



## Joint Declaration of the Speakers

We, the Women Speakers of National Parliamentary Assembly, are gathering in Paris to reaffirm our unwavering support towards women's rights. Through this unprecedented Summit, we want to promote **an active parliamentary diplomacy strongly committed to this goal**. Through our own political careers and convictions, we can inspire and, above all, advocate for the fight for women's rights. We also have a responsibility to denounce and strongly condemn sexual violence against women in times of conflict, in violation of international law, including the abhorrent use of rape as a weapon of war. Ultimately, national parliaments, representatives of their Nation, are in the front line in defending women's rights, and pushing forward equality between women and men and its effectiveness through the legislation they draft, pass and oversee.

**By strengthening the rights of women and girls, humanity as a whole is moving forward.** Fighting against the persistent inequalities and discrimination suffered by women is an imperative in the **defence of the values of equality and democracy** throughout the world.

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women continue to be major challenges for our societies. The principle of equality is **one of the top priorities of the UN Sustainable Development Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda**: «To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls» (SDG5). Similarly, **several major global and regional legal texts** have been adopted, illustrating the collective awareness of the need to ensure equal rights: the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the 2019 International Labor Organisation

Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment; the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as “the Convention of Belém do Pará”; the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the “Maputo Protocol”; the 2011 Council of Europe’s Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the «Istanbul Convention» and the 2023 ASEAN Declaration on Gender Equality and Family Development.

We have shared priorities, including the empowerment of all women, the defence of their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRHRR) the elimination of all forms of violence – intra family, sexual and gender-based - and discrimination in social, political and economic life. The same applies to access to education and employment, combating stereotypes addressing the specific challenges faced by women with disability.

Despite the genuine progress in **education, health and economic development**, women’s rights are being challenged or even called into question. As regards education, 10% of girls and 8% of boys in the world do not attend primary school<sup>1</sup>, even though this gap has narrowed considerably over the last twenty years. Yet, girls no longer have access to secondary and higher education in Afghanistan. The rate of **early marriages** has fallen by 15% in the last ten years<sup>2</sup> but this practice is still widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Worldwide, one in five women is married before the age of eighteen. Every year, between 4.7% and 13.2% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion<sup>3</sup>. In terms of **violence against women**, 200 million women and girls worldwide are victims of genital mutilation, amongst other inflictions, the majority before the age of fifteen, with excision still practised in thirty countries<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, we are also facing **new challenges**, such as cyber violence, and in particular cyber harassment, of which women are the first victims. We are determined to deal with all these challenges together.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, 2021 - <sup>2</sup> UNICEF, 2021 - <sup>3</sup> UNICEF, 2021 - <sup>4</sup> WHO, 2024

We, the Women Speakers of National Parliamentary Assembly, are committed, within our powers, to working for gender equality and the defence of women's rights, and we are united in order to implement the following concrete actions:

— **At an international and inter-parliamentary level, between our Assemblies:** —

Supporting all efforts towards women who are oppressed and threatened with exclusion from public, economic and social life and deprived of their fundamental rights worldwide, victims of violence in armed conflicts and victims of human trafficking and prostitution rings.

Adoption of common positions in favour of women's rights, such as the right to education, a prerequisite for their emancipation, and access to health and protection of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRHRR), which is a major challenge in terms of equality. Our priorities include combating violence against women, such as preventing forced marriages and female genital mutilation, which undermine women's integrity, and combating abuses against women in times of conflict, including the abhorrent use of rape as a weapon of war.

Supporting efforts to achieve widespread ratification of the most advanced international and regional legal instruments promoting equality and women's rights (*supra*) aimed at strengthening legislation and action by States to combat violence against women.

Developing strategies for the constructive dealing with the new challenges such as cyber violence and in particular cyber harassment, of which women are the first victims.

Supporting women's international and regional parliamentary networks, such as the IUP Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the APF French-speaking Women's Network, the CPA Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and the «Femmes@APCE»; creating a specific network to defend the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Supporting women's rights associations on the ground as well as current international initiatives such as the follow-up to the Generation Equality Forum co-organised by France, Mexico and the UN or the introduction of special parliamentary prizes for women.

Defining gender equality as a priority area of parliamentary diplomacy, in particular by developing experience-sharing and by broadening the scope of the Assemblies on issues related to gender equality and women's rights through cooperation between the women's rights delegations, the relevant standing committees and the friendship groups.

■ **Initiating common actions at the occasion of key moments for joint mobilisation:** the International Women's Rights Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the UN "UNITE to End Violence against Women Campaign".

— **At a national level, within our respective assemblies:** —

■ **Promoting the adoption of a legislative agenda that strengthens women's rights** in all areas - the right to education, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRHRR), economic rights, professional equality and entrepreneurship, the fight against violence towards women, including domestic violence, and against prostitution rings, the awareness on issues faced by women with disability, as well as on the situation faced by women who belong to indigenous peoples and local communities.

■ **Strengthening the role of women's rights bodies or of any other relevant body in this area.**

■ **Endorsing a political agenda for equality,** by organising annual debates and other activities dedicated to the women's position in our countries and to the action taken by our governments to promote equality between women and men.

■ **Ensuring full and equal participation of women and men at national level in our Assemblies:** at the political level, for instance via electoral regulations that promote parity; among the elected bodies of the Assembly and in positions of responsibility; within national parliamentary delegations which are called upon to sit in international Assemblies.

■ **Ensuring a culture of equality in our Assemblies,** including the fight against gender discrimination, harassment and hate speech in particular against female parliamentarians; the access of women to decision-making positions and functions, the balance between professional and private life, by adopting working methods that take into account equality between women and men.

■ **Endorsing the follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda in our respective countries.**

We, the Women Speakers of National Parliamentary Assembly, are setting up a **network of Women Speakers of Assembly committed to women's rights and gender equality**, in order to pursue our discussions and act together.