
“GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA”

11-13 May
Hotel des Almadies
Dakar, Senegal



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS | 3 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 6 |
| INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| Opening Ceremony | 9 |
| Workshop Methodology | 10 |
| BACKGROUND | 11 |
| 2.1 Experiences and Trends of Women in Political Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa | 11 |
| Rationale | 12 |
| 2.3 Current Challenges and Opportunities | 13 |
| THEMATIC ISSUES COVERED | 14 |
| 3.1 Human Rights and Elections | 14 |
| Human Rights and Elections Context | 14 |
| Discussion Points | 15 |
| Action Points | 15 |
| 3.2 Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) | 16 |
| EMB Context | 16 |
| Discussion Points | 17 |
| Action Points | 17 |
| 3.3 Political Parties | 18 |
| Political Parties Context | 18 |
| Discussion Points | 18 |
| Action Points | 19 |
| 3.4 Women's Access to Resources for Elections | 20 |
| Women's Access to Resources Context | 20 |
| Discussion Points | 20 |
| Action Points | 21 |
| LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD | 21 |
| 4.1. Human Rights and Elections | 21 |
| 4.2. Electoral Management Bodies | 22 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.3. Political Parties and Elections..... | 23 |
| 4.4. Access to Resources | 23 |
| 4.5. Research/Assessment and Monitoring | 24 |
| 4.6. Lobbying and Campaigns | 24 |
| 4.7. Capacity Building | 24 |
| 4.8. Alliances | 25 |
| CONCLUSIONS..... | 26 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 27 |
| Governments | 27 |
| Political Parties | 28 |
| EMBs | 28 |
| ECOWAS and ECCAS | 28 |
| Civil Society Organizations | 29 |
| Women's Leaders and Organizations..... | 29 |
| ANNEXES | 31 |
| Workshop Programme..... | 31 |
| List of Participants | 35 |
| Communiqué..... | 42 |

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ACHPR | African Charter on Human and People's Rights |
| AU | African Union |
| CAR | Central African Republic |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CPRD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| CPRW | Convention on the Civil and Political Rights of Women |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| DSRSG | Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General |
| ECCAS | Economic Community of Central African States |
| ECONEC | ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EMBs | Elections Management Bodies |
| HR | Human Rights |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IDEA | International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IFES | International Foundation for Electoral Systems |
| INEC | Independent National Electoral Commission |
| IPU | Inter-Parliamentary Union |
| NDI | National Democratic Institute |
| NDP | National Democratic Party |
| OHCHR | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| OSIWA | Open Society Initiative for West Africa |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SMSG | Special Representative of the Secretary-General |



| | |
|-----------------|--|
| TMS | Temporary Special Measures |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| UEMOA | West African Economic and Monetary Union |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programmes |
| UNOWAS | United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel |
| UNSCR | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| URD | Union pour la République et la Démocratie |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A regional workshop on the theme of “**Gender, Human Rights and Women's Participation in Elections**” in West and Central Africa was held in Dakar, Senegal from 11-13 May 2016 under the auspices of UN Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The workshop convened over 40 participants from 15 countries¹ in the West and Central Africa regions that had recently organized or are preparing for elections in 2017 and 2018. The participants, with the majority being women, including women former presidential candidates from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, were drawn from Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI), Political Parties (PP) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The overall objective of the three-day workshop was to take stock of women's participation in elections in both regions in recent years and facilitate knowledge sharing, the compilation of good practices and to develop joint strategies on ways to improve women's leadership in political governance. The outcomes of the workshop were also designed to contribute towards updating and shaping the programmes and strategies undertaken by UN Women, OHCHR, and ECOWAS to promote women's political leadership in the regions, as well as encourage gender mainstreaming in electoral processes in the countries of West and Central Africa.

The workshop covered four broad thematic areas: **Human Rights and Elections, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), Political Parties** and **Women's Access to Resources for Elections**. These thematic areas were selected to provide a holistic view on the challenges and opportunities facing women's participation in political governance. It is evident that in spite of women's significant numbers as voters in West and Central African countries, they are still largely under-represented as political leaders and elected officials. Countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, and Republic of Congo have less than 11 percent women in parliament as of February 2016, according to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In the last rounds of legislative elections in 2015, women's representation was a meager 7.2 percent in Benin, 9.4 percent in Burkina Faso and 5.6 percent in Nigeria.

Countries that have been successful in increasing women's representation are those that have not only put in place Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) but also enforced their implementation. The parity law in Senegal, imposing on all political parties a specific percentage of women on their list of candidates, has led to a sharp rise in women's representation, with 42.7 percent of women elected in parliament in 2012 and 47 percent in local councils in 2014.

The workshop identified existing structural and political obstacles undermining the growth of women's political participation. Barriers include male domination of politics (including political parties and state institutions),

¹ The countries represented were Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Please see annex for the complete list of the participants

gender- discrimination, gender-blind electoral arrangements, gender-defined roles, cultural and religious biases, gender-based violence as well as women's limited finances, and limited technical skills. The uneven political and socio-economic playing field will continue to limit women's active and full participation in the development of their respective countries unless concerted action is taken at regional and national levels to address this concern. Women's under-representation in governance and politics in these countries has the potential of undermining the realization of women-specific development goals such as Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by 2030.

Under each thematic area, participants identified good practices across regions, possible entry points to consider, and strategies and alliances to develop in order to engage key actors at national level for the development of policies, laws and practices that would continue to enhance women's political participation.

The workshop made several recommendations for actions that will aid in promoting and improving women's participation in governance and politics as well as their representation in political leadership.

Governments in West and Central Africa are called upon to:

1. Introduce temporary special measures to improve women's political participation;
2. Strengthen existing temporary special measures to ensure full implementation;
3. Ensure that gender ministries promote a positive image of women in politics;
4. Demonstrate greater commitment to implementing the Maputo Protocol provisions which call for the equal representation of women in electoral processes at all levels.

Political parties in West and Central Africa are called upon to:

1. Adopt and implement gender parity principles within their party constitutions and leadership structures;
2. Ensure party processes enable women to achieve political, professional and family life balance;
3. Strengthen the technical capacity of their female candidates.

ECOWAS and ECCAS are called upon to:

1. Expand support that assists the promotion of women's rights and political participation;
2. Support the development and application of minimum standards for the integration of gender considerations into the work of EMBs;
3. Establish a funding facility to support capacity development, mentorship and training of aspiring and active women politicians.

UN Women and OHCHR are called upon to:

1. Provide the necessary support to implement the recommendations of the workshop;

2. Support regional bodies to create a funding facility to support capacity development, mentorship and training of aspiring and active women politicians;
3. Provide capacity building programmes to women's organisations and other CSOs to enhance their work in promoting gender equality and women's rights.

Civil Society Organizations are called upon to:

1. Hold government, political parties and other institutions accountable for ensuring women's rights in politics;
2. Advocate for a gender assessment of electoral frameworks and systems;
3. Lobby for the adoption and/or implementation of laws on parity or Temporary Special Measures (TSMs);
4. Facilitate the establishment of a regional networking platform for women in politics;
5. Facilitate alliance-building between women running for political office and other constituencies;
6. Support mentorship programmes for young women in politics.

Women's Leaders and Organizations are called upon to:

1. Work in solidarity to create both national and regional networks of women politicians, parliamentarians and subject-matter specialists;
2. Advocate for a gender assessment of electoral frameworks and systems;
3. Publicize examples of good practice - especially within their region – to sensitize society to steps that can improve women's electoral and political participation.

The workshop also emphasized the need to build alliances for the promotion of women's rights in elections and governance in West and Central Africa. These alliances include entities in the public and private sectors, as well as CSOs and UN agencies. In particular, UN Women and OHCHR were called upon to enhance the capacities of women to fully participate in the democratization process of their countries and the regions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The regional workshop on the theme, ***“Gender, Human Rights and Women’s Participation in Elections”*** in West and Central Africa was held at the Almadies Hotel in Dakar, Senegal from 11-13 May 2016. The workshop was organised by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The overall objective of the workshop was to take stock of women’s participation in elections in both regions in recent years and to facilitate knowledge sharing, to compile good practices and develop joint strategies on ways to improve women’s leadership in electoral processes.

The meeting provided a unique opportunity to bring together high level representatives of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), parliamentarians, political parties, regional organisations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) from 15 countries of West and Central Africa. Over 40 participants, mainly from countries that had recently organised, or are preparing for elections, were invited to the three-day meeting to share good practices and review strategies that can facilitate increased participation of women in electoral politics in both regions. The majority of the participants were women, including women former presidential candidates from Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Niger, and aspiring young political women leaders (for a complete list of the participants, see Annex 2).

