

Article for IPU Bulletin

**The First Vice President of the Coordinating Committee of  
Women Parliamentarians  
On building contact and networking among Women MPs and  
Women Association**



***“The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementary, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences” (Inter Parliamentary Union, Universal Declaration on Democracy, 1997).***

The quoted article on the Inter Parliamentary Union’s Universal Declaration on Democracy entails that men and women shall participate in public affairs based on equality and partnership. The article also implied on women’s right to participate in political life. The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) as the world organization of parliaments of sovereign state since 1889 has work hard in pursuit of increasing women’s participation in politic and empowering women in decision making. One of the efforts is through amendment of IPU’s Statutes in 1990, which stipulate that *Parliaments which comprise women members must include at least one woman in their delegations to IPU statutory meeting.* To a certain extent, we must acknowledge

that IPU has succeeded in promoting women participation in politic and increasing awareness among women MP on their potential to contribute to democracy.

However, we shall not resort on the attendance of women on IPU's statutory meeting alone as a mechanism of strengthening women's political participation. We shall explore other means, vis-à-vis other opportunities, to increase the awareness among women MPs on the IPU's works particularly on equality between male and female MPs. One of the efforts is through fostering contact and building network among women MPs as a way of communicating and promoting IPU's works. Furthermore, the contact and network shall not be limited to women MPs who participate in statutory meetings of IPU. We shall not neglect the fact that not all women MPs have the opportunity to attend IPU statutory meeting. Based on that understanding and in my capacity as the First Vice President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, I have take advantage of my attendance in several international and regional meetings to build contact and network with other women MPs.

During my trip to Damascus, Syria in order to attend the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, I have conducted a meeting with Women Association that is led by a parliamentarian and comprises of several parliamentarians as its members. Moreover, during my recent participation in the Parliamentary Union of Islamic Countries (PUIC) Conference in Abu Dhabi, I have arranged for afternoon tea meeting for women MPs. Despite of limited number of women MPs in PUIC, I consider this effort as valuable to communicate our work in promoting women participation in politic. Some of women MPs that participate in PUIC meeting were Dr. Amal A. Al Qubaisi from United Arab Emirates, who is also member of IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, Madame Fenida Mirza Speaker of The Parliament of Pakistan, and Dr. Zaenab Ridwan, Deputy Speaker from the Parliament of Egypt. It is indeed a precious occasion to share experiences with those women who attending a parliamentary conference that is male dominated. Furthermore, in that meeting I have the opportunity to chair the meeting of PUIC Standing Committee on Women, Social and Cultural Affairs. By chairing the meeting, it is expected that it will be contribute to promoting greater participation of women in decision making.



I also met with women association in the countries I visited. During my last conference in Abu Dhabi, for example, in addition to meeting with women parliamentarians, I visited the Family Development Foundation and met with the Head, Maryam Mohammed Al Rumaithi. I learnt a lot from that meeting and I have shared the strategies of this foundation to several women organizations in Indonesia. I also visited the Chamber of Commerce of Abu Dhabi, being met by Deputy Director General and some member of the board, and witness that even though women representation is not too outstanding in politics, but in other sector like in business, women is well accommodated. It is worth noting that the member of the board of Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce is mostly women.

Furthermore, I consider that it is mandatory for me to bring best practice that we enjoy in the IPU particularly in the Coordinating Committee for Women Parliamentarians to other regional parliamentary organizations. It is a great achievement that in its last session in November 2010, the Asian Parliamentarian Assembly (APA) adopted a similar meeting for women parliamentarians in the APA. However, my work shall continue to other organization as I am also urging the PUIC to adopt similar practice. Considering the minimum representation of women in PUIC, it is significant for PUIC to works toward increasing women participation by providing a forum for women MPs to participate in PUIC. When Indonesia hosts the PUIC conference in January, 2012, we are able to insert a program to gather all women MPs from the member parliaments as agreed by PUIC.

From my experiences, I realize that our function in the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians should go beyond IPU meetings and we shall explore our position through various forums. I value my position and I treat it as a mandate to advocate for greater number of women MPs as delegates to Inter-Parliamentary Meetings. Furthermore, we shall seek to promote wider participation of women MPs in all senior posts of IPU. It is our common responsibility to ensure that women are aware of their rights to actively participate in politics and decision making. Therefore, future strategic decisions will be made by taking women's perspective into account and reflecting concerns of women.

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