

**PRESS STATEMENT:**

**LEAD programme: an important step towards gender equality in politics**

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) welcomes the steps taken by the Labour Party to address the low participation of women in the political sphere and to increase the number of women candidates in its electoral lists. NCPE augurs that all political parties in Malta adopt initiatives aimed at enabling the participation of women in politics and is ready to assist in implementing programmes and other measures that seek to address this democratic deficit.

The LEAD programme unveiled earlier this month aims to ensure that by 2027 half of the candidates contesting on the Labour Party electoral lists are women. In order to achieve this goal the programme seeks to recruit and mentor women who are interested in political participation.

The NCPE considers such programmes an important step towards gender equality since they are based on a recognition that women face historical and structural barriers to achieve their full and equal participation in different spheres, including politics. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women terms this as ‘the historical imbalance of power between women and men in society’.

It is to be underlined that the ultimate impact of such barriers is a flawed democracy where half of the population is heavily under-represented. Thus, pro-active measures are needed in order to address deep rooted factors that lead to gender inequality in political representation.

Programmes that actively seek to recruit and train women to participate in the political sphere are a pre-requisite for ensuring that both sexes are equally represented in the political decision-making processes of our society.

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017**