1.1 Opening Ceremony

The meeting began with remarks from Mr. Axel De Ville, Acting Regional Director of UN Women’s West and Central Africa Regional Office; Mr. Andrea Ori, Regional Representative of OHCHR; Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow, the Commissioner of Social Affairs and Gender of the ECOWAS Commission; Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and Ms. Ormolu, Kari Nain, Representative of the Senegalese Ministry of Women, Families and Children, who officially opened the three-day workshop.

In their remarks, the speakers at the Opening Ceremony stressed the timeliness and importance of the workshop. They noted that not only do women quantitatively represent more than 50 percent of the population in both regions, consisting of the biggest electorate, but also that there will be stunted development and security without the inclusion of half of the population in decision-making processes. All the speakers established the correlation between elections, human rights, development and security and stressed that access to gender responsive elections is indeed a fundamental human right. They highlighted the mandates of their respective institutions in improving women’s political participation and stressed that the persisting challenges are not due to the dearth of legal instruments, but rather to the lack of political will and enforcement of the existing instruments. They reminded the participants that the international human rights framework, regional instruments and national legal frameworks across the regions all promote non-discrimination, equality, and human dignity. In spite of these legal instruments, majority of the countries in the two regions

have less than 11 percent of women represented in national parliaments. Paradoxically, the two regions have seen two women presidents² despite the severely low representation of women in governance and politics in Africa.

1.2 Workshop Methodology

The three-day workshop was held under a strict policy of non-attribution to foster candid and open dialogue and build mutual trust and confidence among participants.

The workshop utilized presentations, group work and plenary discussions with the support of a facilitator to deliberate on the four key thematic areas, which were:

- 1. Human Rights and Elections;**
- 2. Electoral Management Bodies;**
- 3. Political Parties; and**
- 4. Women's Access to Resources for Elections**

The four thematic pillars highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing women in governance and politics in both regions. Two subject-matter experts were invited to make a presentation under each thematic issue, followed by a question and answer (Q&A) session. Participants were then divided into three working groups with a chairperson and rapporteur to respond to the following three questions:

- 1. What entry points exist to enhance the participation of women in politics?**
- 2. What has worked as good practices from other countries?**
- 3. What strategies and alliances are necessary to re-engage key actors?**

On the last day of the workshop, a press conference was held, where a cross-section of the participants and organizers interacted with the press to share their views on the importance and outcomes of the meeting. At the end of the deliberations, a communiqué was issued capturing the essence of the workshop and the key recommendations to guide follow-up action.

This report presents the background and rationale for the organization of the workshop, and then briefly covers the four thematic areas before summarizing the outcomes of the three-day deliberations. The report ends with the recommendations put forward by participants to key actors, including governments, inter-

²In Liberia and Central African Republic

governmental organizations, the UN and civil society groups for the promotion of women's active and full participation in governance and politics and improvement in the level of women's representation in elected office.

2. BACKGROUND

Elections are indispensable in a democracy; they are the means through which eligible voters determine their leaders and representatives in parliament and local government, who in turn make laws and policies that impact positively or negatively on the quality of life of citizens and residents of a country. Any limitation on participation in elections, as voters or candidates, by any group will result in the group's under-representation in the policy and law-making processes of the country, and an inability to protect and promote its interests. In spite of their critical mass, women continue to be under-represented in politics, not only in Africa but across the world. Remarkable progress has been made over the last two decades to increase women's participation and representation in politics across the world. UN Women's data shows that 11 women served as Heads of State, and 10 as Heads of Government, in February 2016.³ According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), women represented 22 percent of all national parliamentarians as of February 2016,⁴ compared to less than 12 percent in 1995. However, the number falls below the target of "gender balance" as stipulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to which 189 states parties pledged commitment more than 20 years ago. Despite all the progress in normative framework, there is more work to be done to reach this target. The under-representation of women continues to infringe on their political rights and restricts their ability to influence decision-making process in their respective countries.

2.1 Experiences and Trends of Women in Political Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa

In sub-Sahara Africa, women represented 23 percent of all national parliaments as of February 2016.⁵ Despite the remarkable progress in Africa, there remain significant variations between and within regions. In many countries in West and Central Africa, women are still largely under-represented in politics as political leaders and elected officials. Countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, and Republic of Congo have less than 11 percent women in parliament as of February 2016.⁶ In the last rounds of legislative elections in 2015, women's representation was just 7.2 percent in Benin, 9.4 percent in Burkina Faso and 5.6 percent in Nigeria. Only Angola, Cameroon and Senegal have more than 30 percent women's representatives.

So far, countries that have been successful in increasing women's representation are those that have not only put in place Temporary Special Measures (TSMs) but also enforce the measures. TSMs in use in West

³UN Women <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures> accessed 13 April 2016

⁴Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> accessed 13 April 2016

⁵Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> accessed 13 April 2016

⁶Inter-Parliamentary Union. Http accessed 13 April 2016

and Central Africa are reserved seats measures, voluntary quota measures and legislated candidate quotas.⁷ In 2010, Senegal adopted a gender parity law, which demands political parties to ensure that at least half their candidates in local and national elections are women (a compulsory quota system). This led to a sharp rise in women's representation, with 42.7 percent of women elected in parliament in 2012 and 47 percent in local councils in 2014.⁸ Gender quotas for political parties in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger are either weakly enforced, or implemented on a voluntary basis. Sierra Leone legislated for the reservation of seats for women representatives at the local level, while Niger made similar legislation for reserved seats in the National Assembly and local governments. Niger also has legislated quotas and reserved seats. In parliamentary and local elections, the lists submitted by political parties, groups of political parties or groups of independent candidates should include candidates of both sexes. At the announcement of final results, the proportion of elected candidates of either sex should not be less than 10%' (Article 3 of Law 2000/08 establishing a quota system for elected offices). Any political party or group of independent candidates that obtains at least 3 seats in a constituency must ensure the implementation of the 10% quota requirement (Decree 2001-056/PRN/MDSP/PF/PE of 28 February 2001 on the application of the quota law).⁹ Although Cape Verde has not put in place any TSMs, the country attained gender parity in the government in 2006, and from 2014, the government was led by a majority of women. In the Cape Verde, parliamentary elections in March 2016, the women were out-numbered by almost eight to one as only 73 women out of 551 candidates took part. The women won 17 out of the 72 seats (23.6%) in parliament¹⁰. In Cape Verde, the electoral legislation does not provide for quotas in quantitative terms, however it includes the requirements for balance between sexes in candidate list. Paragraph 1 of Article 415 of the electoral law N° 92/V/99 on Representation of both sexes, and as amended by the N° 56 /VII/2010, states that the list proposed for election shall contain a balanced representation of both sexes. In addition, paragraph 2, of the same Article 415 states that public funding will be awarded only to the political parties that have at least 25% women in the parliament.

2.2 Rationale

The rationale of this workshop was to share good practices related to women's political participation, to review major gaps and challenges impeding women's effective participation in elections and electoral processes, and to elaborate strategies that would address these obstacles ahead of future elections in the West and Central African regions. The workshop would also enhance partnership among key stakeholders to reinforce and promote initiatives on women's political participation. Additionally, it would also contribute towards updating and shaping the programmes and strategy of OHCHR, UN Women and ECOWAS to promote women's political leadership, as well as gender mainstreaming in the electoral processes, in countries in West and Central Africa.

⁷Tripp, Aili: *Women and Politics in Africa Today*, published December 2013 in <http://democracyinafrica.org/women-politics-africa-today/> accessed 14 April 2016

⁸ *Le Profil Genre des Collectivités Locales du Sénégal*, Union des Associations d'Elus Locaux, Février 2015 ; *Parité à l'Assemblée Nationale du Sénégal : au-delà des chiffres*, Rapport Bilan, 2012-2014, ONU Femmes

⁹ <http://www.quotaproject.org/country/niger>

¹⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2057.htm>

2.3 Current Challenges and Opportunities

Over the years, women's political participation has witnessed some gains. International and regional recognition of women's full participation in political and electoral processes has its origins in the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of political rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) of Women. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reiterates the right of women *"to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government"*. The article 4 of the convention states that *"Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination"* and other regional conventions, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, (Maputo Protocol), explicitly state that the enjoyment of such rights shall be without distinction of any kind, including sex or gender.

