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Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment

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A. Draft Resolution

1. Gender-based violence affects women in all aspects of life. The world of politics is no exception. On the wave created by the #MeToo movement, many women politicians started to speak up. Their individual testimonies and experiences are not isolated cases, but indicate the existence of a pattern of widespread and systematic gender-based violence against women in politics worldwide, as confirmed by the 2018 report on Violence against women in politics by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its deepest concern at the findings of the regional study on Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe, which it jointly conducted with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2018. Based on confidential individual interviews with women parliamentarians and staff of national parliaments, this study reveals alarming levels of sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence in national parliaments, widespread under-reporting and a lack of adequate mechanisms to report violence, protect victims and sanction perpetrators.
3. The Assembly reiterates its firm condemnation of all forms of gender-based violence against women as a human rights violation and a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. It confirms its unfaltering support to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS. No. 210, "Istanbul Convention") as the most comprehensive international binding legal instrument in this field.
4. Sexism and violence against women in politics affect the foundations of democracy: they interfere with women's right to fully and equally participate in political life and express their views; limit their right to vote and to run for public office; and ultimately undermine the representativeness and the legitimacy of elected institutions. Sexism and violence against women in parliament hold back women's access to leadership positions and impair their ability to fulfil their elected mandate.
5. Despite its impact on the victims, the respect of fundamental rights and the good functioning of democracy, violence against women in politics as a specific phenomenon has so far received little attention. At societal level, sexism and sexual harassment are often dismissed as the price to pay for women to be in politics. Both sexism and sexual harassment are so trivialised and engrained that many women politicians are not even aware of being victims of a gender-specific form of violence. Others choose not to report acts of sexism and sexual harassment because this would undermine their political standing or harm their political parties. Overall, a culture of impunity for sexism prevails amongst parliamentarians.

6. To redress this state of affairs, it is crucial to raise awareness of sexism and violence against women in politics and to bring about a change of mindsets. In this context, the Assembly recalls the #NotInMyParliament initiative, which was launched by its President, Liliane Maury Pasquier, as a follow-up to the joint regional study conducted with the IPU, and gives it its full support.
7. At the same time, to turn greater awareness into tangible change, the Assembly believes that a number of players in the political arena should strengthen their policies, legislation and other measures aimed at putting an end to sexism and violence against women in politics, and that data collection, monitoring and research in this area should be stepped up, at national and international level.
8. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls on the parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as on the parliaments who enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to:
 - 8.1. introduce or revise the codes of conduct for their members with a view to setting out the explicit prohibition of sexist speech and sexual harassment and introducing sanctions for breaches of the obligation;
 - 8.2. unless it is already the case, consider reviewing immunity rules which afford immunity from prosecution to members of parliament for sexual harassment and violence against women;
 - 8.3. introduce complaint mechanisms to prevent and sanction sexual harassment, sexual violence and misconduct, ensuring that:
 - 8.3.1. they cover members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
 - 8.3.2. victims can report in full safety and confidentiality and have a fair consideration of the case as expeditiously as possible;
 - 8.3.3. the decisions of such complaint mechanisms can be followed by effective sanctions which are proportional to the gravity of the case;
 - 8.3.4. information about the terms of reference of complaint mechanisms, their powers and how to seize them is

Amendment 3

Tabled by Ms Nina KASIMATI, Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO, Ms Petra STIENEN, Ms Elissavet SKOUFA, Ms Sahiba GAFAROVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 8.1, after the words "sexist speech", insert the following words: ", sexist acts".

Amendment 1

Tabled by Mr Frank SCHWABE, Ms Thórhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Ms Marianne MIKKO, Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN, Mr Jérôme LAMBERT, Ms Petra De SUTTER, Mr Christophe LACROIX, Mr Betian KITEV, Ms Shpresa HADRI

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 8.3.2, insert the following paragraph:

"full independence of the complaint mechanism is guaranteed, free of party allegiances."

- regularly disseminated through appropriate means to all members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
- 8.3.5. statistics on the activities of such mechanisms are regularly published, guaranteeing confidentiality and including information on the number of cases submitted, the number of pending cases, the number of decided cases and the outcome of such cases;
 - 8.4. introduce a mechanism of confidential counselling for victims of sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual violence and misconduct and disseminate information about it;
 - 8.5. support the #NotInMyParliament initiative and replicate it at national level;
 - 8.6. conduct surveys and public debates periodically to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women, including in politics;
 - 8.7. organise training on the issue of sexism and violence against women for members of parliament and parliamentary staff;
 - 8.8. disseminate the 2018 IPU-Parliamentary Assembly regional study on Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe among members of parliament and parliamentary staff through appropriate means, and consider translating the study and carrying out a national one;
 - 8.9. ensure that men and women parliamentarians alike are involved in efforts to prevent and respond to sexism and violence against women in politics and parliamentary staff.
 9. Furthermore, the Assembly invites the parliaments of the States Parties to the Istanbul Convention to provide the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) with information concerning violence against women in politics, including in political parties, in parliaments and in the context of the electoral process, in light of the overarching general obligation in the area of the prevention of violence against women set out in Article 12 of the Istanbul Convention.
 10. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly to:
 - 10.1. provide the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women with information on violence against women in politics, including in political parties, in parliaments and in the context of elections;
 - 10.2. support research on the links between sexism, violence against women in politics and the political representation of women;
 - 10.3. support activities, projects and observatories aimed at collecting data on sexism and violence against women in politics, including in parliaments and in the context of elections;

