

## **SUMMIT OF WOMEN SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS**

Palma, April 21, 2024

### **Women Speakers Joint Declaration**

The Summit of Women Speakers of Parliaments took place on April 21, 2024, in Palma, within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2023. This Conference brought together women Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union Member States and the European Parliament, as well as other guest countries with special partnerships with the European Union, to exchange views on women's leadership in public life. It was presided over by the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies, Ms. Francina Armengol. Special guests included Mónica Buendía, CEO and founder of StockCrowd IN, Victoria Luengo, actress and recipient of the Princess of Girona 2024 Award in the Arts Section, and Sara García Alonso, scientist and astronaut.

#### The women Speakers

1. Stress that Parliaments play an essential role in the defence of women's rights, furthering, drafting, adopting and overseeing the legislation that promotes public policies aimed at both formal and substantive gender equality. The struggle against the persistent discrimination of women and girls must be part of European values, focusing on challenges such as access on equal terms to higher education and to the labour market, and the fight against stereotypes and disparities in the public and private lives of all people, in online and offline spaces.
2. Affirm in their commitment to advancing gender equality the indispensable role of men, particularly their parliamentary colleagues, as allies in this collective



endeavor. Acknowledging the intersections of privilege and oppression and by recognizing that achieving true gender equality necessitates the active participation and support of all genders, the women Speakers underscore the importance of engaging men in challenging societal norms, dismantling stereotypes, and fostering inclusive environments.

3. State that the presence of women in social and political leadership positions provides legitimacy to public institutions and civil organizations and increases the likelihood that the interests of women shall be taken into account. However, they note with concern that women are still under-represented in all European Union countries as regards decision-making processes and within political parties. And they note that the positions of political responsibility traditionally held by women are mostly confined to those related to equal gender policies, family, childhood or social inclusion and development. In this respect they encourage a gender balanced representation in party structures and party lists in the election processes.
4. Welcome the initiative presented by the Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives, to invite Speakers and delegations of the national Chambers/Parliaments and of the European Parliament to co-sign the “Joint Declaration for more Gender-sensitive Parliaments”. This initiative has been presented at the LXXIe COSAC Plenary in Brussels. The text of the “Joint Declaration for more Gender-sensitive Parliaments” corresponds to the chapter on “Gender policy and the representation of women and men in parliament” from the adopted COSAC Contribution. The “Joint Declaration for more Gender-sensitive Parliaments” is included as an annex to the present Women Speakers Joint Declaration.
5. Advocate for the promotion of parity within parliamentary Chambers, both with respect to the number of women parliamentarians and to the membership of the different steering and functioning bodies of the Chambers, as well as the membership of delegations to international assemblies and the statutory meetings where the agreements are reached. The Women Speakers take note of the results of the 41st Bi-annual Report on "The Representation of Women and Men in Parliament" and welcome the Contribution of the LXXI COSAC, adopted in Brussels on 26 March 2024.
6. Consider it essential to guarantee the culture of equality within our Parliaments, including the adoption of Equality Plans to face the specific challenges



confronted by women in parliamentary Chambers, related to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination such as gender discrimination, work harassment, women's access to positions and functions of responsibility or work-life balance.

7. Condemn hate speech against women parliamentarians and the violence suffered by women leaders in politics, with particular emphasis on cyber harassment and cybercrime. Affirm that women face two types of violence: political violence and violence based on gender. Violence against political representatives, despite their gender, represents a serious violation of the most basic human rights and a significant obstacle for the exercise of political rights and public freedoms. The rise of extreme political polarisation in democratic societies has come with an increasing violence against all political representatives. Violence against women political leaders takes many distinctive forms, ranging from sexist remarks to hate speech in social media or sexual harassment, which result in greater psychological stress for women in the exercise of their public functions and can be a major disincentive for their participation in politics. Several studies show that women in political positions of responsibility are "less confident" when defending certain stances.
8. Welcome European initiatives such as the legislative proposal to combat violence against women, which shall refer to cyber-harassment targeting female politicians, journalists and other well-known persons, as well as the proposal to combat hate speech, which shall likewise approach this matter.
9. Condemn all forms of violence against women and girls because of their gender. Combatting gender-based violence in all its forms must be a priority in all countries of the European Union.
10. Note with concern the particularly devastating effects of wars and indiscriminate attacks on women and girls who are victims and survivors of sexual violence during armed conflicts or terrorist attacks like the targeted and deadly violence directed at civilians in Israel on October 7, 2023. They condemn all indiscriminate attacks against the civil population of Ukraine and Gaza.
11. Consider it necessary to maintain a constant dialogue on this topic, including parliamentary meetings and discussions with civil society to sustain over time the ongoing mobilization and raising awareness on women's rights, and to consolidate parliamentary support committed to this approach.



12. Emphasise the crucial role of women's leadership in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Advocate for the immediate implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which is a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable, inclusive and lasting peace agreements and ensuring the security of all individuals, regardless of gender. Underscore the need to integrate a gender perspective into all peace and security efforts.
13. Welcome, in this regard, the initiative of the Speaker of the French National Assembly in the sense of convening a Summit in Paris last March 6 and 7, 2024, for the women Speakers of the Lower Chambers worldwide, on the occasion of the celebration of the International Women's Day on March 8.
14. Support the initiative of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Slovenia to hold a meeting of women Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States and of candidate countries, next June 13 and 14, 2024, to discuss the situation of children in Gaza.
15. Recommend that the Spanish Presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean devote particular attention to the issue of involuntary migratory flows from a gender perspective, bearing in mind the specific difficulties faced by women and girls as a result of armed conflicts and forced displacements.
16. Thank the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies of Spain for holding this Conference and encourage the next Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC), to take place in Budapest in 2025, to maintain the original initiative of the Speaker of the Czech Chamber of Deputies in the sense of holding a prior Summit of Women Speakers.

