

Gender Equality-Challenges and Prospects: A Third World Perspective

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Abstract

Equality in gender representation in the political decision-making process and in bureaucracy has been commonly accepted as a crucial source of legitimacy of democratic governance. Today the percentage of women as voters has increased considerably, but their political participation is not equal to men and therefore women are unable to get an equal share in organizations that require decision making. It has been felt that the need of the hour is to redefine women's participation leading to the enrichment of their political life. Though many summits and international Conferences have advocated the importance of laws in ensuring women's rights and achieving gender equality, the position of women has not improved significantly. This is especially in the case of developing societies. The present paper on *Gender Equality-Challenges and Prospects: A Third World Perspective* was presented in national Seminar on the theme Gender Equality in the National Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochin, Kerala. The study begins with a strong conceptual framework and examines the extent to which women in the developing societies are enjoying rights, though provisions are enshrined in all constitutions.

KEYWORDS : Developing societies, Gender, human rights, legislation, representation of women, political participation

Introduction

An essential tenet of any democratic framework is the principle of human rights, including the granting and exercise of the political rights of both men and women. The development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible. Despite efforts over the centuries by prominent women—and men—the recognition and exercise of women's political, economic and social rights is by no means equal between women and men (UNDP, 1995). Women constitute half of the world's population and comprise 50 percent of the labour force, yet make up one billion human beings living in poverty. Decision making and priority setting continue to be largely in the hands of men. Taking into account gendered perspectives and involving both women and men in decision-making processes are a sine qua non of any democratic framework. Hence democracy, by definition, cannot afford to be gender-blind. It must strive towards equality and representation of women and men in decision-making processes and in the opportunities to achieve both these goals (Whittington, 2004).

Gender Equality: Conceptual Framework

Democracy has historically served men better than women. As a political system from the ancient Greece to the modern times of the 21st century, it has built on the public-private dichotomy and excluded women from citizenship. Women have been kept outside the public domain of politics as most of the political thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, John Lock, Thomas Hobbes and Hegel considered women fit only for domestic roles in the private sphere and maintained that there was no place for women in politics because of their suitability in caring roles as mothers and wives. The public private divide remains as the foundation of the various forms of world democracies (Phillips, 1998, Rai, 2000).

The ancient and modern democracies failed to recognize women as citizens. It was only the liberal political philosophy of the 19th century that promoted the idea of 'free and rational' individual which was used by suffragists to demand for the right for vote. However, as Rai maintains the conceptual basis of liberal theory is inherently gendered in ways, which perpetuates patterns of patriarchy and ignores gender subordination in both polity and society (Rai 2000:2). Feminist theorists also challenged the notion of abstract individual in liberal theory and argued it is not a gender-neutral category. This is why despite women had the right to vote they were not able to impact public policy and could

not bring private sphere in the preview of the public. Even western democracies left them dislocated on many fronts. When women enter politics within this patriarchal context of modern democracies, they are unable to play a role to radically change the sexual politics rather they largely play political roles on male's terms. The fundamental assumption in liberal democracies needs to be changed in order to create genuine political space for women within.

The period of liberal ascendancy has therefore been associated with some limited advances in women's formal rights, but without sufficient attention being paid to making their rights meaningful or substantive. In recent engagements with this theme, liberal theorists such as Rawls have placed questions of equality and social justice at the core of liberalism, in ways clearly at variance with more libertarian classical and neoclassical theorists. While Rawls's Theory of Justice has been the subject of feminist critique. for presuming that individuals are male household heads, and for assuming that justice holds sway within the family not all liberal engagements with questions of justice share these assumptions. In the writings of Nussbaum in particular, including her contribution to this project which synthesizes and develops her earlier work, there is a theory of justice that is at the same time liberal and feminist, while being attentive to the material preconditions that are necessary if formal rights are to be substantiated (Razavi, 2000).

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between females and males are interpreted by society to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviors that are appropriate for women and men and that determine women's and men's differential access to rights, resources, and power in society. Although the specific nature and degree of these differences vary from

one society to the next, they typically favor men, creating an imbalance in power and a gender inequality that exists in most societies worldwide .

According to the UN (2002), “equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights.” The term gender equality has been defined in multiple ways in the development literature and has been the subject of great debate in the U.N. It often means women having the same opportunities in life as men, for instance equality of access to education and employment, which does not necessarily lead to equality of outcomes. Several experts have proposed conceptual frameworks for understanding gender equality. The United Nations Human Development Report (1995) refers to gender equality in terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition) and opportunities (economic and decision-making). Similarly, the World Bank defines gender equality in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process)(World Bank,). Three primary domains of equality between men and women emerge from both of these frameworks:

1. capabilities, access to resources and opportunities,
2. agency or the ability to influence
3. contribute to outcomes.

