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Women in the Parliament of Montenegro

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FOREWORD

Democratic process per se requires continuous promotion through reconsideration and understanding of new values, especially in the 21st century when one of the great challenges across the globe is increasing participation of women in politics and public life. Until today, significant changes have been made when it comes to the manner men and women share their business and family obligations, while parliaments increasingly reflect a new reality, seeking to transform themselves into gender-sensitive institutions. Gender-sensitive parliaments, within their structure and manner of functioning, equally meet the needs and interests of men and women. They also seek to remove the obstacles in order to ensure full participation of women, serving as a positive example to the society as a whole. Introduction of quotas as special measures led to significant progress in increasing the number of women in parliaments.

In regards to achieving gender equality in the legislative branch of government, equal participation of parliamentarian women in the work of parliamentary committees-the essence of parliament, is needed, considering that they create room for a detailed consideration of significant issues. Usually, parliamentary committees are guided by a set of determined rules, most often included in the rules of procedure, but also by unofficial, unwritten rules, which determine for example which MP will be a member of a certain committee, and which have a significant impact on the participation of women and men in committees. Results of a survey conducted by Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2011 show that parliamentarian women are usually in the top leadership positions within a committee dealing with gender equality, women rights, social issues, and family, employment and education issues. On the other hand, men are in top leadership positions within committees dealing with foreign affairs, security, defence and economy.¹

Women make up the majority of population in Montenegro. According to the census conducted in 2011, women make up 51 % of the population². However, regardless of their share in the population, their social power increases or decreases depending on their share of representation in the distribution of political functions at the national and local level, as one of significant indicators of gender equality and the key factor of democratisation of society.³

This paper provides information regarding the legal framework for achieving gender equality in Montenegro, and information related to the position and representation of women in the legislative branch of government in the history of Montenegrin parliamentarism - respectively from 1946 to present.

¹ Dr. Sonia Palmieri, Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice, Inter-parliamentary Union, No. 65 – 2011, <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf> (27 June 2013)

² Statistical Office of Montenegro – MONSTAT <http://monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/MONTENEGRO%20-%20CRNOGORSKI.pdf> (27 June 2013)

³ “Women in power 1990-2003”, Gender Equality Office of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, Podgorica, 2004.

1. SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Beginning in 1946, when women were granted the right to vote, until today changes were made when it comes to activism and representation of women in political life, particularly in the legislative branch of government. The share of women in the legislative branch of government increased gradually, from three parliamentary women (out of 107 MPs), elected in the first elections held in Montenegro upon the introduction of women's suffrage, to fourteen (out of 81 MPs), at the start of the current convocation of the Parliament of Montenegro. In the history of Montenegrin parliamentarism, only one woman was elected as President of the Parliament (2001), and in addition to her, two women were also appointed to a top leadership position within the Parliament (Collegium).⁴

From 1946 to present, it can be observed that women were somewhat represented in top leadership positions within committees, most often in the committees that dealt with social policy issues, health, education, and gender equality, with the exception of 1990, when a woman was appointed to a top leadership position within the Committee on Social and Economic Relations and Political System, and 1991, when a woman was appointed as Chair of the Commission for Selection and Appointment.⁵ With regards to committee membership, at a certain degree, women were always represented, however, it is interesting to note that during the convocations, including the current one, not a single woman was part of the Security and Defence Committee.⁶

Currently, women make up 17% of the total number of MPs of the Parliament of Montenegro, which is the highest percentage in the history of Montenegrin parliamentarism. However, the European Parliament Resolution on the 2012 Progress Report on Montenegro⁷ states that in regards to women's rights and gender equality, limited progress has been achieved, with the emphasis that the issue of underrepresentation of women in the Parliament of Montenegro still persists, as well as on other top decision-making positions and on the labour market. "Establishment of the principle of gender equality at all levels and in all areas of social life represents a precondition for European integration, and also the overall emancipation of Montenegrin society."⁸

As a working body of the Parliament of Montenegro, the Gender Equality Committee plays a very important role in achieving gender equality. With the aim of promoting women's rights, Women Parliament was introduced as a novelty within the Parliament, held on the occasion of International Women's Day, with its first session convening on 8 March 2012. The Women Parliament is organised once a year by the Gender Equality Committee and aims to raise awareness on women rights in Montenegro. On this occasion, representatives of the Government of Montenegro answer questions posed by participants, as well as representatives of women's associations of parliamentary parties and representatives of civil society. It is organised in the framework of improving women human rights, particularly in the light of the process of European integration, as well as establishing critical relation between all types of discrimination and raising the level of commitment of promotion and protection of women human rights and gender equality, necessary for democratic development of the society.⁹

The complete document in Montenegrin language can be found at:

http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/biblioteka-i-istrazivanje/Zene_u_Skupstini_Crne_Gore.pdf

⁴ Drobnjak, Nada „Women's Side of Parliament“, Parliament of Montenegro, Gender Equality Committee, Podgorica, December 2010

⁵ "Women in power 1990-2003", Gender Equality Office of the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, Podgorica, 2004

⁶ Drobnjak, n.d.

⁷ European Parliament Resolution of 18 April 2013 on the 2012 Progress Report on Montenegro

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0185+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN> (27 June 2013)

⁸ Puzigaća Milka, Šturanović Petar, Pajvančić Marijana „Research on knowledge and application of Law on Gender Equality in the institutions throughout Montenegro“, Parliament of Montenegro, Gender Equality Committee, Podgorica, 2012

⁹ <http://www.skupstina.me/index.php/me/gradjani/zenski-parlament>