Palma, April 21, 2024

## ANNEX

### **“Joint declaration for more gender-sensitive parliaments”**

#### PREAMBLE

We, the representatives of the national parliaments of the Member States of the European Union and of the European Parliament,

- aware of the need to eliminate gender inequality and promote equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all in order to build a society that is fairer, more inclusive, more open, and more respectful of human dignity;
- aware that gender equality is a fundamental and universal right, and that women and men are equal in dignity and rights;
- aware that gender equality must be integrated into all areas of public life;
- aware that equal participation and involvement of women and men in political life is a prerequisite for democracy, social progress and good governance.

We, the representatives of the national parliaments of the Member States of the European Union and of the European Parliament,

- Considering Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; articles 2 and 3, § 3, subparagraph 2 of the Treaty on European Union; article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; the Council of Europe Convention, known as the Istanbul Convention, on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- Considering the adoption by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in October 2013 of the gender integration policy and the commitments made at the 145th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held from 11 to 15 October 2022 in Kigali on gender equality and more gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world. This declaration is an important step in the progress made towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming in parliaments. It encourages IPU member parliaments to intensify their efforts to promote gender equality in institutions and society at large. In particular, it recommends that they apply gender quotas in elections in order to achieve parity in political decision-making, ensure that the drafting and

implementation of laws and the establishment of budgets take gender dimensions into account, place vulnerable populations at the centre of the parliamentary mission, and put an end to discrimination and gender-based violence and harmful practices;

- Considering the need to promote gender equality in the political and administrative functioning of the Parliaments of the Member States of the European Union;
- Considering that we cannot be satisfied with the progress made to date, given the constant evolution of our society.

We, the representatives of the national parliaments of the Member States of the European Union and of the European Parliament,

We welcome the promotion of transparency within democratic institutions through statistics on the representation of women and men, regular evaluation of gender equality policies and reporting on progress. According to the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), gender equality in the European Union reached an average of 70.2 points in 2023. This means that the Equality Index has exceeded 70 points for the first time, showing a growth of 1.6 points since 2022. The increase in the European Union's overall score is the biggest year-on-year rise since the first edition of the Index in 2013;

We also point out that according to the EIGE, in 2023, the proportion of women in the national parliaments of the European Union has risen to 33 points (idem 2022 and 2021);

We welcome the declaration by the presidency of the trio of Member States holding the consecutive presidency of the Council of the European Union (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) on gender equality, adopted on 26 and 27 February 2024 at the informal meeting of EU gender equality ministers;

We welcome the fact that the gender issue will also be addressed in the European Commission's report on the rule of law and call for the European Commissioner for Equality to publish an annual report on the representation of women in decision-making bodies. This report could be the subject of an exchange of views in the national parliaments. We stress the need to promote gender equality and the active participation of women in decision-making processes, as well as in national parliaments;

We consider that the structures and functioning of national parliaments should be more gender-sensitive. We refer to the EIGE toolboxes that can be used to make an institution more gender-sensitive, in particular by means of a self-assessment, a rating system or an interpretation of a parliament's gender sensitivity. Taken together, these steps make it possible to objectively measure the policies and interventions aimed at strengthening equality between women and men in a parliament;

We note that, based on the replies to the Questionnaire for the 41st COSAC Biannual Report, in most of the national parliaments of the European Union, women are in the minority, not only as members of parliament, but also in positions of responsibility and in the parliamentary administration;

We welcome the fact that a majority of national parliaments already organise specific arrangements for members and/or staff with children, such as breastfeeding facilities, childcare, or the possibility of following meetings online. We encourage the necessary legislative or regulatory measures to be taken to ensure a balance between private and political life, regardless of gender;

We welcome the fact that almost one in two national assemblies has a specific committee to deal with gender issues or deals with these issues within one or more other committees;

We also welcome the fact that national parliaments are drafting and adopting action plans on gender equality, as well as guidelines for gender-sensitive and gender-neutral language;

We welcome the active promotion of gender equality in all spheres of political life through the balanced representation of women and men in decision-making bodies, political organs, and positions of responsibility. We recognise that gender equality can only be achieved through proactive actions and targeted policies aimed at eliminating structural and cultural barriers that limit women's participation in political life;

We support the introduction of concrete measures to ensure equitable access to political office by promoting gender parity in electoral lists, candidacies and appointments to political positions;

We call for the gender dimension to be taken into account, in all areas, when drafting and implementing legislation and when drawing up budgets;

We encourage the elimination of discrimination and obstacles to women's political participation through the adoption of promotion and mentoring policies and reinforcing access to political training. This may include the creation of networks and platforms

enabling women to share their experiences, help each other, and strengthen their collective voice;

We encourage the fight against gender stereotypes in politics by promoting a diverse representation of women and men, valuing their skills and ideas, and encouraging their active participation in political debates and decision-making. It is necessary to reject all forms of discrimination, sexism or harassment in politics and to work towards the creation of safe, respectful, and inclusive political environments for all individuals;

We call for equal and meaningful participation of women and men at all levels of governance by encouraging their presence in decision-making bodies, committees and consultative bodies. In addition, gender balance in parliamentary delegations on missions abroad should also be encouraged;

We welcome the collaboration between parliamentary institutions and with civil society organisations, research institutes and gender experts to strengthen knowledge, exchange good practice, and improve policies on gender equality in politics.”