Amartya Sen (2001) narrates seven forms of gender inequalities-mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity, profession, ownership and household. By gender equality, we mean equality between women and men, girls and boys in all aspects of life including education, health, nutrition, access to economic assets and resources, political opportunity and freedom from coercion and violence.(Grown c. et al2005) To achieve gender equality, progress must be made across all of these areas. Women and girls are subject to inequality not only in the public sphere but also within the private sphere such as within the home and their intimate relationships. Tackling the continuum of inequality in both the public and private spheres is therefore essential to addressing the root causes of gender inequality.

Protection of the Rights of Women: Milestones

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. The equal participation of women and men in public life is one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1979, and in force since 1981. Since the signing of the convention, 179 countries are party to it and bound to take measures to promote women's participation in decision making and leadership positions.

The 1990s were a landmark in the international human rights movement. There were many positive changes in human rights and especially in women's rights. In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing generated renewed pressure for the implementation of the CEDAW provisions: the Beijing Platform for Action identified 'inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels' and 'insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women' as two areas of significant concern where action was critical for the advancement of women. This was further expanded to encompass women's participation in post-conflict state building, which finds expression in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, passed in October 2000. In the debate introducing Resolution 1325 in 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that 'peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men in maintaining and promoting peace and security requires equal participation in decision-making'.³ As noted in the Millennium Development Goals, women's equal participation with men in power and decision making is part of their fundamental right to participate in political life, and at the core of gender equality and women's empowerment.¹ Women have to be active participants in determining development agendas'.

While in 1995 women accounted for 11.3 percent of members of parliament, this figure has increased to nearly 16 percent in 2005. More than 30 women have served as heads of government and/or state since 1995, and in October 2005 27 women presided over houses of parliament. Globally, women now hold more elective offices.

Table 1

Women in Parliament in 2005, by Region of the World

Region	Single House or Lower House	Upper House or Senate	Both Houses Combined
Nordic Countries	40.1%	-	40.1%
Europe – OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	18.9%	16.5%	18.4%
Americas	18.7%	18.5%	18.6%
Europe – OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	16.8%	16.5%	16.8%
Asia	15.1%	13.5%	15.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	14.9%	14.0%	14.8%
Pacific	11.2%	26.5%	13.2%
Arab states	6.7%	5.6%	6.5%
Global average	15.8%	14.7%	15.7%

Source : Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'Women in National Parliaments: Situation as of 31 January 2005.

At the end of 2012, the global average of women in parliament stood at 20.3 percent, up from 19.5 percent in 2011.¹⁰ Regional averages range from a low of 13.8 percent for the Arab states (although Morocco stands out with 17 percent) to a high of 42.0 percent in the Nordic countries (with Sweden at the top with 44.7 percent).¹¹ With

the exception of 2007, the average annual rate of increase in recent years has been 0.5 percentage points.12(Please see Table 2)

On this backdrop , the study intends to examine the following matters.

Objectives of the Study

- a) to examine the status of women in the developing societies;
- b) to study the challenges faced by women in developing societies in enjoying rights; and
- c) to study obstacles-faced by women in developing societies in political participation

Table -2
Proportion of Women in Parliament*

Rank	Country	Seats**	Women	% Women	Seats**	Women	% Women
1	Rwanda	80	45	56.30%	26	10	38.50%
4	Sweden	349	156	44.70%	-	-	-
7	Finland	200	85	42.50%	-	-	-
8	South Africa	400	169	42.30%	53	17	32.10%
10	Iceland	63	25	39.70%	-	-	-
11	Norway	169	67	39.60%	-	-	-
13	Denmark	179	70	39.10%	-	-	-
24	Germany	620	204	32.90%	69	19	27.50%
57	Pakistan	342	77	22.50%	104	17	16.30%
57	United Kingdom	650	146	22.50%	760	172	22.60%
70	Bangladesh	350	69	19.70%	-	-	-
77	United states of America	433	77	17.80%	99	20	20.20%
107	India	545	60	11.00%	245	26	10.60%

* Data as of 1st February, 2013

** Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament.

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union

Status of Women in Developing Societies

There is broad agreement that achieving gender equality in the world remains a challenge. Of the 1.6 billion people who live in extreme poverty, the majority are women(World Bank,2012)1. Every day, thousands of women and girls are victims of violence, including sexual abuse, trafficking and early and forced marriage. The health of women also remains a global challenge. In 2010, 287,000 women died during or shortly after child birth. Developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia had the largest share of these deaths(WHO,2012)2. In many developing countries, there are far fewer girls than boys to be found in secondary schools and it is therefore harder for them to find good jobs(World bank,2012)3.