However, women in West and Central Africa still face multiple obstacles to participating in politics. Structural and political barriers through discriminatory laws, electoral arrangements, gender-defined roles, traditional and religious systems and structures, limited finances, violence and conflict are among the factors which limit women's options to run for public office or in some cases, to exercise their right to vote. In many of these countries, women are less likely than men to have higher education as well as the business and political networks and resources needed to compete in politics on equal footing with their male counterparts. In short, male domination of politics in general, including political parties and state institutions as well as the patriarchal and sometimes violent nature of electoral processes, can limit or discourage women's participation. On the whole, the playing field is far from being levelled from a gender point of view, which hampers opportunities for women to participate actively in the political development of their respective countries.

The adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action at the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing was instrumental in the rise of women's political leadership. The hard work over the past two decades needs to be sustained to ensure that a greater number of countries in West and Central Africa achieve the target of gender balance. Achieving and surpassing this benchmark will certainly contribute towards the realization of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - on Gender Equality and Empowerment of all Women and Girls. The application of a human-rights based approach in electoral support is also important for upholding a safe and peaceful environment for all stakeholders and for strengthening the credibility of such processes.

3. THEMATIC ISSUES COVERED

The workshop covered four thematic issues which are crucial in addressing gender equality, gender responsive electoral processes and women's participation in elections. The four thematic issues were: **Human Rights and Elections; Electoral Management Bodies; Political Parties; and Women's Access to Resources for Elections.** In this section each thematic issue is discussed with its objectives, prospects and challenges.

3.1 Human Rights and Elections

The theme of human rights and elections explored human rights issues as the foundations of elections. The exclusion and/or under-representation of women during the electoral process are gross human rights violations.

The objectives of the session on human rights and elections were to:

1. Identify existing state policies, electoral laws and practices that impinge on women's rights to public life and their full and active political participation at all levels;
2. Explore the differences at national and regional levels and consider good practices;
3. Recommend practical and concrete actions as a way forward.

Human Rights and Elections Context

The promotion of women's basic rights to public life and political participation has witnessed remarkable progress over the years. A number of international and regional legal instruments have been developed to recognize these basic rights of women to hold public office, and to take part in a country's political and electoral process without discrimination. Prominent legal instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007)¹¹. At the continental level, the African Union enshrines women's rights in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986). At the ECOWAS level, the promotion of women's rights is encapsulated in the Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region, adopted by the Conference of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in May 2015. At national level, almost all countries in the Central and West Africa regions are signatory to, or have ratified most of the international and regional legal instruments and have established national human rights frameworks. It should be recognized that the 1990s marked a turning point for women's unfettered rights to

¹¹ This convention is mentioned because the participants from Ghana explained that they took special measures to ensure that women with disabilities were able to vote.

participation in all spheres of public and private life. The Fourth UN World Conference on Women in 1995 adopted the Beijing Platform for Action to ensure greater involvement of women. The efforts continue today with the Sustainable Development Goals, which re-emphasize the need to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030.

Discussion Points

Participants acknowledged the remarkable progress in terms of the establishment of international, regional and national legal instruments and norms to promote and safeguard the non-discriminatory participation of all, irrespective of gender, in public and political life. However, the main challenges in most of these countries are the domestication, application and enforcement of these international and regional instruments to guarantee the safeguards and respect of these essential rights to be enjoyed by every citizen. There have been some efforts at national levels through the introduction of TSMs to increase women's representation in parliaments. The laws, nonetheless, are often not bold enough to make meaningful and lasting impacts. Beside the implementation of TSMs, it was noted that other measures could play a similar role. In the last parliamentary elections in March 2016, the Central African Republic (CAR), after three years of intense violence and instability, courageous women running as independent candidates won more votes than women fielded by political parties. It demonstrated that women with the right incentives, training and local support network can also improve their electability with or without TSMs in place. In addition to legal frameworks that do not ensure women's full enjoyment of their political rights, the participants underscored the existing deep-seated perception and stereotype in many communities, including among women themselves, that politics is largely the preserve of men. Moreover, traditional and religious views still constitute significant impediments for women's advancement in politics. Participants noted that a good number of communities are still of the view that their society is not ready for a female president. Social, political and cultural stereotypes increase women's vulnerability to harassment, intimidation and other forms of violence in electoral processes, which in turn acts as a deterrent to their political participation. As a result, women have limited representation in politics and governance to influence law and policy-making to put an end to these violations.

Action Points

It was recognized that there is more work to be done to further improve the gender-responsiveness of constitutions and electoral laws and in many countries. Until there are laws in place to ensure gender parity outcomes, women will continue to be held back or be marginalized in their quest for full and active participation in public life. It was proposed by participants that constitutions and electoral laws at national level need to be re-examined from a gender perspective in a bid to identify areas of opportunity or concern for women's advancement in politics. To engender positive legal and policy changes at national and regional level, participants proposed several entry points and stressed the importance of engaging with diverse groups, including key actors such as women parliamentarians, women leaders and organizations.

Participants encouraged the setting up of electoral monitoring platforms to report abuses and violations of women's rights during elections as a way to hold governments and political leaders accountable. Other positive actions to be promoted include the introduction of TSMs in electoral laws and empowerment of

women, through training and provision of incentives to run for political office. Engagements to promote women's political advancement by national advocates should start with government and national institutions, targeting in particular gender departments and the relevant committees in parliaments and human rights institutions for awareness raising around the issues of promoting women's participation at all levels of governance. The purpose of the engagement should include identifying individuals - both men and women - in these institutions to act as champions in furthering the cause of women's full participation in politics.

3.2 Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)

Electoral laws and regulations are often not gender sensitive, which in turn make the electoral process less gender sensitive. Electoral Management Bodies, or EMBs, play and ought to play a critical role in mainstreaming gender in electoral laws and processes. EMBs are tasked with the responsibility of conducting elections and managing the electoral process including voter registration, candidate registration, polling preparations, and voter education and outreach. As a result, EMBs are uniquely placed to support electoral processes that are inclusive and empowering to women.¹²

This thematic issue discussed the current role women play in EMBs in countries in Central and West Africa and what can be done to increase their participation going forward.

The objectives of the session on EMB were to:

1. Identify the policies and practices that limit women's role in EMBs and identify good practices for women's participation in Central and West African countries through the work of EMBs;
2. Explore ways and means by which women's leadership roles and numbers can be increased in EMBs; and
3. Recommend practical and concrete actions as a way forward.

EMB Context

EMBs are the structures and individuals responsible for carrying out the many activities involved in the planning and administering of elections. While a single body may be primarily responsible for most of these activities, it is also common for electoral administration tasks to be distributed across multiple bodies¹³. EMBs must ensure that all stakeholders not only abide by the electoral rules, but also that there is an environment conducive to the exchange of political views and policy platforms. A good practice in facilitating that

¹² UN Women and UNDP (2015), *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation*

¹³ UN Women and UNDP (2015), *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation*, page 11

environment is to work with a variety of partners and stakeholders, including political parties, the media and civil society organizations.¹⁴

Discussion Points

The importance of EMBs was emphasized by participants in terms of facilitating gender mainstreaming into the electoral process to ensure that women are not disadvantaged by political, legal, social, economic and cultural barriers. EMBs can play an important part in ensuring equal participation of women and men at all stages of the electoral process. It was acknowledged that women are gradually playing increasingly prominent roles in EMBs. The current heads of the EMBs in Ghana and Cape Verde, for example, are women. Other EMBs have taken actions to enhance women's political participation. In Nigeria, the EMB has developed a gender policy, established a gender unit to oversee implementation of the gender policy at the national level, made a budgetary allocation to gender-specific actions and created an inter-agency advisory committee on gender and elections, comprised of ministries, civil society groups and development partners. EMBs also shared measures they are implementing to prevent the disenfranchisement of women voters. Some EMBs such as in Ghana located voter registration and polling centers in areas accessible to women. Other measures shared include priority voting for expectant mothers and disabled people, and generating data on women's participation at the polling unit level to inform future policymaking. In short, many EMBs are taking proactive measures to mainstream gender into the electoral system and processes. Nonetheless, it was recognized that not all EMBs have been able to mainstream gender in every facet of their electoral process. The challenges include inadequate resources to implement programmes and activities, lack of political will from governments and political parties, lack of awareness among the communities and the difficulties in securing the buy-in of the majority of men to mainstream women into politics. Moreover, an unevenness was noted across countries in the two regions regarding the extent to which gender-sensitive policies and procedures had been adopted to guide the work of EMBs.

