

**PRESS STATEMENT:**

**A democratic deficit when the fundamental constituents of society, women and men, are not equally represented**

In the context of the current debate on quotas in politics, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) would like to underline that the fundamental constituents of society are women and men, configured in different groupings that have different needs and aspirations. NCPE reiterates the importance of measures aimed at reaching an equal representation between women and men in the political sphere in order to address the current democratic deficit. The under-representation of one sex, currently women, effectively means that women are not fully included in the democratic processes. Several countries, such as France and Slovenia, have recognised the need to address this deficit and have enacted legislative quotas for the balanced representation of women and men in politics.

Women, constituting half of the Maltese population, have consistently been heavily under-represented in elected office. This is due to structural factors closely linked to historical and current unequal power relations in Maltese society.

Quotas which ensure a balanced representation on the basis of sex are fundamentally different from quotas for minority groups since ensuring a balanced representation of women and men in elected office concerns the totality of the population and, if implemented well, should have a positive impact on people from minority social groups, be they women or men. It is essential to recognize that women and men have different identities based, for example, on their race, religion, sexual orientation, age and gender identity.

A gender quota system should go hand-in-hand with a gender mainstreaming exercise by political parties, civil society and government that identifies and addresses the specific needs and barriers experienced by women and men from different social groups. In doing so, political institutions may become more representative of society at large through an increased involvement in politics of women and men from different groups.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017**