Despite many notable advances in the situation of women in developing societies, there remains an undeniable gap between women and men regarding their political, economic, and social conditions and contributions. As half of their population, society had much to gain by effectively incorporating women into their development process. The United Nations Development Programme's 1997 Human Development Report states, "A creative commitment to gender equality will strengthen every area of action to reduce poverty—because women can bring new energy, new insights, and a new basis for organization. *If development is not engendered, it is endangered(UNDP,1997)*".

Even in countries with high numbers of women in national office, women generally do not have high levels of participation at the local level, and particularly not in mayoral positions. Regional averages for the proportion of women among locally elected councilors in Africa for example ranged from a low of 8 percent in Northern Africa to a high of 30 percent in sub-Saharan Africa(UNSD,2010). A study in the Asia-Pacific region specifically shows large variation of levels of women in local government. In terms of sub-national women's representation, India is first at almost 40 percent followed by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Australia and New Zealand, with most other Asia-Pacific countries falling below 20 percent(UNDP,2010). In Latin America and the Caribbean, an average of 25 percent of city councilors were women in 2011(ECAC2011). Mexico and Costa Rica each had 38 percent, followed by Suriname, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, all above 30 percent.(ECLAC,2011) In the United States, the level of women in state legislatures varies greatly from a high of 41.5 percent in Colorado to a low of 11.8 percent in Louisiana. In 2011, about one quarter of the United Kingdom's local councilors were women, but only 13.2 percent of elected council leaders were women. In Mauritania, 30 percent of the seats in municipal councils are held by women. In South Africa, 38 percent of local councilors were women after the 2011 elections, a decrease from the previous level of 40 percent in 2006.

Indian Scenario

The Constitution of India guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedom such as protection of life and personal liberty. Indian women are the beneficiaries of these rights in the same manner as the Indian men. Article 14 ensures equality before law and Article 15 prohibits any discrimination. Article 16(a) forbids discrimination in any respect of employment of office under the state on the grounds only of religion caste, sex, descent, and place of birth, residence or any of them.

In the post-independent India we had series of laws passed for the upliftment of women. These legislations have been brought in order to give equal rights and privileges with men, to eliminate discriminations against women, remove inequality between sexes, and remove external barriers coming in the way of their self-realisation and development. The important Acts passed for the upliftment of women are:

1. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955:
This Act provided equal rights to women to obtain divorce and also maintenance in certain cases.

2. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956:
By virtue of this Act a woman can adopt a boy or a girl as her son or daughter.
3. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956:
This Act provides that a woman is entitled to act as the natural guardian of her minor children.
4. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956:
As a result of this Act, woman has got equal rights in the inheritance of family property. This Act is a landmark in the history of Hindu law.
5. The Hindu Women Right to Property Act of 1973:
This Act has given more facilities to women. According to this Act, the daughter, the widow, and the mother can inherit property of the deceased simultaneously. Now women will hold her property absolutely with full right to sell, mortgage, and dispose of as she desires. But according to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, woman has only to enjoy her husband's share in coparcenaries property for her life time without any right to alienate property.
6. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961:
According to this Act, taking or demanding dowry is an offence punishable by imprisonment and or fines.
7. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976
This Act does not permit wage discrimination between male and female workers

Women Reservation Bill

The Women's Reservation Bill – which proposes to reserve 33 per cent of seats in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies for women – has been doing the rounds of the Indian Parliament in various forms since it was first introduced by the Deve Gowda government in 1996, failing each time ,to to pass.

Women in India are still not well represented in political life. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha since the first general elections reveals that they continue to be grossly excluded from electoral participation at the top even after many years after independence. Table given below gives the details.

Table 3

Representation of Women in Lower House of Indian Parliament

Lok Sabha	Total No of Seats (Elections Held)	No of Women Members who won	% of the Total
First (1952)	489	22	4.4
Second (1957)	494	27	5.4
Third (1962)	494	34	6.7
Fourth (1967)	523	31	5.9
Fifth (1971)	521	22	4.2
Sixth (1977)	544	19	3.4

Seventh (1980)	544	28	5.1
Eighth (1984)	544	44	8.1
Ninth (1989)	529	28	5.3
Tenth (1991)	509	36	7.0
Eleventh (1996)	541	40*	7.4
Twelfth (1998)	545	44*	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	543	48*	8.8
Fourteenth (2004)	543	45*	8.1
Fifteenth (2009)	543	59	10.9
Sixteenth (2014)	543	61	11.23

