

APPEAL

THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL MR. BAN KI-MOON

THE UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL UN WOMEN MS. MICHELLE BACHELET

Women and Politics 2010

At the invitation of the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and the Swedish Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna, 30 women's rights advocates from the civil society, UNDP, European Feminist Initiative (EFI), Members of Parliaments and politicians from local municipalities from 10 countries of the Middle East, EU and the Balkans, gathered in Alexandria, Egypt from 27th - 29th September 2010 to participate in the international seminar "*Women and Politics: Are women's rights possible to debate in the political sphere?*"

The seminar took place as a response to the guidelines and the recommendations of previous seminar organized in the same place and framework, on 14-15 December 2008, "Women in Politics: A Space for Social Changes", to enable further discussions on issues of concerns that women face in entering the political sphere as well as opportunities and strategies to overcome the identified challenges. Through exchange of experience and knowledge on local, regional and international level, from the perspective of politicians and representatives of civil society, the seminar aimed at strengthening cooperation between female politicians at the local, national and international level, in order to create synergies and encouraging broader public debate.

The participants at the seminar,

- Having regard to CEDAW, the outlined forms of discrimination and measures to address them;
- Having regard to the Beijing Platform for action 1995 and the recommendations for a minimum of 30% gender quota as an affirmative measure to support women's presence, voices and equal participation in all spheres of life;
- Having regard to UNSCR1325, 1820, 1889 on strengthening of women's participation in public and political life;
- Having regard to the conclusions and recommendations from the first seminar: "Women in Politics: A space for Social Change" at the SI Alexandria on December 14th-15th, 2008;

-Having regard to the conclusions and recommendations from the second seminar on “Women and Politics: Are women’s rights possible to debate in the political sphere?” at the SI Alexandria September 27-29, 2010,

A. Whereas political participation was defined as a development process, linked with equal opportunities and equal access to resources,

B. Whereas lack of political will in a context of general lack of democracy was underlined as major hinder for women to enjoy full and equal citizenship rights,

C. Whereas in the countries of the Middle East, adopting of just legislation protecting women’s rights is hindered by strong patriarchal structures, increasing militarization, increasing religious fundamentalisms, increasing political conservative trends, as in Europe is the implementation of the legislation,

D. Whereas the domination of a gender blind culture and traditions are hindering women’s participation in public and political life and hereafter on all levels of decision making and gender stereotypes, essentialism and the culture of shame prevents them from using their full potentials: These have been used consciously by male colleagues and media to attack women’s politicians integrity, to question their “intellectual” or “moral” capacity to perform, especially when the female politicians have “proved” other excellent capacities,

E. Whereas political parties are lacking democracy due to their patriarchal organization, structure and male driven agenda and do not facilitate logistically women’s participation in decision making within the party, just on the contrary: they often restrict and prevent female party members to enter or act sustainably in the political life,

F. Whereas economical dependence prevents women to participate, as even if they have financial means they are led to dedicate them for the family needs,

G. Whereas the general and open violence erupting during a military conflict and countries under occupation, as in Palestine and Iraq, limits women’s mobility and prevents them to enjoy same privileges and logistic support to participate in public and political life on an equal footage with men,

H. Whereas the participants in the 2010 seminar agreed to create **Alexandria Platform**, a space for furthering international discussions on promoting women’s participation in the political sphere and decision making, enhancing empowerment of female politicians and developing common feminist political agenda adaptable for the sensitivities of the different national contexts.

Appeal to the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon and the Under Secretary General UN Women Ms Michelle Bachelet and request that UN and the UN-Women do all that is in their powers to:

- 1. Advocate women's rights and gender equality as a top political priority for national development agendas and maintain these on the top of the political agenda of United Nations, with a vigilant eye toward not allowing any violations of women's integrity and women's rights in the name of culture, tradition or religion, and working for full separation of state politics from religious interference, which is seen as a major hinder to women entering the political sphere.**
- 2. Promote a regional and international approach and cooperation to strengthening of women's participation in the public and political sphere and the adoption of quota of minimum 30 percent for the participation of women in the public office.**
- 3. Enhance and demand consultative peace processes at the national level to be put in place where women's right advocates, human rights defenders, progressive thinkers, actors from the civil society and politicians are part of; and refrain from any peace negotiations if women promoting women's rights are not present at the negotiation table. Request and put in place measures to ensure the protection of women so that they can participate rightfully in peace negotiations taking place in the Middle East in the implementation of UNSCR1325, and in regard to initiation of broader national consultative processes, an integral part of negotiations for a just and comprehensive peace and an immediate end of the occupation.**
- 4. Appoint a special rapporteur on women refugees to investigate their status, the lack of protection and the violations of their rights, including the right to self determination.**
- 5. Ensure that CEDAW reservations are lifted and properly addressed within an agreed time frame not extending beyond the next reporting date.**