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WOMEN IN POLITICS

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COMMUNIQUE'

On the Topic of

“Recommendations on introducing amendments to the RA Law on Local Self-Government from the perspective of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.”



Second Meeting of the National Assembly-CSO Cooperation Platform

On May 21, in Yerevan, the second meeting of the NA-CSO Open Cooperation Platform (hereinafter the Platform), took place with the following agenda.

1. *To sum up the results of the first meeting of the Platform*
2. *To discuss the recommendations on introducing amendments to the RA Law on Local Self-Government from the perspective of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.*

Within the framework of the first topic of the agenda the Vice President of the National Assembly Lena Nazaryan presented the results of the previous meeting entitled “Women in Job Market, Problems and Solutions” and introduced the position of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs regarding possible legislative solutions for the topics discussed at that meeting.

The RESULTS of the first meeting of the NA-CSO Open Cooperation Platform

Result No. 1

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has given its preliminary approval to the Platform proposal to make amendments in the RA Labor code Article 176, part one, point 1st to provide paid childcare leave for up to two months to fathers instead of unpaid leave they have now. The position of the ministry is that the problem needs to be regulated, however, it is proposed that the issue be discussed with stakeholders in order to estimate possible financial burden related to the issue and to come up with a realistic regulation.

Result No. 2

The Ministry has approved another recommendation made during the 1st meeting of the Platform to the effect that the period of care of children with disabilities and the elderly be included in the work record. This issue has been addressed to and discussed at the Ministry on numerous occasions. As a potential solution of the issue Introduction of an institute of personal assistants is under discussion now.

Result No. 3

The Ministry does not find acceptable the proposal made by Platform regarding calculation of maternity allowance of women working on the basis of service contracts the same way as stipulated for those under employment contracts.

For the Ministry's position, see the link <http://bit.ly/2Wc5eht>

During the discussions around the 1st point of Agenda, it was DECIDED:

- To organize an expert meeting at the office of OxyGen Foundation (June 10, 2019, at 15:30) to discuss the position of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs on the three recommendations made at the Platform's first meeting. To amend and refine the recommendations as necessary and reintroduce them to the Ministry and other stakeholders.



2. Under the second topic of the agenda the representatives of the CSO's present at the meeting referred to the RA Law on Local Self-Governance and necessity to introduce changes in the system towards ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Part of recommendations related to LSG elections are connected with necessity to introduce changes in the RA Election code.

The Platform participants particularly PROPOSE:

Amendments in the Election Code

- Taking into consideration the under-representation of women¹ in the local self-governance bodies to expand the number of communities - including urban and consolidated ones - forming community councils through the proportional system.
- To revise the quota in the event of introducing the proportional system of the elections by making a change to Article 83.4 of the Electoral Code which stipulates temporary measures of support for women by replacing the current provision with the one that “the number of representatives of each sex shall not exceed 60 percent,” and introduce that threshold on the proportional elections of LSG bodies.
- Along with the transition to proportional elections system for the LSG bodies to consider the possibility of civil initiatives to participate at the elections.
- To decrease the electoral threshold that parties and alliances have to pass to engage in the community councils.
- The obligations and functions of the Central Election Commission and Territorial Election Commissions should be clarified and expanded to provide for a broad-based awareness raising on elections and their procedures among the population.

¹ The low number of female community heads, 1.6 per cent; women represented in municipal councils make up 9.3 per cent of the total number of councilors, and there are no women at all among the councilors of 275 communities out of the total number of 502 communities.

- The Central election committee should have a legally binding obligation to collect and publish all the data regarding any elections on the principle of gender segregation as well as to incorporate the gender component in the work of all bodies responsible for the organization and conduct of elections.

Amendments in the RA Law of Local Self-Governance

- In order to have well justified and gender sensitive five-year community development programs, legally bind the requirement to provide evidence-based and gender analyzes including community-based surveys before development of the programs.
- To set up encouragement toolkits such as the organization of an annual awarding ceremony for the "Best Community or Best Municipal Council member", to provide incentives for community council members (e.g., social packages, discount cards, and other benefits). To envisage encouraging measures for communities that provide the best solutions for gender issues.
- To legally introduce exemplary calculation models and procedures for financial compensation of municipal councilors. Including amendments in the RA Law "On Social Assistance" providing the possibility of obtaining health care subsidies for community members.
- To introduce a recall mechanism of the member of council and heads of the communities.
- To specify the powers of administrative heads of the consolidated communities in the Law on Local Self-Government Bodies.
- To ensure by the law 50/50 representation of women and men in the councils adjunct to community heads. Legally bind the requirement that the procedures of the formation of these bodies should be put to a mandatory public discussion before submitting to the community council approval.
- To revise the requirement of a law on Community Council Meetings, setting out that the Agenda of the council meeting is posted in accessible and visible locations of all settlements included in the community, regardless the number of populations.
- Taking into consideration the importance of online streaming of the meetings and hearings of the community councils for the multi-settlement communities legally establish the requirement stipulating that these public events will be streamed online in communities with 3 000 or more residents.
- To introduce gender budgeting mechanisms in formation of community budgets. Introduce regulations obliging to direct 1% of the annual budgets of LSGs to implementation of young people's community initiatives.
- Stipulate by the law that heads of the communities as well as members of the community councils be obliged to attend training courses (attestation) in ten days period after their election.

In the RA Gender Policy Implementation in 2019-2023 strategy and outreach program.

- Establish clear actions and measures to promote women's political participation, including the vision of raising women's representation in the local self-governance system.
- To clarify the actions of regional and community structures within the framework of the improvement of the national machinery for promotion of women.

The whole package of the above-mentioned and other proposals discussed at the Platform meeting is enclosed.

P.S.

During the meeting, a preliminary agreement was reached that Women's reproductive health will be the topic of the next meeting of the Platform
