

Politics



“ For me, a better democracy is a democracy where women do not only have the right to vote and to elect but to be elected. ”



- Michele Bachelet

Low participation of women in politics threat to devt — Coalition

By Timothy Ngenbe & Josephine Ansa

THE Women Manifesto Coalition (WMC) has expressed concern about the dwindling rate of women participation in decision-making in the country, describing the situation as a threat to sustainable development.

The Coalition said it was unacceptable that after 34 years of local governance, women currently constituted 4.1 per cent of elected members at the metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs) and 14.5 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs).

Again, the WMC observed that the

widening gap of gender inequality in terms of decision-making in the political space was inimical to the global push for parity in political participation.

At a media engagement organised by Abantu for Development, a non-governmental organisation, in Accra last Tuesday on the topic: "Addressing the role of political parties in advancing democracy in Ghana", the Convenor of the Coalition, Hamida Harrison, stressed that the time had come for women groups to rise up and demand fair participation in political decision-making.

Worrying development

Mrs Hamida said it was worrying that while other countries were moving towards equal representation for both

male and female on the political decision-making table, Ghana was retreating.

"The two main political parties have just had their parliamentary primaries, and women have lost out, further widening the gap of inequality in political participation; and this is because political party structures do not favour women," she said.

The WMC Convenor said while the political parties were structured in a manner that did not promote women participation, the huge financial requirements to run campaigns aggravated the situation.

"We know that some political parties have reduced filing fees for female candidates, but the progress is slow to deal with the systemic conditions that limit women participation in decision-making. The filing fees should be abolished completely," she stressed.

Action now

A consultant and former Commissioner at the Electoral Commission, Pauline Adobebe Dadzawa, underscored the need for bold steps to be taken to address the root causes of the gender inequality and put women in a better position to

participate actively in the political space. She called for the implementation of the quota system to boost the participation of women.

"There are some seats that are safe seats in the strongholds of some parties; so there should be internal arrangement by political parties to ensure that women occupy them so that there will be more females in Parliament," she said.

Ms Dadzawa also stressed the need for political parties to institute training and capacity-building programmes for women to prepare them for political participation.

Again, she said it was important for political parties to roll out specific mentorship systems for women to build their confidence to go for political office.

"The political parties must also have internal culture that promotes women participation and helps to erase gender discrimination. If I were to join a political party, I would look for one that has gender-sensitive policies," she added.

The former commissioner also said apart from the elective positions, deliberate efforts must be made to appoint women to positions of responsibility to help bridge the gap.

She called on the media to use their platforms to give fair coverage of women empowerment issues.

In her view, it was when the media gave adequate attention to issues of women participation in governance that the barriers could be addressed.

@ a glance



■ Women groups have called on political parties to implement quota systems and other initiatives to boost women participation in governance.



• Hamida Harrison (left), Convenor of the Women's Manifesto Coalition, addressing participants in the press conference. Picture: EDNA SALVO-KOTÉY