- 10.4. consider introducing specific legislation on sexism and violence against women in politics.
11. The Assembly calls on political parties at national level and its political groups to commit to rejecting all forms of violence against women in politics, enshrine this commitment in their codes of conduct/statutes and set up effective disciplinary procedures against members who act in breach of this commitment.
12. As regards its own work and functioning, the Assembly recalls the applicability to its members of Rule No. 1292 on the protection of dignity at the Council of Europe and the relevance of its Code of Conduct for members, which sets out the obligation to "respect the values of the Council of Europe and the general principles of behaviour of the Assembly and not take any action which would cause damage to the reputation and integrity of the Assembly or its members".
13. With this consideration in mind, the Assembly:
 - 13.1. asks the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to regularly bring to the attention of the members of the Assembly the Council of Europe rules on the protection of dignity which are applicable to them, in writing and through the organisation of training;
 - 13.2. calls on its Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs to modify the Code of Conduct for members of the Assembly with a view to:
 - 13.2.1. introducing the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct as well as the obligation to take account of the Council of Europe rules on the protection of dignity and to co-operate with the relevant mechanisms and with the decisions that might be taken as a result of a harassment procedure;
 - 13.2.2. ensuring that recommendations of the Commission against Harassment and/or decisions of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe resulting from the application of Rule No. 1292 can be followed up by the Assembly in the context of its Code of Conduct;
 - 13.3. asks the Bureau of the Assembly to ensure that, in the context of election observation by the Assembly, the issue of violence against women, and notably sexism and sexual harassment, is systematically taken into account and is included in future revisions of the Guidelines for the observations of elections.
14. The Assembly takes note of the planned revision of Rule No. 1292 on the protection of dignity at the Council of

Amendment 2

Tabled by Mr Frank SCHWABE, Ms Thórhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Ms Marianne MIKKO, Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN, Mr Jérôme LAMBERT, Ms Petra De SUTTER, Mr Christophe LACROIX, Mr Betian KITEV

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 13.1, insert the following paragraph:

"asks the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to provide additional training on the issue of sexism and violence against women for Parliamentary Assembly delegates, following the example of the European Parliament."

Europe with a view to enhancing its effectiveness and recalls the need for a coherent application of Rule No. 1292 and of the Code of Conduct for members of the Assembly.

B. Draft Recommendation

1. Recalling that gender-based violence affects women in all aspects of life and that the world of politics is no exception, the Parliamentary Assembly draws the attention of the Committee of Ministers to its Resolution ... (2019) on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment.
2. The Assembly welcomes the inclusion of gender equality, the fight against gender-based violence and the promotion of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention") among the priorities of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers.
3. The Assembly reiterates its unfaltering support to the Istanbul Convention and looks forward to the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a recommendation to prevent and combat sexism as well as the organisation of a meeting bringing together the international and regional mechanisms to combat violence against women to be held in 2019 under the auspices of the Council of Europe.
4. The Assembly recalls that the 2018 World Forum for Democracy on the theme "Gender equality: whose battle?" enabled participants to discuss the links between greater gender equality, balanced representation of women and men in politics and the fight against gender-based violence.
5. As a follow-up to the World Forum for Democracy and to the regional study on Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe, which it jointly conducted with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2018 and considering that the specific issues of sexism and violence against women in politics have been largely neglected until recently, the Assembly encourages the Committee of Ministers to ensure that it is adequately taken into account in the context of the relevant Council of Europe intergovernmental work.
6. In order to strengthen monitoring and data collection, the Assembly:
 - 6.1. recommends that the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) address the issue of violence against women in politics in its country visits, reports and recommendations;
 - 6.2. encourages the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) to develop a model for national NGOs and civil society groups to collect data and information on violence against women in politics.

Amendment 4 Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Amendment to the draft recommendation In the draft recommendation, paragraph 3, replace the words "looks forward to the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a recommendation to prevent and combat sexism as well as" with the following words: "welcomes the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a recommendation on preventing and combating sexism. It also looks forward to"

7. Likewise, with a view to enhancing knowledge, exchanging information and sharing promising practices, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to ensure that the issue of sexism and violence against women in politics is included in the dialogue between the appropriate Council of Europe bodies and other regional mechanisms to combat violence against women.
8. Finally, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to ensure that its activities in the area of electoral assistance and co-operation also cover sexism and violence against women in the context of elections.