



Kabul Declaration 2015

"Afghanistan 2016 and Beyond: Opportunities and Challenges for women's political participation and leadership"

Kabul, Afghanistan
16 December 2015

The Afghanistan Constitution states that all women have equal rights to men, in all spheres of social, political and economic life. Over the last thirteen years, tremendous efforts have been made to improve the situation of Afghan women. Whilst significant gains have been made, many difficulties and challenges, especially in the area of political and electoral participation, require greater efforts and full attention.

According to Afghanistan's UNSCR1325 National Action Plan, civil society, the Afghan Government and women's rights advocates must coordinate their efforts to achieve implementation. This reaffirmation is outlined throughout this declaration.

On 15 December 2015, on the first day of a two-day conference, a multi-stakeholder consultation was held with representatives from civil society, women's networks, the Election Reform Commission, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and other international community representatives, including Gender Concerns International and other Bayan partners.

The consultative meeting highlighted the need for women's political participation, opportunities, challenges and electoral reform in 2016 and beyond. The role of the international community in support of this process was discussed and how a more cohesive approach could be developed for 2016.

The most important outcome of the consultation was recognition of the opportunities and challenges that are present. Key opportunities include:

1. The ability to pursue women's rights and women's political participation through various national and international legal instruments including, the Afghan Constitution, international commitments since ratification of Security Council Resolution 1325, and the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325;
2. The opportunity to enhance civil society engagement with national institutions to advance women's political participation;



3. The scope to enhance cooperation between national and international women and other civil society organizations to further the issue of women's electoral participation at all levels;
4. The chance to encourage and develop the emergence of a new generation of Afghan youth to espouse modern values and democracy;
5. To take firm actions to appoint women in key leadership positions within various Ministries, Departments, provincial bodies and embassies.
6. Ensure positive discrimination in relation to gender-focused electoral reforms.

Some of the major challenges addressed during this multi-stakeholder consultation were:

- The position of women within traditional belief structures
- The current state of weak democratic practices
- The low levels of female candidacy
- An unpredictable security environment
- The lack of ratification of international instruments into domestic legislation e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Based on these discussions, the aforementioned attendees present the following recommendations:

1. We *call upon* the Government to honor its commitment to implement the 1325 National Action Plan in its full spirit. Moreover, the Government should adhere to its commitment of strengthening women's participation in governance and decision-making at the leadership level.
2. To ensure the neutrality and independence of the Election Reform Commission and allow it to fulfill its mandate. The process of election reform should be completed promptly to allow elections to occur in 2016, in respecting the legitimacy of institutions.
3. Women and other civil society organisations should conduct further awareness-raising programs amongst government bodies and the general population to ensure greater political participation of women. This will assist in challenging traditional structures and will support women to claim their right to political representation.
4. We *call upon* the Government to swiftly bring about gender inclusive electoral reform to allow for full and effective gender representation.
5. We *emphasise the need* for the international community to continue to work towards supporting national and international organisations to protect the rights of women.



6. We *urge the* international community to respect and recognise female leadership in international consultations especially on the issues of peace, security and development.

As civil society actors committed to advancing and supporting the development of equal political participation of women, we commit to work together with all stakeholders in order to continue supporting and advocating for gender equality in Afghanistan. We commit to monitoring the implementation of this declaration.

"Afghanistan 2016 and Beyond: Opportunities and Challenges for women's political participation and leadership" was held in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 15 December 2015. The consultation brought together 25 representatives from women-led non-governmental organizations, international organisations, the Afghan National Election Reform Commission, human rights organisations and other experts. The consultation was kindly hosted by Gender Concerns International in cooperation with its two partners, the Development and Support of Afghan Women and Children Organization and the Women Human Rights and Media Organization, as part of the Bayan Consortium.