Action Points

It was agreed that the momentum to increase the number of women staff in EMBs and mainstream gender in the electoral process should be sustained. The starting point is to have gender balance in EMBs and establish a budget line to undertake women-specific activities. EMBs may also develop a manual for electoral officials to integrate the gender dimension in their management of electoral matters, or consider using the UNDP/UN Women Guide.¹⁵ EMBs should continue to partner with different entities including national human rights institutions, international and regional agencies, local CSOs and the media to raise awareness among women on the need of their full participation in election as voters and candidates. Moreover, regional bodies including the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions should join the efforts in promoting good gender-inclusive practices in EMBs in West Africa.

¹⁴ UN Women and UNDP (2015), *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation*, page 87

¹⁵ UN Women and UNDP (2015), *Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation*

3.3 Political Parties

Despite the large numbers of women voters in West and Central Africa, they are not significant actors in political parties. Very few women lead political parties. This thematic discussion examined the structure of political parties that makes it extremely difficult for greater numbers of women representatives to occupy leadership positions, as political parties in the Central and West African countries are, by and large, dominated by men.¹⁶

The objectives of the session on Political Parties were to:

1. Identify key policies and practices in political parties that limit women's full participation in terms of leadership roles and numbers;
2. Explore emerging trends and patterns in party politics that are likely to improve or worsen women's participation in Central and West Africa.
3. Recommend practical and concrete actions as the way forward.

Political Parties Context

Political parties are the basis for association of people with common ideologies. They also attract and recruit candidates for elections. Women's active involvement in party politics at leadership levels may encourage the younger generation of women to aspire to become political leaders. However, participants noted that the male-dominance of party politics permeates the electoral system, resulting in the marginalization of women. Some challenges include women's limited influence in party policy and platform development, absence or limited representation on executive bodies in parties, lack of internal mechanisms to support women candidates and marginalization of women's wings within parties.

Discussion Points

The importance of women's representation in political parties was underscored as essential for advancing the democratization process in West and Central Africa. It was agreed that political parties are a very important enabler at both national and local levels to advance women's leadership and active participation in politics. However, political parties in the two regions are overwhelmingly male-dominated with only a handful of instances where women head a party. Moreover, a large number of political parties operate with governance structures that actively or passively do not encourage or support women candidates in elective positions. Also, most party politics is marred by political violence, in the form of assassination, thuggery, intimidation, harassment, name-calling and arson attacks. These forms of violence tend to undermine

¹⁶International IDEA (2013) Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens. This report analyzed the commitments of political parties to gender equality in 33 countries in Africa. One of the key findings was that although many political parties promote women's political empowerment in their campaign manifestos, these promises are rarely met.

women's active participation. Overall, there still remains a high-level of prejudice against women politicians who, in some cases, are considered from traditional, cultural and religious perspectives as unfit to run for elected offices, let alone for high office. At times, the prejudice starts from the home with spouses resisting their wives to engage in politics or attend political meetings, especially ones organized out of town or at night. In addition to the prejudice, there is also the misperception in some countries that women are less interested in politics.

The challenges facing women are innumerable and include limited influence in party politics, inability to mount a platform within a party to advance the women's agenda and inadequate gender-responsiveness of parties' internal mechanisms, such as the use of quota systems for elective positions, to support women candidates. Nevertheless, it was recognized that women had made enormous inroads in politics and political parties. Women's struggles in Senegal culminated in the establishment of the parity law, adopted in 2010, making it a requirement to hold equal representation in parliament. In Niger, the quota law requires political parties to include a certain number of women candidates on their lists, with sanctions in place for failure to comply. The candidates list of a defaulting political party will be rejected until they are compliant. This law led to a significant increase in the number of women parliamentarians from 14 women parliamentarians in 2011 to 25 in the last elections.¹⁷ Unlike Niger and Senegal, Cape Verde's electoral law rewards political parties that include 25 percent or more women on their lists of candidates but does not provide sanction mechanisms if a political party falls short.

Action Points

Participants agreed that the presence of women in political parties would help to improve the negative image of politics and reduce political violence. It was acknowledged that women must be empowered to know and assert their rights and be well prepared, through training, mentorship and funding, to take roles within political parties in a bid to transform political governance. Aspiring female politicians will need perseverance, courage and patience to overcome the prejudice they are almost certain to face in seeking leadership positions within political parties. Notwithstanding existing challenges, it was noted that engaging with political parties and their leaders should serve as a key entry point to enhance the level of women's representation in politics. Such engagements should push for reform in political parties to engender policies and norms that will not deter young aspiring women politicians. Political parties must recognize the importance of women's political participation as a human rights issue, but they should also champion these rights at all levels of government. Participants noted the important example of Senegal, which took legally-binding steps with punitive measures to ensure political parties implement temporary special measures for women.

¹⁷ See http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2237_E.htm and <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

3.4 Women's Access to Resources for Elections

The issue of structural and financial barriers that limit women's potential to run for elections was discussed. In a context of increasing monetization of elections, coupled with the reality of women having less access to financial resources than men in general, women are often placed at a disadvantage, in terms of being able to finance costly elections campaigns. The thematic discussion looked at innovative ways in which women can overcome the resource constraints they face in countries in Central and West Africa.

The objectives of the session on Women's Access to Resources were to:

1. Identify current challenges that women face at community, national, regional levels, as well as resources that aspiring female politicians and political leaders can access;
2. Explore ways and means by which other women have overcome the problem of limited resources in some countries in Central and West Africa;
3. Recommend practical and concrete actions as a way forward.

Women's Access to Resources Context

The monetization of elections across Africa has added to the constraints faced by women in increasing their numbers and participation in political leadership and politics. To run for office and win in today's elections environment, demands a considerable amount of resources including financial, personnel and logistics. Women generally lack the wherewithal to fund their participation in politics in contrast to their male counterparts. The majority of women are however often unable to access vital resources critical to their success.

Discussion Points

Women across West and Central Africa are still confronted with structural and socio-economic barriers, such as limited finances, marginalization, poor education and inadequate experiences to improve their chances in politics. Cultural and religious practices enforcing gender-based roles are key factors limiting women's opportunities to engage in gainful activities and their rights to vote and stand for elections. Women are hindered by a lack of resources and mobility. Women's lack of time and finances significantly undermine their full participation and ability to vie for leadership positions. The financial challenges are even greater for women candidates running on an independent ticket. They are faced with the enormous challenge to self-finance their political activities and to rely on friends and relatives for help. The lack of time is as a result of women's multiple roles, such as childcare and domestic work, leave them with little or no room to build a career in politics. Moreover, women often lack experience in key areas such as public speaking, community mobilization, outreach, and mounting large-scale campaigns in comparison with their male counterparts. Some women may lack civil and political awareness caused by low levels of literacy and education.

Action Points

It was agreed that more work needed to be done to overcome gender stereotypes in society and continue to empower women to take control of their lives and have equal access to opportunities and resources. Specialist training should be provided for women leaders and politicians in leadership, communication and fund-raising strategies. To improve women's access to resources, including finances, consideration could be given to making available, state funding for women candidates. Facilitating women's access to funds will go a long way in encouraging others to aspire to enter the field of politics. Inter-generational exchanges should be promoted to support and encourage younger women to enter the field of politics.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

Participants noted positive developments in some African countries in terms of promoting and enhancing women's political participation and representation. They considered these positive developments as "good practices" that could be adapted to other countries. The good practices are outlined below.

4.1. Human Rights and Elections

The African Union (AU) declared 2016 as the African Year of Human Rights with a special focus on women's rights to put the spotlight on the existing structural, practical, legal obstacles which continue to undermine women's representation in decision-making. At the regional level, there are instruments, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. These instruments seek to safeguard these essential rights to be enjoyed by every citizen. As such, the credibility and fairness of elections are undermined if these rights are not respected.

At country level, Burkina Faso, for example, has adopted legislation to promote women's political participation. A quota system was established in Burkina Faso in 2009 providing for quotas for women's representation in legislative and municipal elections, although more work is needed to ensure enforcement in practice. Under the National Transitional Council, a preliminary draft law was produced by the Ministry of Women and Gender in collaboration with civil society. It states that every list of candidates presented at legislative or municipal elections by a political party, a coalition of political parties, or a coalition of independent candidates in an electoral district should have almost equal representation between men and women.

