



Advocacy Document for the Yemeni Women Quota

▪ Preamble

The Yemeni woman has recorded honorable stances during the last decades in terms of her participation in public life and engagement in the different political, cultural and social activities. She did not succumb to the existing constraints that restrict women in a conservative patriarchal society in which the culture and environment combined, constitute an impediment to the freedom and dignity of women, and to the attainment of her rights as stipulated in the Islamic Sharia and ascertained in the International Bill of Human Rights.

It is well-known now that no progress can be made in the domain of women rights as a societal issue, if the whole society does not progress, and if the social, economic and political conditions were not available, most importantly development, freedom, equality, social justice and human rights. Thus, women participation in all domains of public life has become a necessity and an aim at the same time, as women represent the potentials and needs of half the society, and their participation in the different development processes and foremost their participation in political decision-making is inevitable. This would be through fair mechanisms that curb the huge gap between men and women, and push for women empowerment in a practical manner in everyday life, without just resorting to the theoretical rhetoric or the decorative activities.

Despite all what the Yemeni woman has accomplished throughout the past years, she still lacks the equal and balanced representation whether in the government and its executive services, or in the representative institutions (the Houses of Representatives and the local governance), as well as in the political parties, the trade unions and the different CSOs.

However this gloomy situation is about to disappear, as the Yemeni woman has a big opportunity to change the equation of political representation that was restricted to a large extent to males. The outputs of the national dialogue conference have resulted in the endorsement of a representation quota for women of not less than 30% in the different elected bodies in the State or in the political parties.

▪ The Importance of the Quota

A group of reforms were launched during the last two decades to promote women, they did not achieve much, especially in the political sphere or at the level of women representation in the elected councils. Therefore, a number of countries adopted the quota system similarly to some democratic systems that had adopted it years ago.

Quota means the allocation of a specific number of seats to women in the legislative bodies. It was also defined as the allocation of seats for women in the Houses of Representatives. The application of this system requires that the political parties be forced to allocate seats for women at all levels of organization. There is a limited number of seats occupied by women in the House of Representatives, and their number may not be below the rate specified by law.

The women quota system contributes to enhancing and activating the role of women in society in general and in the parliamentary life in particular, by creating and preparing female cadres in this field. The quota system eliminates barriers between men and women. Its application grants women some of her political rights and alleviate the injustice experienced by women to as a result of the great disparity that is in favour of men.

A number of countries did include in their legislations a provision about the women quota system in the parliament. The Law in Morocco has allocated 30 seats for women out of 325 seats in the Moroccan parliament. The Iraqi legislation has allocated a rate of not less than the quarter of the members of the House of representatives, i.e. 25% of the 275 members. Sudan has allocated a rate of 10-35 seats for women.

The Yemeni National Dialogue Conference has allocated not less than 30%, and it is expected that the new Yemeni constitution will stipulate an explicit provision in this respect.

▪ **The Outputs of the National Dialogue Conference on Women issues**

The final document of the national dialogue conference has asserted that the citizens are equal before the law, and any discrimination based on sex, custom, language, colour, origin, social or economic position, faith, religion, intellect, opinion or disability shall be criminalized.

It also stipulated that the State shall guaranty all the civil and political rights of women and shall be committed to enabling her to exercise all the rights of equal citizenship.

In an explicit and decisive Article, the document has endorsed the quota system for the presentation of the Yemeni women for a rate of not less than 30%, and has committed the political components to arrange their electoral lists, whereby ensuring that not less than 30% of women occupy seats in the electoral councils. The order of the male and female candidates on the election lists shall be as follows:

One woman at least among every three candidates, and the lists of political components that violate this law shall not be accepted.

This clarity precludes any attempts of devious intentions which may respond to women rights in form but manipulates them in content. With the aforementioned way, the representation of women in the elected councils by a 30% rate became a definite matter, and only needs a constitutional drafting to confirm it and move it to the circle of implementation.

Following this, the document has also endorsed a number of seats for women in the parties and organizations bodies by not less than 30%. This is considered an advanced step, as the international experiences have demonstrated that women representation in the elected councils is not sufficient, especially in the light of the discriminatory culture that is against women and the roles she should play in society.

The document also provided for an authentic humanitarian principle that affirms the equality of men and women in human dignity.

However, these rights that the Yemeni women movement have grabbed are being ignored by the political powers in the transitional period. The agreed upon representation rate for the formation of bodies has been overlooked in the formation of the constitution drafting committee, and in the formation of the national committee for the control of the dialogue outputs, as well as in the formation of the committee for the delimitation of regions. It is also feared that in the formation of the future national partnership government, the number of women would be below the required rate.

The most serious of all this would be to circumvent these gains and not to reflect them in the provisions of the new constitution and the fundamental laws.

§ The Advocacy Items:

Based on this, the representatives of the political parties and components, and the CSOs that have signed the document “together for a quota for the Yemeni Women” proclaim their commitment to the following points:

1- Joint action in order to :

- Lobby using all legitimate means to constitutionalize the political rights of the Yemeni women, namely the representation of women by not less than 30% in the elected State bodies, and the political parties bodies and the CSOs.
- To monitor the implementation of the outputs of the national dialogue conference relative to women issues.
- To coordinate the local efforts with the donor organizations to enhance the status of women and her political rights in the Yemeni society.

2- To adopt an advocacy media campaign for women political rights and provide the female activists with the necessary skills for the success of the campaign.

- 3- To establish a joint operations room that coordinates and communicates with the political parties and components and the members of the constitution drafting committee, and with the national commission for the monitoring of the dialogue outputs, in order to ensure that the agreed-upon women rights in the national dialogue document are constitutionalized.
- 4- To review the programs and visions of the political parties pertaining to women issues and to redraft them in line with the outputs of the national dialogue conference
- 5- To encourage all the constructive steps towards the enhancement of the political process, which if not stable, would render women rights meaningless.

The Yemeni Women Network for Peace and Security shall supervise and follow-up the implementation of the document of political advocacy of women