



PRESS RELEASE

South Asian Women MPs promote stronger role for women in politics, diplomacy

New Delhi/May 02, 2016: Time has come for political parties to give 33% tickets to women in elections, Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi, Member of Parliament (India) asserted, while advocating stronger representation of women in diplomacy at a special session co-hosted by the Ananta Centre and the High Commission of Canada with South Asian Women Parliamentarians earlier today.

The initiative was aimed at building a dialogue between women MPs from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal and creating awareness on the challenges to increased participation of women in political and economic spheres.

“Qualities are neither feminine nor masculine, and yet there exists a glass ceiling beyond which women cannot grow. They are systemically kept out of decision making processes. Conflict resolution is one area where they need to play a role. I feel that when you bring a women into decision making, you are not empowering women, but the society itself. The time has come for each recognized party to give 33% tickets to women in elections. Any party that does not give 33% ticket to women must not be allowed to contest,” **said Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi, Member of Parliament (India).**

“Women are worst affected in conflict situations, and hence we must have more women in international discussions,” **said Ms. Chandrani Bandara Jayasinghe, Member of Parliament and Minister (Sri Lanka)**

“Afghan women are very vulnerable due to the prevailing security situation in Afghanistan. Women can be agents of peace and drive change with their resilience,” asserted **Ms. Naheed Farid; Member of Parliament (Afghanistan).**

“Women are more focused on seeking consensus and promoting agenda for peace. They are naturally equipped with diplomatic skills, including negotiation and decision-making. Women diplomats have access to rural and conservative households, and can bring out voices of other vulnerable women. Diplomacy of the 21st century must be one of equal representation,” **said Ms. Chhaya Sharma Pant, Member of Parliament (Nepal).**

“Across South Asia, we see that economic independence of women is very important for social and political empowerment. In the context of terrorism, women can play a very important role if they are part of diplomacy, as they are good negotiators. Women are empowered in the corporate sector and

businesses, but we need more women in public life, in politics and government. I feel women are not trusted with senior ministerial positions,” said Ms. Maiza Hameed, Member of Parliament (Pakistan).

The regional tour of the Women Parliamentarians involved programmes in Colombo and New Delhi. In New Delhi, the delegates engaged and interacted with think tanks, women’s organizations, students and the media – deliberating on topics ranging from women in international affairs to economic independence and empowerment through skilling, among others.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

Ananta Centre is an independent organization registered under the Indian Trust Act. It focuses on leadership development and encourages frank and open dialogue on the most important issues facing Indian society, to help foster its transformation. The Centre also engages civil society, business, governments and other key stakeholders on issues of importance to India's development, foreign policy, strategic affairs and national security.

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