The National Human Rights Commission of Burkina Faso (NHRC) played a crucial role in promoting and defending human rights provisions in the constitution and electoral laws during the last presidential elections in Burkina Faso. The contributions of the NHRC in the last elections included a thorough scrutiny of the legal framework, organization of training sessions on elections and human rights and deployment of human rights

monitoring teams in four out of the 13 regions. According to the NHRC, there were overall equal conditions for eligibility in the elections and non-discrimination in the registration of all citizens of both sexes on electoral lists. Certain freedoms, especially the freedom of expression and assembly, were exercised without any constraints. Publicity and campaign speeches were devoid of hate speeches, promoting a relatively violent-free election environment that was conducive to women's participation.

4.2. Electoral Management Bodies

Participants noted that there was a growing awareness among electoral authorities about the need to mainstream gender-equality concerns into their work. Progress has been made in terms of involving more women staff into EMBs. Different countries have taken different approaches to ensure the inclusion of women in key electoral positions. Several countries require the appointment of women to the EMB's governing body. In Niger, it was stated that the post of second vice president of the EMB is statutorily reserved for a woman. Also at the local level, electoral commissions must be composed of at least two women out of 18 members. In Cape Verde, the law states that there must be gender parity in the EMB. At present, there are three women and two men serving on the country's Electoral Commission, with a woman serving as head of the Commission. In the Central African Republic (CAR), the electoral code states that the Council of the Electoral Commission should be composed of seven members, of which at least two should be women.

In other countries, the rules for the composition of the EMB require appointees to be drawn from sectors of society where women are often more present than in some traditional backgrounds such as the law. In Cote d'Ivoire, a new law was passed, allocating four seats in the electoral commission to CSOs, comprising of representatives from religious and non-religious organizations. At present in Cote d'Ivoire, three out of the four seats are held by women. In **Guinea**, the electoral commission is composed of 25 members, of which 10 come from the ruling party, 10 from the opposition, and three from civil society, which the president of the commission must come from and two from the government. In Guinea, one of the two vice president of the commission has to be a woman. In other countries, a general improvement of the position of women in politics and government is echoed in the composition of EMBs. In Ghana, the new chairperson of the EMB is a woman, and five out of the seven commissioners are women. There has also been a significant increase in the number of women recruited as election officials and as candidates, especially at the local level. It was noted that in Nigeria, more women are being appointed to the EMB. Seven people were appointed by the federal government in 2015 of which two were female. Gradually, a couple of EMBs have adopted a gender policy to increase the number of women at all levels of the electoral system including in senior and middle level management. EMBs are increasingly adopting measures that are gender-sensitive to facilitate the participation of female voters. EMBs are designing and undertaking women-specific activities to raise political and voter awareness.

4.3. Political Parties and Elections

West African countries such as Cape Verde, Niger, Senegal and Togo were cited as having put in place policies and laws to facilitate women's participation in elections. However, among these countries, parties

are encouraged by the governments and the EMBs to have on their list of candidates at least 30 percent women, and when they do so, they are rewarded by the State with supplementary funds to finance the campaign of the women. This is a strategy to motivate political parties to increase the number of women candidates. In Niger, the candidate lists of many political parties were rejected in 2010 and 2011 because they failed to include the required 10 percent of women candidates in the legislative and local elections. As a result of Niger's strict adherence to this provision in the electoral law, every political party included between 10 to 15 percent of women on their list for the 2016 parliamentary elections. This inclusion of women of the parties' list was reflected in the elections results in Niger where 12,28% women were elected. Senegal's parity law in 2010 was considered one of the best examples of a national government's commitment in West Africa to enhance women's political participation as it resulted in a greater number of women's participation : women are now 42,7% in the national parliament. In Togo, the government passed a decree in 2013 cutting by 50 percent, the deposit female candidates should pay to run for elected office. This action was meant to reduce the cost for women wanting to run as independent candidates. Nonetheless, pro-women groups in Togo are still calling for the complete elimination of the amount to be deposited by women candidates, which prevents women from participating to elections. The Togolese government has yet to respond to this call to eliminate the deposit for women.

Rwanda was discussed as the model to which African countries should aspire to really boost the numeric representation of women at all levels of government. Rwanda's gender quota law, which calls for parity in the lists of candidates, has resulted in women being over 50 percent of representatives in the national assembly.

4.4. Access to Resources

Women's access to resources, in particular political finance, is a major stumbling block in seeking elected offices. However, in some countries, governments are taking actions to help women overcome this. In Niger, the government gives a certain percentage of allocated funds to women's wings of political parties, whereas in Cape Verde, government grants are given to political parties if a certain percentage of women are elected. In Nigeria, the government waives nomination fees for female candidates, while in Côte d'Ivoire, all women candidates taking part in legislative elections are provided with state financial support of one million FCFA (USD1,700). In Togo, as previously described, the electoral law sets an upper limit for the cost of political campaigns and reduces by 50 percent, the deposit to be made by female candidates. In Burkina Faso, government subsidizes female candidates' cost by paying polling agents of female candidates deployed around polling stations. In addition to government support, women have demonstrated resourcefulness in seeking and managing resources. For instance, women candidates organised joint fund-raising, shared cost to carry out publicity, and shared logistics such as vehicles and megaphones for campaign purposes.

4.5. Research/Assessment and Monitoring

Research or needs assessments may be considered at the national level to identify existing and residual stumbling blocks to women's political advancement. These can include legislation and regulations, cultural and traditional viewpoints about women's role in politics, or capacity issues. Programme design must support

the areas where the greatest impact can be felt. Participants also noted that there is a dearth of data in many countries regarding women and elections. In addition to research and periodic assessments, there is a need to put in place an active monitoring system of key data collection that can inform programme interventions. Media monitoring should be consistently conducted to eliminate negative presentation of women candidates which has the effect of discouraging future young women from running for elected offices.

4.6. Lobbying and Campaigns

Active and sustained campaigns and lobbying of key stakeholders is needed to continue to may raise the important of women's political participation, especially ahead of general elections. In countries where there are no temporary special measures, a broad-based working committee might be established to help promote women's political participation, including representatives from CSOs, women's groups, political parties, parliaments, EMBs, national human rights institutions, relevant government ministries and relevant UN agencies. The committee could serve as an important coordination and lobbying entity, and make suggestions for revision of policies, laws and practices that impede women's participation. A proposal was made for the creation of a regional Funding Facility to be supported by ECOWAS and UN Women, to provide capacity-building and mentoring support to women leaders in NGOs, government, parliament, EMBs and political parties. Also, given that UN bodies do not fund politicians running for office, national-level funding mechanisms could be created to support women candidates, especially those running as independents, which they can access for campaign purposes. The fund will incentivize aspiring and competent women to establish their own political parties. These funds could be supported through government, donations from the public, the private sector, and development partners.

4.7. Capacity Building

Capacity building in the form of training, mentoring, study tours, exchange visits and technical support were highlighted as good practice to target active and aspiring women politicians. Empowerment of women is critical to ensure there is a significant pool of competent women candidates that can compete with men, as well as make meaningful contributions while in elected office. Gaining experience, being active and visible in a political party makes it more likely for women to run as candidates for election. Women's empowerment at the broader societal level requires awareness-raising at the community level about political rights and the importance of women holding office and contributing to policy development. Capacity building should also target other entities, such as political parties and EMBs. For instance, technical support can be provided for the creation of a gender unit or division within EMBs to facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data in every aspect of the electoral process. The gender unit's capacity could also include advising the EMB regarding gender sensitive budget and planning. For political parties, their leaders can be trained about the importance and benefit of selecting women to hold leadership positions. Political parties accessing government finance can be trained on developing gender-sensitive programmes and gender-mainstreaming into the work of the parties. Relevant CSOs can also benefit from capacity building activities to be able to design and develop lobbying and campaign programmes targeting key entities and political leaders, to ensure gender issues remain a national priority.

4.8. Alliances

The promotion and defense of women's rights to participate in elections and to hold elected office demands the creation of various alliances and networks. Alliances can be developed between EMBs, relevant CSOs, women politicians and UN agencies to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout the entire electoral process from staffing, voter registration, campaigning etc. Other alliances can advocate for the passage of temporary special measures that may facilitate the election of women to parliament. Alliances driven by human rights bodies, including national human rights institutions can be established to closely work with EMBs, political parties, security forces, and the media to promote and ensure the respect of women's rights. Further alliances can be between women politicians, women in political parties and women in parliament, to fight for a common cause.



