

Research Report

Topic 1: The Question of Securing Top Government and Public Administration Positions for Women



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Introduction

Securing top government and public administration positions for women is an important aspect of the empowerment of women. Since the suffragette movement, women and men have been fighting for the advancement of women in politics and society. First by giving women the right to vote and partake in elections. Secondly, by breaking down the barriers found in society that inhibits the opportunities for women to enter the political stage, or advancing within the public or private sector. This committee will be focusing on the question of securing top government and public administration positions for women, and will not be addressing the issues found in the private sector regarding the advancement of women and securing top positions.

Today, there are still many cultural and societal obstacles that inhibits women from having the same opportunities as men when it comes to securing top positions in both public administration and governments. This is seen in the world wide average percentage of women in parliament only being at 23.5%.¹ Thus, it's important to find the necessary solutions to solving these problems, and prove a greater number of women around the world the opportunity to take up more top positions in both the public sector and governments.

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief overview regarding the situation of securing more top government and public administration positions for Women, but also to explore the different challenges that the international community is facing today regarding the issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender Quotas: Setting a mandatory minimum number or percentage of seats/positions that has to be occupied by a member of a specific gender.

Top Government Positions: Elected representatives holding top positions inside the government as minister, prime minister, president etc.

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>



Top Public Administration Positions: Civil service leadership positions in state/regional governments, national governments, intergovernmental organisations (e.g. UN, EU, World Bank, IMF etc.) or in the military.

Gender equality: Equality between the genders so that rights and opportunities are equal for all genders, and eliminating gender based discrimination.

Background information

The empowerment of women is currently a major focus of many organisations. The United Nations has already taken major steps towards securing a greater influence of women in policy making by helping and supporting women by forming branches such as UN Women, and actively working with member nations to advance the position of women. Other IGOs such as the European Union are also actively trying to enhance the opportunities for women seeking major positions in either governments or in the public sector.²

According to a study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 23.5% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women as of 1 December 2017.³

The situation has improved vastly from when women didn't even hold the right to vote, to taking up 23.5% of parliamentary seats on average in the world, but there is still a long way to come.

The first country that granted women universal suffrage was New Zealand in 1893.⁴ Then came the suffragette movement that swept across Europe and the US during the beginning of the 20th century, and achieved their goal of giving women the vote in almost every single country across the world. The last country that granted women the right to vote (apart from the Vatican City) was Saudi Arabia in 2015, but women can, however, only vote in municipal elections.⁵

² European Commission (n.d.). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/index_en.htm

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

⁴ New Zealand History (n.d.). Visited 18/01/2018. Available at: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/womens-suffrage>

⁵ BBC (12/12/15). Visited 18/01/2018. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35075702>

Women are, however, still underrepresented in most parliaments across the world, with women on average only holding 23.5% of the seats in parliament across the world.⁶

Parliaments should reflect the population, so therefore the number should in the ideal world be higher than the current number. Secondly, not only is it important to secure a greater number of women in parliaments, but women also need to be represented in major political positions such as in the cabinet or as head of state. Looking at civil servants, the same thing is applicable where a greater number of women should have the opportunity to hold major civil service positions within the public sector.

The OECD countries, the average percentage of women in the entire public sector was 59% in 2013.⁷ However, women face barriers in reaching senior leadership positions in the public sector, with women only occupying 29% of the top civil service leadership positions⁸, and 26.9% of cabinet/ministerial positions.⁹

The Nordic countries have the highest share of women ministers (except for Denmark), with Finland, Sweden being in the top, and Norway having the 4th highest share of women ministers in the OECD.¹⁰ The overall gap across the different countries vary greatly, with Finland being in the lead with the percentage of women ministers in the Finnish government being over 60%, compared to Greece, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovakia, where the percentage of women ministers in governments is less than 10%.¹¹

⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

⁷ OECD (2015), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, printed, p. 27. Online book visited 18/01/2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en

⁸ OECD (2015), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, printed, p. 28. Online book visited 18/01/2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en

⁹ OECD (2015), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, printed, p. 28. Online book visited 18/01/2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en

¹⁰ OECD (2015), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, printed, p. 28. Online book visited 18/01/2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en

¹¹ OECD (2015), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, printed, p. 28. Online book visited 18/01/2018. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

China: China introduced gender quotas on parliamentary seats in 1949, and have continued to have them ever since. By 1949, Chinese women were secured 10% of the total seats in the Chinese Parliament. The effectiveness of these quotas has been disputed, with China ranking 72nd on the world list of gender ratio in a national parliament.¹²

EU: The European Commission of the European Union have been vocal supporters for the advancement of women in policy and decision making positions, and are trying to work for achieving gender equality in decision and policy making positions. This is done through encouraging the member nations to put it on their political agenda, and by increasing awareness, collecting and analysing trends and cooperating with key stakeholders e.g. NGOs, governments etc..¹³

Sweden: Sweden currently ranks 5th on the world list of gender ratio in a national parliament, with women taking up 44% of the seats in the Swedish parliament.¹⁴ Sweden doesn't have gender quotas on seats in the parliament, but a few parties, including the Swedish Social Democratic Party, have gender quotas.¹⁵ These quotas have had surprising results, not only have it secured a higher percentage of women being able to candidate for a position in the parliament, but also enabled more competent leaders to be elected, and especially more competent male political leaders.¹⁶

