



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

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SIW Paper on Quota Systems and Parity Democracy for Women

In politics, the aim of creating gender quota systems is to increase the number of women who hold political positions to at least a “critical minority” of 30 or 40%. For a parity democracy, 50% of political positions would be held by women.

Quotas systems are a tool which can be used to accelerate the creation of a parity democracy. A true parity democracy describes an environment where gender equality is both natural and integral to the behaviours, attitudes and actions of individuals, organisations, institutions and governments. As a result, the infrastructures of legislation, policies, electoral and government processes within a parity democracy would act to support and maintain this environment.

The three main types of gender quota systems used in politics are:

1. Political party gender quotas

This is a voluntary option, where a political party agrees to incorporate a gender quota within the party. This could start at a minimum of 20% of party positions or candidate nominations being held by women, to be increased to 50% before 2030.

This type of quota is achieved by including a clearly stated minimum gender quota in the party’s constitution or statutes.

2. Reserved seats gender quotas

A reserved seats gender quota stipulates that a definite number of seats in government must be held by women.

This type of quota is achieved either by the creation of legislation, or by a change in the national constitution.

3. Legal candidate gender quotas

A legal candidate gender quota stipulates that a set minimum number of women are nominated as candidates for political posts.

In some countries, a ‘double-quota’ is applied, which includes a ‘Placement Mandate’ which is aimed at ensuring that women candidates are not added at the bottom of the candidate list as an afterthought, with no hope at all of winning.

This type of quota is achieved either by the creation of legislation, or by a change in the national constitution.

Gender Quota Reviews

Regular reviews of the effectiveness of quota systems are vital. If gender quotas are not being met, resulting in few women participants, it is possible that other limiting factors need to be addressed. Limiting factors might include issues such as an absence of childcare facilities, or negative cultural attitudes, which form an integral part of the gender equality landscape.
