



Speech:

“Fight for a genuine women’s quota and stop violence against women in politics”

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The Ukrainian Parliament has ratified a number of important international documents aimed to prevent and combat discrimination against women in public life.

The Parliament also adopted a number of laws in this regard, including the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women, alongside other laws.

However, real life is somewhat different from what is written in the legislation, despite a number of measures taken by the government.

I will speak to you today about two of the most important issues inhibiting women’s equality in public life in Ukraine: the issue of temporary special measures (quota) and the issue of violence against women in politics.

Ukrainian women face direct or indirect discrimination in business, social and political life. Gender stereotypes remain widespread in Ukrainian society. Widespread harassment and even violence prevents women from participating in public and political life.

This event, aimed to discuss the various problems faced by women nowadays can serve as evidence of this.

Fight for a genuine women’s quota

These problems are rooted in low female representation in Parliament and local councils. The share of women in the Ukrainian parliament is one of the lowest in the region and indeed, in the world. Only 11.8% of MPs are women, placing Ukraine in 147th position out of 190 countries worldwide.

It is obvious that the Parliament, with such a low share of women, cannot effectively represent, uphold and protect women’s rights.

Therefore, addressing the issues we are discussing today would hardly be possible without the measures aimed to increase the share of women in Parliament.

In 2014, a group of legislators, most of which are women MPs, registered in Parliament a draft law, which, as has been for a long time believed, would increase women representation in elected office, both at the national and local levels. However, a 30% women quota without a “zipper” rule and applicable only to the half of the MPs elected under the PR system, would hardly accomplish this task.

If adopted, this bill would not significantly increase (if at all) women’s share in the Rada. Since 2014, the Parliament also failed to take any serious steps to consider even this flawed bill. No steps have been made to improve or replace the flawed bill with another draft law.

While certain attempts have been made to address the issue of women underrepresentation in the legislature in relation to the work on the Draft Election Code, it is questionable whether the draft Code has any chance to be adopted well in advance of the 2019 parliamentary elections. The ongoing debates around the Draft Election Code and electoral system change should not prevent the Rada from introducing an effective women quota under the current parallel electoral system, which would very likely be used in the 2019 parliamentary elections.

Parliament and women MPs need to take further steps to move the issue forward. In 2017, IFES prepared a comprehensive draft law aimed to introduce a 40% enforceable women quota, combined with the “zipper” rule, and sanctions for non-compliance. We will be happy to share this bill with the Woman Caucus, as well as other MPs who are ready to promote better representation of women in politics.

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Stop violence against women in politics

Furthermore, it is essential to address the issue of violence and harassment against women in politics (VAWP) in Ukraine. VAWP silences women’s voices and prevents them from exercising their civic and political rights.

IFES has recently completed research to document VAWP in online spaces in Ukraine, as part of a global study. Our research tracks the volume, intensity and speed of hateful, aggressive and degrading rhetoric against political women.

Looking at nearly 200 individuals over the course of four years and analyzing over 1.2 million data points, we found that politically-engaged women in Ukraine experience as much as 40% more degrading and violent online vitriol regarding their personal or moral integrity, intelligence or appearance than men.

They also experience highly intense physical threats and high levels of sexually demeaning online attacks.

VAWP has recently been recognized as a human rights violation by the United Nations and we here today also need to recognize the negative impact of violence and harassment against women in politics and take firm steps to end it.

Linking these two issues; women in Ukraine must have a better level of representation in elected office to be able to effectively address the issues we are discussing today.

Thank you.