



Netherlands Institute for  
**Multiparty Democracy**

**Roundtable on  
Political Party Funding and Women's Participation in Political Life**

**Tbilisi, June 29-30, 2011**

**Roundtable Conclusions on Women's Participation in Political Life**

*Georgia ranks among the lowest participating States in the OSCE region in terms of women's representation in parliament. Women's under-representation seriously compromises the democratic political development of a society, while the systematic inclusion of women serves to strengthen policy effectiveness and expand the political agenda. To discuss some of the key issues that affect Georgia's political development, the Central Electoral Commission of Georgia, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) convened a Roundtable to address the issues of women's participation in political and electoral processes on June 30, with the broad participation of Georgian political parties, women political actors, non-governmental organizations, international donor and development agencies, gender and political experts, and the Georgian media.*

*Roundtable participants discussed several key issues relating to women's participation in the democratic development of Georgia. These include: 1. the low level of women's representation in political and public life, 2. the impact of electoral systems and institutions on levels of women's participation, 3. the role of political parties in influencing the political participation of women, and 4. measures and strategies political parties can adopt to strengthen internal party democracy and women's participation. The Roundtable participants identified a number of challenges to women's political participation in Georgia, as well as measures to address these challenges.<sup>1</sup>*

*Participants developed the following conclusions as a means to promote women's participation in political life.*

**Legal framework**

1. Women's participation in government is low. Women's participation in governmental structures (e.g. legislature and local government bodies) should be increased from current levels. Further, women should be considered for leading positions in administrative bodies at all levels.

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<sup>1</sup> These conclusions have no official status and were not developed through consensus. Their inclusion in this report does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the organizers, including the OSCE/ODIHR, the US Government, USAID, IFES or NIMD.

2. Legislative regulations are mostly declarative in nature. Legislation is neutral towards gender issues, creating an environment of indirect discrimination in terms of gender. Provisions to protect women in the workplace are not considered by the Labor Code and mother's rights are not protected as well. Legislation should be enacted to actively encourage and support women's participation in political activities.
3. Temporary special measures such as gender quotas are not currently included in the legislation. While there have been efforts to establish quotas, these have not yet come to fruition. In the absence of a legislative gender quota, parties are encouraged to establish voluntary quotas. Voluntary quotas can be successful if large and influential parties agree to this initiative. At present, parties lack voluntary quotas to ensure women's representation on party lists.
4. Women's representation is also influenced by election systems. The existing practice has shown that a proportional election system is particularly effective in increasing women's representation, due to greater electoral incentives to develop a candidate list that is balanced in terms of representation of different interests and groups.

#### **Women's participation in political parties**

5. Women's interests and incentives to become actively involved in the political sphere are very low. This can be attributed to social conditions, the political environment, a patriarchal society, and political pressure, particularly towards opposition candidates. Addressing this last problem is quite difficult for women as opposition candidates in both the governmental and private sectors fear that they may lose their jobs.
6. There is a lack of awareness among political party leaders regarding the resources, capacities and potential of women within their own parties as well as the number of women voters. Political parties will directly benefit from enhancing their knowledge of their electorate and where their support derives from, including party support among women voters, number of women party members, number of women decision-makers and number of women members at local party levels.

#### **Internal party democracy and women's political participation**

7. Political parties generally have a low level of internal democracy. Parties should adopt internal party regulations to increase women's representation and their promotion both within internal party structures and in carrying out the parties' political activities. This can be partially achieved by developing clear and transparent guidelines for the recruitment of party members, the recruitment and selection of party candidates, and the allocation of party resources to members and candidates. These guidelines can include specific provisions to ensure equality of opportunity for women and men in all party activities and processes, including candidate recruitment, participation in decision-making bodies such as nomination/selection boards, and equal access to party resources. It is equally important that both women and men are involved in all party processes, including planning and budgeting.
8. Internal party management policies, procedures and decisions regarding resource allocation can have a strong impact on levels of women's participation as party decision-makers and candidates for public

office. These linkages should be further explored and discrepancies in allocation to women and men addressed.

9. Likewise, linking public funding for political parties to the proportion of women candidates is a possible means of providing incentives for political parties to increase the number of women put forward as candidates on party lists.

#### **Political and public awareness of gender equality and women's political participation**

10. There is no consolidated, organized, and broad-based movement to inform society and increase women's self-awareness of their contributions to public life. In the run-up to elections in both 2012 and 2013, this is an important moment for Georgian civil society to revive movements (such as a coalition) to coordinate advocacy and awareness raising efforts.
11. Likewise, increasing public awareness of gender issues will contribute to political parties' development as they will receive more support from society. As there is presently no interparty women's political union to lobby gender issues within and among political parties, active women party members should consider forming such a union.
12. The role of the ruling party, as the organization having the most effective and powerful tools to regulate and promote the above-mentioned issues, is particularly important. Due to its high profile in government, the ruling party is well placed to promote gender-sensitive political party regulation, which could result in legislative reform.

#### **Strategies to enhance women as political party members, leaders and candidates**

13. There are many strategies that civil society and political activists can implement to provide incentives to political parties to increase women's participation. For example, "double pressure" should be implemented on political parties (both leaders and members) by the public on the one hand, and decision-makers and those who influence opinion on the other. Coalitions of women civil society organizations and gender advocates are another potential driver of change, particularly in developing and implementing "parallel campaigns" which capitalize and build on the existing knowledge and resources of women civil society activists.
14. An open dialogue between men and women citizens, political actors and government representatives should be launched to discuss the above-mentioned issues. Special focus should be paid to the regions.
15. The role of media in encouraging women's participation is very important. Special training should be carried out for journalists as well as for senior leaders in the governmental, non-governmental and public sectors.