



Convening Meeting of the Community of Democracies
Working Group on Gender Equality
Open presentation by senior delegation heads:
Round-table discussion “**Women and Leadership**”
Vilnius University, Theater Hall
April 12, 2010, 15:30-16:30 PM

Organized by Center for Gender Studies, Vilnius University, Embassy of the United States in Lithuania, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

Despite gender equality laws and efforts to combat gender stereotypes, women are still underrepresented in the vast majority of elected bodies. The percentage of female members of national legislatures vary widely according to country and region: Nordic countries – 42.1%; USA – 16.8%; Europe, excluding Nordic countries – 19.9% (Lithuania – 19.1%); Asia – 18.7%; Sub-Saharan Africa – 18.4%; Pacific – 13.2%; Arab States – 10.1%.

It is crucially important to identify and address the factors that obstruct women's meaningful political participation.

Women's political participation is important not just in terms of fairness. It is necessary for the interests and concerns of women, their families, and their communities to be taken into account. Women in politics and decision-making positions in governments and legislative bodies contribute to redefining political priorities; placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women's concerns, values, and experiences; and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues. This is particularly important in conflict-affected countries, where women's participation as decision-makers in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding are requisites for sustainable peace and development.

Governments, political parties, women's groups, and women and men themselves should commit to substantially increasing the number of women candidates for public office, including by promoting equality of women and men; encouraging women candidates; developing and introducing open and participatory processes that enhance the participation of women and men in all phases of developing legislation, programs, and policies; ensuring shared responsibilities between men and women in the home; and promoting the equal contribution of women and men to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Round-table discussion participants:

Ms. **Melanne S. Verveer**, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

Ms. **Jolanta Kwaśniewska**, former First Lady of Poland

Ms. **Aušrinė Marija Pavilionienė**, Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Other senior delegation heads of Working Group on Gender Equality (**to be confirmed**)

Participants: Gender equality activists from all over Lithuania, journalists, diplomats, up to 200 participants