

Global norms and standards: Leadership and political participation

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A number of internationally agreed norms and standards relate to women's leadership and political participation. Among the most prominent are:

The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130) stresses its critical importance in all contexts. It calls on UN Member States to take a variety of measures, including:

- To review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women and their representation in elected bodies and to adjust or reform those systems where appropriate;
- To strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyse issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties;
- To promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process at the community, local, national and international levels;
- To investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences and, to ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible; and
- To encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels, and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making at all levels.

The 2003 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142) stipulates that Member States should take steps including to: monitor progress in the representation of women; ensure that measures to reconcile family and professional life apply equally to women and men; develop mechanisms and training programmes that encourage women to participate in the electoral process and improve women's capacity to cast informed votes in free and fair elections; promote the participation of young people, especially women, in civil society organizations; and develop programmes to educate and train women and girls in using the media and information and communication technologies.

The UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 calls on governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other representative groups to adopt a 30 percent minimum proportion of women in leadership positions, with a view to achieving equal representation.

The Beijing Platform for Action reiterates resolution 1990/15 and calls for an increase in women's representation in Strategic Objective G2.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women includes commitments under Article 7 on political and public life, and Article 8 on representation.