*Including one nominated member. *Source :Election Commission of India.*

Challenges in Attaining Gender Equality

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women achieved significant progress in the economically progressive areas dominated by Western culture, including North America, Europe, and Australia. In developing areas dominated by non-Western culture, however, women remain more or less subjugated, and in some countries they are stripped of any human rights. They are face following Challenges

1. Denial of Property Rights.

Exploitation and abuse of women, including outright violence, are acceptable in countries where women have an inferior social status by customary or formal law. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) study *Women's Land and Property Rights in Situations of Conflict and Reconstruction* (2001) documents the economic subjugation that results from the absence of property rights for women. Access to land is crucial in many African countries where subsistence farming is the main source of livelihood. In such countries, including Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia, women usually lose their land when they are widowed because their entitlement to the land is founded on their marriage. In theory, women may own property according to the formal civil law. In reality, however, the customary law prevails over the civil law.

Access to land entails access to water, which is an invaluable resource in agrarian societies. Women in these societies are responsible for bringing the water for domestic and farm use, spending eight hours on average walking to and from a water source, collecting the water and carrying it back.

Formal civil law sometimes joins the customary law in fostering the subjugation of women. The socialist regime in Ethiopia (1975–91) enshrined customary law by appointing only men to be guardians of the state-owned means of production, especially land. In Somalia and the Sudan, customary law has been reinforced by formal law founded on the Islamic law, which disavows any ownership of land and property by women (UNIFEM 2001)

2. Honor Killing

There is the need to strengthen the law against the practice of honor killing (“Pakistan Rejects” 2005). The Jordanian Parliament blocked a proposed law imposing harsher punishment of those convicted of honor killing. Honor killings are permitted under Jordanian law articles 340 and 98 (“Honour Killings’ Law Blocked” 2003). Turkey, the most westernized Muslim country, revised its “honor crimes” law as part of the country’s preparation for European Union accession proceedings, and it now imposes life sentence on the perpetrator of an honor killing (“Turkish MPs Probe Honour Killings” 2005). A day after a court in Istanbul handed down a life sentence for the murder of girl by her brothers, however, a survey by a university in Turkey showed that almost 40 percent of the respondents supported the practice of honor killing (“Honour Crime Defiance” 2005).

3. Practice of Dowry

The *Asia Observer* reported in 2002 (Reddy 2002) that the practice of dowry is prevalent in all socioeconomic groups in India. A young woman’s family must pay a dowry in order to avoid the stigma of having an unmarried daughter. Dowry is regarded as the bride’s contribution to the marriage because she is unlikely to have paid employment. The dowry is usually paid in the name of the groom or his family. Dowry related killings occur predominantly in South Asia. According to the UNIFEM report *Violence Against Women*, almost fifteen thousand dowry deaths are estimated per year in India, most of them in kitchen fires designed to look like accidents.

In Bangladesh, dowry disputes have led to many acid attacks, often causing blindness, disfigurement, and death. In 2002, a total of 315 women and girls were victims of acid attacks there (2005, 2). The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 made the giving or taking of dowry illegal in India, punishable by a prison term and a fine, but the formal law has had little effect on the operation of the customary law.

4. Lack of Legal protection

The gap between customary law and formal law, whether in regard to land ownership, honor killing, or dowry, leaves women helpless and confused about their actual rights. Says IshaDyfan, a lawyer and women’s advocate from Sierra Leon: “First, there is the colonial law, and then the customary law, and also Muslim law in our system. For women, and even for lawyers, this proliferation of law is like a minefield, and really discourages them from facing the legal system” (quoted in Rehn and Sirleaf 2002, 98).

According to the UNIFEM report *Women, War, and Peace* (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002), the vestiges of colonial law are not necessarily more progressive than the indigenous customary law. In Mozambique, Portuguese colonial law regarded the man as the head of the household. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgian colonial law required married women to obtain their husband’s permission before undertaking a judicial action. Confusion about the status of women, however, is not limited to Africa or India. In Guatemala, one article of the law provides for the equality of spouses in civil marriages, whereas another article declares that the husband is the representative of the

household. In addition, because most Mayan couples live together in common-law marriages, the Guatemalan law cannot be applied to their situation. In Asian countries such as Bhutan, Burma, and Nepal, socio-cultural and religious constraints hamper the implementation of legal reforms, and women fail to take advantage of the new opportunities accorded to them by such reforms. They are either ignorant of these reforms or unable to overcome the traditional norms in which they were brought up.