UN Women: UN Women is the branch of the UN that is championing gender equality and the empowerment of women. The framework that created UN Women was passed by the UN general assembly in 2010, and led to the creation of UN Women.¹⁷ UN Women has 5 priority

¹² Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 26/12/2017. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

¹³ European Commission (n.d.). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/index_en.htm

¹⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 26/12/2017. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

¹⁵ Besley, Timothy, et al. (2017) Gender Quotas and the Crisis of the Mediocre Man: Theory and Evidence from Sweden, American Economic Review: 107(8), p. 2205

¹⁶ Besley, Timothy, et al. (2017) Gender Quotas and the Crisis of the Mediocre Man: Theory and Evidence from Sweden, American Economic Review: 107(8), p. 2240

¹⁷ UN Women (02/07/10). Visited 10/01/2018. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2010/7/un-creates-new-structure-for-empowerment-of-women>



areas which are: “Increasing women’s leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security process; enhancing women’s economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.”¹⁸

Rwanda: Rwanda is currently ranking first on the world list of gender ratio in a national parliament, with women making up 61% of the members of the Rwandan parliament.¹⁹ The current president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, has been one of the leading proponents of securing political influence of women in Rwanda by placing women in major political positions, and by passing a new constitution that secures women in Rwanda 30% of all seats in the parliament.²⁰

UNDP: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports the introduction of gender quotas in the public sector to improve gender equality in the public sector.²¹

Relevant UN Resolutions

A/RES/34/180

Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly 18 December 1979 during the 34th session.

This resolution, also known as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, is a convention that seeks to eliminate all discrimination against women, and states a number of rights that seeks to strengthen the equality of both men and women.²²

Available at:

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_34_180.pdf

¹⁸ UN Women (n.d.). Visited 10/01/2018. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

¹⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (01/12/17). Visited 26/12/2017. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

²⁰ Warner, G. (29/07/16). Visited 26/12/2017. Available at:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/07/29/487360094/invisibilia-no-one-thought-this-all-womans-debate-team-could-crush-it>

²¹ UNDP Europe and Central Asia (n.d.). Visited 12/01/2018. Available at:

<http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/gender-equality/democratic-governance/political-participation.html>

²² United Nations (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations*, printed, p. 1. Online book visited 17/01/2018. Available at:

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_34_180.pdf

E/CN.6/2000/PC/2

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the UN Economic and Social Council on 19 January 2000 during the Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled: *"Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"*.

The Beijing Platform for action is an agenda for the empowerment of women worldwide, and improving gender equality.²³

Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ecn6-2000-pc2.pdf>

Previous attempts to Solve the Issue

As mentioned earlier in the document, many countries, ranging from China to Rwanda, have introduced gender quotas to secure a higher percentage of women participating in policymaking. The effectiveness of these policies have varied, with the Rwandan policies on securing women a greater access to policy making, has indeed been very effective in securing a greater representation of women in the Rwandan parliament. The Chinese attempt at improving representation of women has not been so effective, with China currently ranking 72nd in the world on the percentage of women in parliament, despite having a set quota of seats in the parliament reserved for women.

Sweden has no set gender quota on the seats in the parliament, despite of this, they currently have the 5th greatest percentage of women represented in parliament in the world.

Improving education could also be seen as an attempt of securing greater opportunities for women, especially when it comes to achieving greater chances of gaining leadership positions within the public sector, where many key IGOs such as UNESCO are trying to empower women through education.²⁴

²³ United Nations (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, printed, p. 16. Online book visited 17/01/2018. Available at:

http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf

²⁴ UNESCO (n.d.) Visited 12/01/2018. Available at:

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-and-gender-equality/unfpa-unwomen-programme>

Possible Solutions

A possible solution is to introduce gender quotas on public administration and government positions to, by force, achieve a higher representation of women. As mentioned earlier in this document in the Background information section, Sweden has achieved great results in both narrowing the gender gap, but also to secure more qualified individuals – especially men – for positions in the government and in the parliament.

There are many benefits to introducing gender quotas, but there are also arguments against introducing gender quotas. Gender quotas might secure a higher proportional representation in a parliament or other elected body, but other measures – such as education – must also be a focus of policy makers in order to secure more women in top positions.

Gender quotas are also against the principle of equal opportunity for all, as it shouldn't be your gender that determines your opportunities, and one's gender shouldn't either limit nor strengthen any chance of achieving a specific opportunity. Gender quotas might also make companies prone to hire people based on their sex and not on their qualifications, which is against the intention of gender quotas that are meant to secure greater opportunities for women, and not just hiring them because they are women and would thus be counterproductive towards the goal of gender equality.

Education can therefore also be regarded as another solution, or a part of the solution. Education allows more women to qualify for top positions in the civil service and the rest of the public sector. Education is – in most countries – not a requirement to become an elected representative of a national or regional legislative body, but education can help grant the necessary skills that enables women to advance and take up more top government positions.

Establishing a women's wing within a party or a parliament also provides a great forum for women in power to engage in dialogue and highlight issues that prevent opportunities for women in the particular parliament of the particular country from having equal opportunities as their male counterparts.

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