIL 2019



## GENDER EQUALITY FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMATION BACKGROUND TO THE DISCUSSION

In-line with the online consultation in February 2019, the Tunis Forum discussions focused on the how to get women into politics, rather than what women might be able to deliver in policy terms once in office. The recommendations reflect this practical emphasis. While discussions focussed on several aspects of women in decision making, access to campaign funding, lack of diversity in election commissions, and building young women's skills and confidence to enter and/or stay in politics were particularly pronounced.

It was argued that feminist thought should become the foundation of any capacity-building intervention and that without the engagement of women as equals in decision-making, societies cannot be democratic. The need for enabling environments so women can dedicate time to political work was emphasized; specifically, women need quality and affordable child care and to be freed from the responsibilities of household chores. Alongside this, the role of the media in either exacerbating or challenging negative stereotypes and bias against women as politicians or as experts was repeatedly raised.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Promote an enabling environment for women in leadership at the local level

- Promote the building of networks and alliances of elected women.

- Promote specific mechanisms and focal points on gender issues at the local level to ensure continued institutional capacity.
- Promote greater awareness among men and women of the issue of gender equality in local governance and decision making.
- Encourage positive engagement with the media and the promotion of a quota on women experts to give opinions and statements in news broadcasting (political, scientific, and all domains of expertise).
- Encourage women candidates and politicians to coordinate with feminist and women's rights organisations on a regular basis and to coordinate with peers from across party lines on issues of common interest and share good practices.
- Promote the implementation of Cities for CEDAW and similar initiatives; and encourage all municipalities to adopt it.
- Promote a flexible pace and work-life-balance in the organisation of local affairs compatible with other social and economic activities for elected representatives.

### **Encourage political participation in local government**

- Introduce and enforce quotas/Special Temporary Measures in all levels of government, national and local as well as in public administration to ensure that women have equal influence and participation in decision making.
- Push for measures to tackle the level of sexual harassment and violence against women who run for political office at all levels of government and eliminate impunity for perpetrators.
- To ensure electoral parity, diversify the composition of election management bodies at central, regional and local levels.
- Encourage the implementation of horizontal and vertical alternation between gender on electoral lists. Where parity exists, between elections replace a person leaving their position by a person of the same gender.

### **Empower candidates**

- Empower women candidates and women elected in politics and provide comprehensive training on good governance and skills development, including, for example, on gender budgeting, how to chair meetings, how to address the media, how to deal with negative attacks in (social) media, how to lead a team, how to manage a budget, including role playing and other concrete exercises.
- Develop media skills of women candidates and elected women, as well as build capacity of journalists to report on elections from a gender perspective.
- Encourage women's organisations to build links with political parties/parliamentarians and politicians to build knowledge amongst women in decision making positions about how to promote gender equality and engage feminist women as trainers for policy makers and nominated candidates.
- Promote mentorship and peer-to-peer experience sharing amongst women in politics, across levels of government, across time (encourage former politicians to help new

candidates) and across countries, to exchange good practices, lessons learnt and develop self-confidence.

- Train members of government and local councils on the importance of gender equality.

Women candidates often have less means and are therefore less visible than male colleagues. Form a new global alliance to campaign for making women candidates visible and help them to gain votes including from other women: “women support women candidates” and mainstream mechanisms that support women’s campaign funding.