In March 2001, the United Nations Children's Fund released a report highlighting the continuing practice of marrying underage girls, effectively ending their chance for education. An extreme case is Nepal, where 7 percent of girls are married before the age of ten, and 40 percent by age fifteen. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger, Bangladesh, and other countries, large percentages of girls are married before their eighteenth birthday. The problem is so acute because of the numerous risks from pregnancy-related complications for girls who are not physiologically ready to bear a child. According to the United Nations report, pregnancy-related death is a leading cause of mortality for girls ages fifteen to nineteen. Early marriage and pregnancy are not the only hazards for underage girls. In Southeast Asia, many young girls are sold into prostitution by their poor families (UNICEF 2001).

Obstacles in Political Participation of Women in Developing Societies

The factors that hamper or facilitate women's political participation vary with level of socio-economic development, geography, culture, and the type of political system. Women themselves are not a homogeneous group; there are major differences between them, based on class, race, ethnicity, cultural background and education. The exclusion of women from decision-making bodies limits the possibilities for entrenching the principles of democracy in a society, hindering economic development and discouraging the attainment of gender equality.

Political Obstacles

At the beginning of the 21st century, over 95 percent of all countries in the world have granted women the two most fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and the right to stand for election. New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote, in 1893; and Finland was the first to adopt both fundamental democratic rights in 1906. Among the political obstacles that women face, the following feature prominently:

- a) the prevalence of the 'masculine model' of political life and of elected government bodies;
- b) lack of party support, for example, limited financial support for women candidates, limited access to political networks, and the more stringent standards and qualifications applied to women;
- c) lack of sustained contact and cooperation with other public organizations such as trade (labour) unions and women's groups;
- d) lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women's leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political life; and
- e) the nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favourable to women candidates.

Socio-economic factors

The social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies. For example, researchers point to the correlation between women's legislative recruitment and the proportion of women working outside the home, as well as the percentage of women college graduates. According to some researchers, socio-economic conditions take second place to electoral systems in women's legislative recruitment within established democracies.

In addition to lack of adequate financial resources, the socio-economic obstacles impacting on women's participation in parliament are:

- a) illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions; and
- b) the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations

Ideological and Psychological Factors

The ideological and psychological hindrances for women in entering parliament include the following:

- a) gender ideology, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles assigned to women and men;
- b) women's lack of the confidence to stand for election;
- c) women's perception of politics as a 'dirty' game; and
- d) the way in which women are portrayed in the mass media.

Despite the removal of legal barriers to women's political participation in many countries, governments remain largely male-dominated. Various factors influence women's *access to decision-making bodies*, including:

- a) lack of party support, including financial and other resources to fund women's campaigns and boost their political, social and economic credibility;
- b) the type of electoral system as well as the type of quota provisions and the degree to which they are enforced;
- c) the tailoring of many of these institutions according to male standards and political attitudes;
- d) the lack of coordination with and support from women's organizations and other NGOs;
- e) women's low self-esteem and self-confidence, endorsed by certain cultural patterns which do not facilitate women's access to political careers; and
- f) the lack of media attention to women's contributions and potential, which also results in the lack of a constituency for women.

Suggestions

Obstacles vary according to the political situation in each country. The following suggestions are recommended to improve the status of women especially in developing societies.

1. The introduction of political, institutional and financial guarantees that promote women's candidature to ensure equal participation of female nominees in electoral campaigns can improve the situation.
2. The state has to design legislative regulations for implementing effective quota mechanisms.
3. Recognise the role of educational programmes and centers designed to prepare women for political careers;
4. The state has to take initiative in the development of and support for schools (or centres) for the training of women leading them to have a participatory approach.
5. Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institution's especially the Gram Sabha where women can effectively take part in the democratic process.
6. Involvement of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations in the matter of awareness creation regarding the need for participation in democratic setup.

Concluding Remarks

Sweeping legal reforms have opened many doors for women in Western countries, but women have not always taken full advantage of these reforms. Legal measures are insufficient where traditional norms of a woman's place are still predominant in the culture. As in developing countries, customary law may still prevail over the formal law. It is up to both men and women to challenge the traditional norms to bring about a genuine change in women's condition.

Rights-based strategies, always a central part of feminist campaigns for justice, have acquired a new international pertinence in the twenty-first century. Rights have always been integral to citizenship, and in its modern, global idiom of human rights, the emphasis is upon their multidimensional and indivisible character as well as their transnational applicability. If rights are interpreted and contested within conditions of political struggle, political freedom is a condition of their contestation as it is of their realization.

It can be observed that it is not *democracy*—as measured by a nation's level of democratic freedoms at a particular moment in time—but rather *the democratization process* that matters for women's legislative representation. Positive measures should be taken to assure representation that reflects the full diversity of societies, with the target of the '*gender-balanced*' legislative bodies and '*gender responsive governance*

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