IULA Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government

Preamble

1. The World Executive Committee of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the worldwide association of local governments, meeting in Zimbabwe, November 1998;

2. Recalling the Worldwide Declaration of Local Self-Government adopted at IULA's 31st World Congress in Toronto, 1993;

3. Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Declaration on Women and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing in 1995, in particular the principle, recognised in Article 34 of the Beijing Platform for Action, that international organisations, such as IULA, have an important role to play in implementing the UN Platform for Action;

4. Recognising that the reasons as to why women are not represented equally in local government are multiple, and that women and men throughout the world live under different conditions and women do not have the same access to and control over economic and political resources as men;

5. Considering that local government, as an integral part of the national structure of governance, is the level of government closest to the citizens and therefore in the best position both to involve women in the making of decisions concerning their living conditions, and to make use of their knowledge and capabilities in the promotion of sustainable development;

6. Emphasising that the mission of IULA cannot be realised without the equal and systematic integration of women into democratic local decision making and that democracy cannot be realised without adequate representation, participation and inclusion of women in the local governance process.
WE, THE MEMBERS OF IULA, REPRESENTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WORLDWIDE, FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT:

7. Democratic local self-government has a critical role to play in securing social, economic and political justice for all citizens of every community in the world and that all members of society, women and men, must be included in the governance process;

8. Women and men as citizens have equal human rights, duties and opportunities, as well as the equal right to exercise them. The right to vote, to be eligible for election and to hold public office at all levels are human rights that apply equally to women and men;

9. The problems and challenges facing humanity are global but occur and have to be dealt with at the local level. Women have the equal right to freedom from poverty, discrimination, environmental degradation and insecurity. To fight these problems and to meet the challenges of sustainable human development, it is crucial that women be empowered and involved in local government as decision-makers, planners and managers;

10. Local government is in a unique position to contribute to the global struggle for gender equality and can have a great impact on the status of women and the status of gender equality around the world, in its capacities as the level of governance closest to the citizens, as a service provider and as an employer;

11. The systematic integration of women augments the democratic basis, the efficiency and the quality of the activities of local government. If local government is to meet the needs of both women and men, it must build on the experiences of both women and men, through an equal representation at all levels and in all fields of decision-making, covering the wide range of responsibilities of local governments;

12. In order to create sustainable, equal and democratic local governments, where women and men have equal access to decision-making, equal access to services and equal treatment in these services, the gender perspective must be mainstreamed into all areas of policy making and management in local government.

Local government as a service provider and enabler of sound living conditions

13. Women have the right to equal access to the services of local governments, as well as the right to be treated equally in these services and to be able to influence the initiation, development, management and monitoring of services. The provision of services such as education, welfare and other social services by local governments, should aim to see women and men as equally responsible for matters related both to the family and to public life, and avoid perpetuating stereotypes of women and men;

14. Women have the equal right to sound environmental living conditions, housing, water distribution and sanitation facilities, as well as to affordable public transportation. Women's needs and living conditions must be made visible and taken into account at all times in planning;

15. Women have the right to equal access to the territory and geographical space of local governments, ranging from the right to own land, to the right to move freely and without fear in public spaces and on public transport;

16. Local government has a role to play in ensuring the reproductive rights of women and the rights of women to freedom from domestic violence and other forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence and abuse.
Local government as an employer and in a strategic position to influence local society

17. Women have the equal right to employment in local government and equality in recruitment procedures. As employees in local government women and men have the right to equal pay, equal access to benefits, promotion and training, as well as the right to equal working conditions and treatment in the evaluation of their work;

18. Women's often heavy workload of paid and unpaid work is a barrier to their ability to take part in decision making. Local government has an important role to play in providing affordable, professional and safe care services for children, older people and people with disabilities, be that directly or in partnership with the private or the voluntary sectors, and in promoting the sharing of household tasks by women and men on an equal basis. Men have the equal right and responsibility to care for their children and relatives and should be encouraged to do so.

WE, THE MEMBERS OF IULA, REPRESENTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WORLDWIDE, COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

19. Ensuring that the conditions within our local governments and associations allow our beliefs as stated in this document to be realised;

20. Strengthening our efforts to make equal the number of women and men in decision-making bodies at all levels and in all policy areas, and our efforts to ensure women’s qualitative participation in councils, committees and other groups related to decision-making in local government;

21. Applying the mainstreaming principle by integrating a gender perspective into all policies, programmes and service delivery activities in individual local governments and their representative associations at national, regional and international levels, and to developing methods for monitoring and measuring this mainstreaming work;

22. Looking for new ways to ensure that women are represented and actively participate by formal as well as informal means in the process of local governance;

23. Strengthening international and national cooperation between local governments, supported by national, regional and international associations of local governments, in order to further the exchange of experiences, as well as to devise and develop methods, policies and strategies that help offset barriers to women’s participation in local decision-making;

24. Outlining, implementing and monitoring action plans for promoting equal opportunities in the municipal workplace, encompassing equal opportunities of recruitment, promotion, remuneration, as well as equal working conditions;

25. Working for changes of attitudes related to gender issues by awareness-raising in the education system and within the political and administrative structure of local governments;

26. Working actively with other actors of society, including national gender systems and organisations, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, professional groupings, women’s groups, research institutes and trade unions in accomplishing the goals of this declaration.
WE CALL UPON NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO:

27. Acknowledge that local government has a critical role to play in creating sustainable democracies and gender equal societies, and therefore, to grant constitutional, legal and financial autonomy to local governments to enable them to meet their democratic responsibilities;

28. Support, encourage and create opportunities and resources for local governments to work for and promote gender equality;

29. Recognise national associations of local governments as important partners in the development, promotion and support of gender equality at the local level, and in the exchange of experiences at the international, national and local levels;

30. Work in partnership with local government associations and their members to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);

31. Guarantee and enforce the right of women to a legal capacity identical to that of men and to the same opportunities to exercise that capacity, by ensuring equality and non-discrimination before the law and in practice;

32. Guarantee and enforce the right of women to participate in the democratic system, by ensuring women the equal right to vote, to be eligible for election and to hold public office;

33. Develop and augment knowledge in the field of gender by ensuring that statistics collected on individuals are gender disaggregated and analysed with a gender perspective, and to make available resources for academic research with a gender perspective, that can be of use for the development of gender equality in local government.

WE CALL UPON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:

34. Implement the Beijing Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and this declaration;

35. Recognise the local level as the level of governance closest to the citizens with a critical role to play in attaining the objectives of gender equality agreed upon by National Governments through the United Nations, and therefore;

36. Work with Local Government and its institutions at all levels to promote the equal participation of women and men in local decision-making in all its forms, formal and informal;

37. Support programmes initiated by local governments and their associations aimed at increasing the representation of women in local government and local positions of leadership.

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