

PRESS STATEMENT:

Political parties should present gender-balanced lists of candidates

In view of the approaching general elections, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is once again highlighting the imbalance in the participation of women and men in the political sphere. In this context, NCPE is urging political parties to present gender-balanced lists of candidates in the coming general and local council elections.

Results of recent elections show that the problem of female under-representation in politics does not lie in voting behaviour, since the percentage of elected women has been more or less the same as that of women candidates. However, the number of women candidates has been very low. Thus, under-representation is primarily related to the low recruitment of women candidates by political parties.

A pro-active effort by political parties to break gender stereotypes and promote a balanced female participation in the party structures at all levels, as well as more family-friendly arrangements and support structures within parties, is essential for an increase in the level of participation of the under-represented sex. It is also important to have a cross-party consensus to address barriers to women's participation in politics.

NCPE positively notes that political parties have already taken a number of measures aimed at promoting female participation in politics. To increase gender-balance in their list of candidates, political parties should:

- Endeavour to attract women to the political sphere and field women candidates by providing more structures within parties that are family-friendly;
- Integrate a gender concern in all operations of the party, including their work, policies and structures;
- Avoid gender stereotypes and actively strive to have women represented in all policy areas and levels of the party;
- Ensure that the necessary resources, including financial ones, are available to women for effective campaigning and other work;
- Make sure that women are given speaking slots in public events and media appearances.

Achieving a gender-balanced political participation is a pressing issue and concrete action is required to ensure the participation of both women and men in the political sphere. This is needed to strengthen our democracy, to improve the quality of decision-making and to achieve a more equal society. Fielding more women candidates will give the electorate a wider choice of candidates and it should lead to a more gender-balanced representation in Parliament and in local councils.

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