Mr. Axel Deville, Regional Director ai, UN Women; **Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow**, Commissioner of Social Affairs and Gender, ECOWAS; Representative of son **H. E. Madam Mariam Sarr**, Ministre de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance, Republic of Senegal; **Mme Hiroute Guebre Sellassie**, DSRSG, UNOWAS; Ms. Oury Traoré, Consultant; and **Mr. Andrea Ori**, Regional Representative, OHCHR.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The workshop on the theme of Gender, Human Rights and Women's Participation in Elections in West and Central Africa presented participants with the opportunity to exchange ideas and identify good practices from the region. The workshop was a call to action to sustain, and improve upon, the gains made in terms of women's political participation. Under the four thematic areas, the workshop acknowledged the progress that has been made in terms of the development of legal instruments over the years at national, regional and international levels to promote women's political participation. However, the challenge remains in the application and adaptation of these laws. It emerged from the deliberations that there is still substantial work to be done if women's representation in national parliaments is to reach gender balance.

It was also noted that the introduction of quota laws has produced mixed results. Some countries recorded positive changes, such as Niger, while implementation has been poor in other countries such as Burkina Faso. The gender parity law in Senegal was considered a good example of the government's commitments to enhancing women's political participation. In Senegal, the parity law has increased women's political representation as a result of its enforcement on the back of women's relentless campaign and pressure through the media on government. The mandatory presence of 50% of women on every list, both at the parliamentary level and at the local level, allowed a higher representation of women. Given the mixed results in the implementation of quota measures elsewhere, participants proposed a further in-depth study.

There were good practice examples where EMBs are playing important roles in mainstreaming gender perspectives into their work and the electoral processes. Good practices by EMBs include the use of gender-sensitive budgeting for example in Nigeria under specific activities targeting women, the development of gender-sensitive voter education materials, and establishment of registration centers and polling stations giving consideration to the needs of women, including pregnant women. The number of women in EMBs occupying senior leadership positions and other positions such as electoral officers and polling agents, is on the rise, which is encouraging. This positive result needs to be publicized and shared at regional levels to encourage other EMBs to follow suit. The workshop urged regional bodies, namely, ECOWAS and ECCAS, to take actions to ensure the harmonization at regional level of minimum provisions to support the integration of gender considerations in the work of EMBs.

Women's access to financial and other resources to mount effective electoral campaigns remains a challenge. Political parties remain largely the preserve of men. Women's involvement is largely restricted, given the stereotypes driven by cultural, traditional and religious factors. Political parties need to be sensitized to understand the importance and democratic dividends of nominating women as candidates and to senior political positions. Access to vital resources for women has become a great concern given the increasing monetization of politics in both regions. Lack of finances place women at a significant disadvantage to run for office. Proposals suggested to address the challenges relating to women's access to resources include the establishment of a funding facility and a national network to provide technical support. It was also

emphasized that mentorship programmes could be developed for young women aspiring to elected offices and political leadership. The workshop also proposed that women should consider running solely on their political agenda, vision, and programmes to downplay the monetization of elections. It was also noted that partners committed to enhancing women's participation could consider donations in kind instead of in monetary terms.

Moving forward, the workshop recognized the need to build various alliances for the promotion of women's rights in elections and governance in West and Central Africa. The alliances should cover entities in the public and private sectors as well as CSOs and UN agencies, in particular, UN Women and OHCHR to facilitate resource mobilization and investments in building the technical skills and capacities of women to fully participate in the democratization of their countries and the regions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the deliberations of the workshop, the participants made a set of recommendations to governments, the regional bodies ECOWAS and ECCAS, the UN agencies in particular UN WOMEN and OHCHR, political parties, CSOs and women's leaders and organizations.

6.1 Governments

- a. Governments in West and Central Africa are called upon to introduce temporary special measures in countries where there are none, and to strengthen such laws in countries where they exist to enhance women's participation, in particular to include sanction regimes and other methods to ensure the effective implementation of existing TSMs.
- b. Government gender ministries or agencies should help to promote a positive image of women in politics in order to change the perception of the population on women candidates, and to encourage other women.
- c. There is need for governments to demonstrate greater commitment to implementing the provisions of the Maputo Protocol which call for the equal representation of women in electoral processes at all levels. In this regard, governments should foster closer working partnerships between electoral management bodies and national human rights institutions in the context of addressing gender and women's rights considerations in elections.

6.2 Political Parties

- a. Leaders of political parties are called upon to adopt and implement gender balance or parity principles within their party's constitutions and leadership structures, including the adoption of

minimum standards for the number of women on a party list and the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting.

- b. Political parties should take steps that ensure internal mechanisms enable women to achieve political, professional and family life balance. They should strengthen the technical capacity of their female candidates in public speaking and development of campaign agendas.

6.3 EMBs

- a. For EMBs to be able to promote gender parity within political parties, they should first ensure a greater gender balance amongst its personnel at all levels. EMBs should develop a manual for its electoral officials to integrate the gender dimension in their management of electoral matters, or consider using the UNDP/UN Women Guide. Given EMBs important position in election, they should be engaged in mainstreaming gender in electoral laws and processes which are not gender sensitive enough to promote women's needs and rights.
- b. EMBs should work with various partners and stakeholders, including political parties, the media, civil society organizations and development partners to promote good code of conduct that would address political violence in elections. Good practices of other EMBs, such as the adoption of gender-sensitive measures for expectant mothers and disabled people to register and vote, and the gathering of women-specific data on women's participation, should be publicised and promoted across the region. Other gender-sensitive measures include the adoption of a budget line to design and undertake women-specific activities aimed at increasing women's political participation.

6.4 ECOWAS and ECCAS

- a. ECOWAS and ECCAS were called upon to expand the provision of technical and financial support to Member States and CSOs working towards the promotion of women's rights and political participation.
- b. ECOWAS and ECCAS should support the development and application of minimum regional standards and provisions to guide the integration of gender considerations into the work of EMBs. The minimum standards should include the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting frameworks in Member States.
- c. The regional bodies should seek to establish with the support of UN Women and partner agencies, a funding facility to be accessed by civil society and women's organizations in member states, to support capacity development, mentorship and training of aspiring and active women politicians.

6.5 UN WOMEN and OHCHR

- a. UN agencies, in particular UN Women and OHCHR, were called upon to provide the necessary technical, political and material support to implement the recommendations emanating from the workshop.
- b. UN Women and UNOHCHR should work in close collaboration with the regional bodies to mobilise other partners in a bid to create a funding pool to support CSO, who can in turn provide training and technical support particularly to aspiring and active women politicians and political leaders.
- c. UN Women and OHCHR should provide capacity building programmes to women's groups and CSOs to enhance their work in promoting gender equality and women's rights.

6.6 Civil Society Organizations

- a. CSOs in the respective regions were called upon to play a leading role, acting as pressure groups to hold government, political parties and other institutions accountable for their policies and actions in ensuring women's rights in politics.
- b. CSOs should advocate for a gender assessment of electoral frameworks and systems to determine their gender-responsiveness and provide a basis for identifying actions necessary to improve women's electoral and political participation.
- c. CSOs should lobby governments and political parties for the adoption and/or implementation of laws on parity or temporary special measures, and for the harmonization of domestic legislation in line with international and regional standards and conventions.
- d. CSOs should facilitate the establishment of a regional networking platform for women in politics to share knowledge and good practices on strategies for promoting women's leadership and political participation.
- e. CSOs should facilitate alliance-building between women running for political office and other constituencies, including the media, private sector and traditional authorities.
- f. CSOs should provide support including mentorship programmes for young women in politics.

6.7 Women's Leaders and Organizations

- a. Women leaders and organizations are called upon to work in solidarity to create both national and regional networks of women politicians, parliamentarians and subject-matter specialists to provide knowledge sharing, good practices and strategies on promoting gender equality and women's rights in governance and politics. The platform for women politicians at national level should develop

partnerships with the private sector for funding. The platform should also run mentorship programmes to train young girls and women in leadership building and political participation.

- b. Women's organizations should advocate for a gender assessment of electoral frameworks and systems to determine their gender-responsiveness and provide a basis for identifying actions necessary to improve women's electoral and political participation.
- c. Women's organizations should publicize examples of good practice - especially within their region – to sensitize society to steps that can improve women's electoral and political participation.

