

## **ECWR Conference Recommendations on Women's Status in Political Movements Following the Parliamentary Election**

(Cairo, February 1, 2006) On January 25, 2005, ECWR closed its conference on **Women's Status in Political Movements Following the Parliamentary Election**, concerning the women's and legal reform program. A total of 120 individuals participated in the conference, including NGO leaders, political party representatives, political and legal experts, parliamentary and local council leaders, and journalists and media workers.

The conference addressed three sessions:

During the first session, a presentation regarding the 2005 Parliamentary election report regarding voting districts with female candidates, titled **Raising on Women's Bodies**, was given and included three case studies on women's participation in the election. Both the Director of the General Administration of Conferences in Parliament and Local Councils, Dr. Azza Wahby, and a strategist for El Ahram, Dr. Ahmed El Maslmany, provided comments and discussion on the first session.

For the second session, Dr. Neven Mos'ad, Professor of Political Science at Cairo University, presented a paper on the status of women in the Middle Party, El Karama Party, National Movement, and Kefaya Movement. Lastly, Dr. Heba Ra'ouf, a professor in the Faculty of Economic and Political Science, also presented a paper on the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, written by Hana'a Mohamed, Editor of El-Zouhor Magazine. Dr. Daia Rashwan, an expert on El Ahram provided comments and discussion for this session.

In an attempt to study the status of women in political power in light of parliamentary election results, we are currently evaluating previous strategic work and undertaking discussions for cooperative work between various women's and political organizations. The conference ended with a active dialogue between all participants to better reach women at all social and legislative levels.

The recommendations resulting from the conference were as follows:

- 1) Emphasize the importance of reserving seats for women in local councils and accept the need for women's participation, which is considered very important in light of current political trends regarding women. Additionally, emphasize the lack of conflict between the constitution and women's political participation and stress this as integral to the basic principles of the constitution and an important step toward equality.
- 2) Promote a re-institution of the Quota system through a comprehensive reform of the political system and a new legislative amendment, and pressuring for political support of women's organizations.
- 3) Work to amend the laws on political rights in order to balance the elections process with the Quota system, to ensure at least 30% female representation in the parliament, and to present such considerations to the current assembly for review.
- 4) Establish a dialogue among NGOs, political parties, professional syndicates, journalists, and media workers on issues that impact women's political participation and emphasize the responsibility of each civil society organization to undertake and uphold both dialogue and cooperativeness.

- 5) Increase the number of supporters for the Quota system and the reserving of seats for women in parliament, through collective grassroots campaigns.
- 6) Strengthen the number of women in leadership positions and offer organizational, financial and political resources and support for female candidates, based on those candidates' qualifications, political history, publicity, and so forth.
- 7) Organize a committee to work in conjunction with the National Council for Women (NCW), who will head the committee, to receive women's complaints during elections and to try and solve problems with the concerned organizations.
- 8) Discuss with women the suggested law's concerning women and obtain their opinions before publication.
- 9) Emphasize strengthening female membership in local councils and parliament, and maintain connections with the grassroots in order to sustain confidence and cooperation.
- 10) Work to build a new generation of women's activists to strengthen the women's movement among youth leaders.
- 11) Raise awareness among voters on the characters of the candidates, how to choose a candidate to vote for, and the impotence of voting.
- 12) Create new forms of coordination and cooperation between women's organizations in order to strengthen the Egyptian women's movement.

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