



SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

Executive and Regional Meetings
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 22 and 23 April 2016



Women and Asia – Promoting Gender Equality

DECLARATION

Millions of women and girls in Asian regions experience significant gender inequalities within their homes, local communities and national infrastructures. It is of critical concern that many Asian women are suffering high levels of mortality in childbirth due to unequal or lack of skilled birthing care, experiencing endemic levels of intimate partner violence, are typically earning 70 – 90% of what men earn for doing the same work, and have far lower levels of access to education than men and boys. In addition, despite 40% of the region's women being employed in agricultural work, female-headed households continue to own significantly less farming land than male-headed households.

These inequalities affect all areas of the daily lives of Asian women, resulting in the suppression of their ability to live healthy and productive lives, develop educationally, and thrive as individuals within their homes and communities. It is vital that these issues are urgently addressed and that women in these regions are supported in their progress towards achieving gender equality and the full realisation of their human rights and freedoms.

Within the framework of women's economic empowerment and the eradication of poverty, it is essential to urgently address a number of key issues, including: reducing the gender wage gap, finding multilateral solutions for the creation of sustainable and guaranteed income, streamlining national infrastructures to enable the marketing and distribution of goods produced by women in remote areas, and providing financial support and advice to female entrepreneurs in small business start-ups.

It is vitally important to focus government and public attention on eliminating all forms of violence against women. Urgent action is required to safeguard the human rights of women, enhancing their ability to develop and thrive, as well as allowing them to contribute further to the sustainable development of their local and national communities.

Due to the vital importance of agriculture in the lives and economies of Asian regions, focus on sustainable development and the valuable contribution of women in the creation of solutions is critical. It is also of urgent importance to spread the message of promoting 'green' development solutions and to change mental and behavioural attitudes to overcome the immense challenges created by the loss of climate balance caused by global warming.

Socialist International Women and the Social Democracy Mongolian Women's Association commit their support for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda

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and the vision of achieving true gender equality and the equal participation of men and women in building peaceful, sustainable communities.

Socialist International Women and the Social Democracy Mongolian Women's Association assert that women's participation in local and national government decision making processes is of critical importance in ensuring that the issues and concerns of women are heard and incorporated into policies, budgeting and legislation. The vision to be realised is communities and nations governed under the principles of 'parity democracy' allowing full political participation for both men and women.

The realisation of 'parity democracy' takes time, as it requires significant political infrastructure change to ensure gender equality at all levels of the political process. These include changes to: *constitutional rights* – guaranteeing equal rights of voting and candidate nomination for men and women; *electoral systems* – to allow mechanisms such as proportional representation; *legal quotas* – such as reserved seats for women, or gender quotas for candidates; *political party rules and candidate selection procedures* – ensuring 50-50 gender quotas; *capacity development* – giving both men and women the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in political environments; *parliamentary reform* – ensuring gender sensitive working conditions, such as childcare facilities and shorter duration of sittings in parliament.

The adoption of quota systems for women within political parties is a vital first step in increasing the number of women in politics, with the aim of achieving a 50% quota of women members. This quota could be achieved gradually, for instance starting with a 30% quota, with a clear plan to increase this figure to 50% before 2030. Making progress at grassroots party levels is critical to the achievement of the goal of 'parity democracy' across regions and nations.

The Socialist International Women (SIW) calls on all leaders, Governments, Member Parties of the Socialist International, and NGOs with similar core values to the SIW, to take urgent action to end the suffering and exploitation of Asian women and girls, with particular focus on the promotion of gender parity in political processes and decision making.

The Socialist International Women calls on governments to spend 10% or more of the GDP on healthcare services.

The SIW calls for urgent action to:

Promote education, discussion and understanding of gender inequality issues and their impact on individuals and communities at local and national level.

Raise awareness of the effects, consequences and costs violence against women has on an individual level (for survivors and others affected by violence), within the family, community, the business sector and wider society and implement policies and measurements to end violence against women.

Include gender quotas in party candidate nomination rules and practices and promote gender equality in party manifestos and campaigns (See below *SIW's Paper on Quota Systems and Parity Democracy for Women*).

Encourage increased participation of women in local and national government and decision making processes, with the aim of achieving 'parity democracy' across all platforms.

Implement policies and practices which promote increased access to quality education and healthcare.

Create partnerships and alliances with local and national groups and NGOs to support and encourage the integration of gender inclusive policies and practices.

Support co-operation and discussion between countries and regions to promote unity and solidarity in thought and action.