7. ANNEXES

a) Workshop Programme

GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS & WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IN WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

11-13 May
Hotel des Almadies

Dakar, Senegal

AGENDA

| Day 1: Wednesday, May 11 th , 2016 | |
|---|---|
| 0800 to 0900 | Welcome & Registration |
| 0900 to 1030 | Overview and Opening Remarks Chair: Oury Traoré <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Axel Deville, Regional Director ai, UN Women ▪ Mr. Andrea Ori, Regional Representative, OHCHR ▪ Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow, Commissioner of Social Affairs and Gender. ECOWAS. ▪ Mme Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, DSRSG, UNOWAS ▪ H. E. Madam Mariam Sarr, Ministre de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance. Republic of Senegal. |
| 1030 to 1115 | Group Photo and Break |
| 1115 to 1200 | Presentation of Background Paper Ms. Oury Traoré, Consultant |
| 1200 to 1300 | Plenary Session 1: <i>Human Rights and Elections.</i> Chair: Ms. Caroline Wafang Ouaffo Regional Gender Adviser for West Africa, OHCHR Speaker 1: Mr. Yves Boukpassi Human Rights Adviser, UNOWAS Speaker 2: Valerie Rouambe-Ouedraogo National Human Rights Commission, Burkina Faso |
| 1300 to 1400 | LUNCH |
| 1400 to 1500 | Group Discussion: Human Rights and Elections |
| 1500 to 1530 | BREAK |
| 1530 to 1630 | Plenary Session 2: <i>Elections Management Bodies.</i> Chair: Mr. Yao Daté Electoral Commission, Togo Speaker 1: Ms. Blessing Obidegwu Deputy Director, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria. Speaker 2: Ms. Abigail Nutakor Gender and Disability Desk Officer. Independent Electoral Commission, Ghana |
| 1630 to 1730 | Group Discussion: Elections Management Bodies |
| 1730 | Closing |

| Day 2: Thursday, May 12 th , 2016 | |
|--|--|
| 0900 to 0915 | Recap Day 1 |
| 0915 to 1030 | Reporting back in Plenary: <i>Human Rights and Elections & Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)</i> Chair: Mr. Ahowonou Agbessi Regional Representative, HCDH. Central Africa |
| 1030 to 1100 | BREAK |
| 1100 to 1200 | Plenary Session 3: <i>Political Parties.</i> Chair: Mr. Ahmed Gumah ECOWAS Gender & Development Center Speaker 1: Ms. Aissata Tall Sall. Parti Socialiste, Senegal. Speaker 2: Mr. Younoussa Touré Union pour la République et la Démocratie (URD), Mali. |
| 1200 to 1300 | Discussion Groups: <i>Political Parties</i> |
| 1300 to 1400 | LUNCH |
| 1400 to 1500 | Plenary Session 4: <i>Women's Access to Resources – Financial & Technical.</i> Chair: Ms. Comfort Lamptey Regional Policy Adviser, Governance Peace and Security, UN Women. Speaker 1: Senhora Adelsia Duarte Caboverdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity, Cape Verde. Speaker 2: Mme Maimouna Diamballa Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Niger |
| 1500 to 1530 | BREAK |
| 1530 to 1630 | Discussion Groups <i>Access to Resources – Financial & Technical</i> |
| 1630 to 1745 | Reporting Back in Plenary: <i>Political Parties and Women's Access to Resources – Financial & Technical.</i> Chair: Ms. Comfort Lamptey |
| 1745 | Closing |
| 1830 | COCKTAIL |

| Day 3: Friday, May 13 th , 2016 | |
|--|---|
| 0900 to 1030 | <p>Recap of the Key Issues, Action Points and the Way Forward</p> <p>Chair: Oury Traoré, Consultant.</p> |
| 1030 to 1100 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and Adoption of Draft Communiqué <p>Chair: Ms. Salimata Thiam, ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) Senegal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation |
| 1100 to 1130 | BREAK |
| 1130 to 1230 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closing Ceremony <p>Chair: Oury Traoré</p> <p>Ms. Comfort Lamptey; Ms. Caroline Wafang Ouaffo; Mr. Ahmed Gumah; Representative of the Senegalese Government</p> |
| 1230 | CLOSING |
| 1230 to 1300 | PRESS CONFERENCE |
| | LUNCH |

b) List of Participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. | Mr Ahowonou Agbessi | OHCHR | Regional Representative for Central Africa | Cameroon | aagbessi@ohchr.org |
| 2. | Ms Fatou Baldé Yansané | Coalition des Femmes Leaders De Guinée Conakry | | Guinée Conakry | cofelguinee@gmail.com |
| 3. | Ms. Donia Ben Romdhane | UN Women | Consultant | Central African Republic | Donia.benromdhane@unwomen.org |
| 4. | Ms Isabelle Boukinda | ECCAS | Gender Adviser | Gabon | Boukinda_isabelle@yahoo.fr |
| 5. | Ms. Izeduwa Derex- Briggs, | UN Women | Representative | South Sudan | Izeduwa.derex-briggs@unwomen.org |
| 6. | Ms Diamballa Maimouna | Mouvement National pour la Société du Développement | | Niger | Maimoun_sak@yahoo.fr |
| 7. | Ms. Aminata Camara | UN Women | Program Assistant | Senegal | Aminata.camara@unwomen.org |
| 8. | Ms Safietou Diop | Siggil Jigeen | | Senegal | siggiljigeen@gmail.com |
| 9. | Ms Adelsia Duarte | Caboverdean Institute for Gender Equality and Equity (ICIEG) | | Cabo Verde | Adelsia.duarte@icieg.gov.cv |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|--|
| 10. | Ms Coumba Fall Venn | PanAfrican Center for Gender, Peace AND Development | Administratrice | Senegal | africangender@fasngo.org |
| 11. | Ms Odile Ndoumbé Faye | ECOWAS Gender Development Center | | Senegal | Odilefaye16@gmail.com |
| 12. | Mr Tem Fuh | Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) | Program Officer Law, Justice and Human Rights | Senegal | tmbuh@osiwa.org |
| 13. | Ms Angela Furtado | Caboverdean Parliament | Deputy | Cabo Verde | angelafurtado@gmail.com |
| 14. | Mr Ralmeg Gandaho | Changement Social | | Bénin | Ralmeg.gandaho@csbenin.org |
| 15. | Ms Hiroute Guebre Sellassie | UNOWAS | Deputy-Special Representative of the Secretary-General | Senegal | |
| 16. | Mr Ahmed Gumah | ECOWAS Gender Development Center | Director | Senegal | agumah@yahoo.com |
| 17. | Ms Brandie Jones | UN Women | Consultant | United States | bjdris@outlook.com |
| 18. | Ms Anouk Heili | UN Women | Governance, Peace and Security Unit | Senegal | Anouk.heili@unwomen.org |
| 19. | Mr. Dramane Kanté | Observatoire Régional du Hamol pour la Participation Politique des Femmes | | Côte d'Ivoire | Kantedramane01@gmail.com |
| 20. | Ms Soda Kebe | UN Women | Program Assistant | Senegal | Soda.kebe@unwomen.org |
| 21. | Ms Yoli Bi Koné | Commission Electorale | | Côte d'Ivoire | Klintio2001@yahoo.fr |
| 22. | Ms Cécile Koyaga | Autorité Nationale des Elections | Officer | Central African Republic | koyagacecile@gmail.com |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------|--|
| 23. | Ms Comfort Lamptey | UN Women | Regional Adviser on Governance, Peace and Security | Senegal | Comfort.lamptey@unwomen.org |
| 24. | Ms Henriette Lagou | RPC Paix | | Côte d'Ivoire | lagouhenriette@yahoo.com |
| 25. | Ms Latifa Mai Moussa | NDI | Resident Senior Program Manager | Niger | lmoussa@ndi.org |
| 26. | Ms Abdou Mariatou | Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante | | Niger | ceniniger@yahoo.fr |
| 27. | Ms Sassy Mbodj | Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) | | Senegal | Mbodj.syssa09@hotmail.com |
| 28. | Mr Serigne Mbaye Mbodj | OHCHR | Consultant | Senegal | smbodj@gmail.com |
| 29. | Ms Houmey Meteiton | Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action Femmes, Démocratie et Développement (GF2D) | | Togo | phanihoumey@gmail.com |
| 30. | Ms Aziza Kattr Mint Mohamed | Malian Parliament | Deputy for Tombouctou | Mali | azimaiga@yahoo.fr |
| 31. | Ms Cécile Mawe Moube | Association Jeunesse Active pour le Développement (JADD) | | Cameroun | mawececile@gmail.com |
| 32. | Ms Zipporah Ndione | Réseau National des Jeunes Femmes Leaders | | Senegal | zdndione@gmail.com |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | | (RENAJEFL) | | | |
| 33. | Ms Oumoul Khairy Niang | Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille Et de l'Enfance de la République du Sénégal | | Senegal | |
| 34. | Ms Angela Nnoko | UN Women | Gender in Emergency Analyst | Senegal | Angela.nnoko@unwomen.org |
| 35. | Ms. Abigail Nutakor | National Electoral Commission | Gender and Disability Desk Officer | Ghana | abinutakor@yahoo.co.uk |
| 36. | Mr Ilya Novikov | OHCHR | Human Rights Specialist | Senegal | inovikov@ohchr.org |
| 37. | Ms. Blessing Obidegwu | Independent National Electoral Commission | | Nigeria | ifeas@yahoo.com |
| 38. | Ms. Madeline Ogbebulu | All People Congress | | Nigeria | pemegg@yahoo.com |
| 39. | Ms. Joy Onyesoh | Women International League Peace and Freedom | | Nigeria | dzoious@yahoo.com |
| 40. | Mr Andrea Ori | OHCHR | Regional Director | Senegal | Andrea.ori@ohchr.org |
| 41. | Ms Oti Ankupe Ovrawah | Human Rights Institute | Director | Nigeria | otianuk@yahoo.com |
| 42. | Ms Solange Pagonendji | Coalition des Femmes pour la Paix et la Reconstruction en Afrique | | Central African Republic | Masondji62@gmail.com |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|-----------------------|---|--|---------------|--|
| 43. | Mr Touh Pahorsiki | Ministère de l'administration territoriale, de la Décentralisation et des collectivités locales | | Togo | toparhork@yahoo.fr |
| 44. | Ms Salimata Porquet | Réseau Paix et Sécurité des Femmes De l'Espace CEDEAO (REPSFECO) | Director | Côte d'Ivoire | repsfeco@yahoo.fr |
| 45. | Ms Claudine Rouamba | National Human Rights Institution | | Burkina Faso | claudvale@yahoo.com |
| 46. | Mr Abdou Karim Saidou | Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA) | | Burkina Faso | Danjima.aks@gmail.com |
| 47. | Ms Graça Sanches | Women's Parliamentarians Network | | Cabo Verde | Graca.Maria.sanches@gmail.com |
| 48. | Ms Ndeye Marie Sané | Réseau Ouest Africain des Jeunes Femmes Leaders (ROAJEFL) | | Senegal | Marilune23@yahoo.fr |
| 49. | Ms Penda Seck Diouf | Plateforme de Veille des Femmes | | Senegal | Nenufar54@yahoo.fr |
| 50. | Ms Sidikou Fatima | National Human Rights Commission | Vice-présidente | Niger | fatimsidik@yahoo.fr |
| 51. | Ms. Fatimata Sow | ECOWAS | Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender | Nigeria | |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|----------------------------|---|---|--------------|--|
| 52. | Ms Aissata Tall Sall | Parti Socialiste | | Senegal | tallassocies@orange.sn |
| 53. | Ms. Esther Tawiah | Gender Center for Empowering Development | Executive Director | Ghana | esthertawiah@gmail.com |
| 54. | Ms Agathe Telou Kemaleou | UNOWAS | Gender Advisor | Senegal | telouk@un.org |
| 55. | Mr Serigne Modou Thioune | | Consultant | Senegal | sthioune@hotmail.com |
| 56. | Ms Françoise Toe | Mouvement de Libération Nationale (MLN) | | Burkina Faso | francoisetoe@gmail.com |
| 57. | Ms. Salimata Thiam | ECOWAS Gender Development Center | Responsable de la Politique et des Programmes Genre et de leur mise en œuvre | Senegal | Salimata.thiam@gmx.fr |
| 58. | Mr Younoussa Touré | Union pour la République et la Démocratie (URD) | Deuxième Adjoint au Secrétaire Général Point Focal pour l'Emergence des Femmes en Politique | Mali | Yunusature53@yahoo.fr |
| 59. | Ms. Oury Traore | | Consultant | Senegal | ourytraore@yahoo.com |
| 60. | Mr. Axel De Ville | UN Women | Regional Director ai | Senegal | Axel.deville@unwomen.org |
| 61. | Ms. Caroline Wafang Ouaffo | OHCHR | Gender Advisor | Senegal | Couaffowafang@ohchr.org |

