

MEETING OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

28th Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum

Canberra, Australia, 13-16 January 2020

1. The Meeting of APPF Women Parliamentarians convened on Monday, 13 January 2020. This was the first time that the meeting was convened as a plenary session following the opening ceremony of the APPF.
2. The plenary session was chaired by Senator Sue Lines, Deputy President of the Australian Senate.
3. The meeting discussed three topics—namely, promoting gender equality for sustainable development and shared prosperity, realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; improving access for women and girls to education, innovation and technology; and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in decision-making at all levels. Delegates from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia (including the first female Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives), Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia and Vietnam elaborated on these themes.
4. Delegates noted that APPF Member Countries are making progress towards equality but that there is more to be done to close gender gaps in economic participation, education, health and political empowerment and to eradicate violence against women. The meeting considered that member countries must continue to focus on these areas and also continue to transform their international commitments into national law.
5. Empowering women and promoting gender equality is seen as crucial to accelerating sustainable development. Many women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right but also has multiplier effects across other development areas. This must be underpinned by a focus on the eradication of gender based violence. Ending discrimination and violence requires a concerted effort from the public and private sectors as well as broader society.
6. Gender equality is a standalone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) but also cross-cuts the other goals. Without addressing gender equality and without a gender-responsive implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, SDGs cannot be achieved, poverty cannot be eradicated and peace cannot be sustained.
7. The meeting encouraged member countries to improve access to education, innovation and technology for women and girls and urged their parliaments to take action to ensure, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that no-one is left behind. SDG 4 recognises that obtaining a quality education is the foundation to creating sustainable development. Globally, women are underrepresented in both education and employment for innovation and technology. Technological and industrial change is also posing new challenges. With quality education, women will not only be able to improve their living conditions but also reap the potential of trade, economy, technology, industry and information in a globalised world.

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8. Member states are encouraged to take direct action to improve foundational skills and ensure all girls, boys, women and men have equal opportunity to pursue, complete and benefit from high-quality education and training. Women's and girls' participation in education in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths should be promoted.
 9. Promoting the meaningful inclusion of women in all decision-making positions is seen as key to advancing society. Women's participation in politics affects the range of policy issues that get considered as well as the types of solutions proposed. Member countries are encouraged to increase the number of women in decision-making positions at all levels of government and within public institutions and provide equal opportunity for women and men working across policy areas and government bodies. Several speakers highlighted measures being taken in their countries, such as introducing quotas, to get better representation for women.
 10. Women should be included in decision-making at all levels. This includes the APPF. The Executive Committee is called on to consider APPF's own rules and recommend changes to the plenary to ensure there is female representation on the Executive Committee.
 11. Designing and collecting better gender and disaggregated data will support countries to monitor, evaluate and review the progress they are making. This data can also be used to ensure effective monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and women's participation, generate insights and target policies and programs more effectively.
 12. The Working Group, chaired by Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP and attended by delegates from Australia, Indonesia, Russia, Vietnam and the Cook Islands, submitted three draft resolutions to the Drafting Committee for further discussion and approval.
 13. We express our gratitude to all delegates for their enthusiastic and constructive participation in discussions.
 14. We look forward to the next meeting of APPF Women Parliamentarians in the Republic of Korea in 2021.

CANBERRA, 15 JANUARY 2020