| No. | Name | Institution | Title/Position | Country | E-mail |
|-----|-----------------------|---|-----------------|------------|--|
| 62. | Mr Ousman Yabo | The Association of Non- Governmental Organizations In the Gambia (TANGO) | Deputy Director | The Gambia | Yabo_1948@yahoo.com |
| 63. | Mr Robert Daté Yao | Commission Electrale Nationale Indépendante | | Togo | yaorobert@yahoo.com |

c) Communiqué

COMMUNIQUE

Gender, Human Rights and Women's Participation in Elections in West and Central Africa

We, the representatives of Election Management Bodies (EMBs), National Human Rights Commissions (NHRCs), Parliaments, Political Parties, Regional Organizations Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in West and Central Africa, and the United Nations (UN), met in Dakar, Senegal from 11-13 May, at a regional workshop on the theme of ***“Gender, Human Rights and Women’s Electoral Participation in West and Central Africa”***, held at the Hôtel des Almadies, on the initiative of the UN Women, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Welcoming the alignment of the objectives of the workshop to regional and sub-regional policies and declarations for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality, including the African Union Declaration of 2016 as a Year of Human Rights, with a focus on African Women’s Rights;

Recognizing the critical role of Electoral Management Bodies, National Human Rights Commissions and political parties to facilitating women’s full and effective participation in electoral politics in West and Central Africa;

Committed to engaging and promoting solidarity amongst women, and to encouraging inter-generational exchanges with young women for effective knowledge transfer and mentorship on issues of women’s rights and gender equality;

Noting with encouragement, the wealth of good practices in countries of West and Central Africa aimed at promoting a gender and human rights perspective and women’s full and equal participation in elections, which include: the adoption of a Gender Parity Law in Senegal, which has resulted in an increase of women’s parliamentary representation to 43 percent; the adoption of quota laws in countries including Niger, Guinea and Mali; the appointment of women to leadership positions in National Electoral Commissions in Cape Verde, Ghana and the Central African Republic, and the adoption of a Gender Policy by the Electoral Commission of Ghana; as well as innovative efforts by Cote d’Ivoire to establish a national compendium of women political leaders which can be accessed by political parties;

Noting with concern however, the continued existence of multiple structural, cultural, political, financial and technical barriers to women's full and effective participation in electoral politics in West and Central Africa, hereby propose amongst others, the following recommendations:

Governments Shall:

- Commit to implement provisions of the Maputo Protocol which call for the equal representation of women in electoral processes at all levels;
- Adopt laws on parity or quotas for countries that have not yet done so, including: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Ghana, Nigeria and the Central African Republic;
- Ensure effective implementation of laws pertaining to parity or quotas in countries such as Togo and Burkina Faso;
- Ensure that electoral laws and the charter establishing political parties include provisions that uphold principles of women's rights and gender equality;
- Foster close working partnerships between National Elections Commissions and National Human Rights Commissions in the context of addressing gender and women's rights considerations in elections.

Regional Organizations Shall:

- Continue to expand the provision of technical and financial support to Member States and civil society organizations with the aim of promoting women's rights and participation in electoral processes;
- Support the development and application of minimum regional standards and provisions to guide the integration of gender considerations into the work of National Election Commissions, which include the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting frameworks in countries of the ECOWAS and ECCAS regions;
- Establish with the support of UN Women and partner agencies, a Funding Facility, to be accessed by civil society and women's organizations within the West and Central African regions, to support capacity development, mentorship and training of women in politics, including both aspiring and elected women leaders.

Civil Society Organizations Shall:

- Advocate with governments and political parties for the adoption and/or implementation of laws on parity or quotas, and for the harmonization of domestic legislation in line with international and regional standards and conventions;
- Facilitate the establishment of a regional networking platform for women in politics to share knowledge and good practices on strategies for promoting women's leadership and political participation;
- Facilitate alliance-building between women running for political office and other constituencies, including the media, private sector and traditional authorities;
- Support mentorship programmes for young women in politics, which will facilitate leadership development and inter-generational knowledge transfer.

Political Parties Shall:

- Adopt and implement gender parity principles within their party constitutions and leadership structures;
- Adopt gender-responsive budgeting to inform implementation of their political activities and programmes;
- Adopt internal mechanisms to enable women to achieve political, professional and family life balance.

The United Nations and International Organizations Shall:

- Provide the necessary technical, political and material support to implement the recommendations emanating from the workshop.

Dakar, May 13th2016.