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**POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING IN POLITICAL
PARTIES IN KOSOVO:
WOMEN, YOUTH AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper analyses the decision- and policy-making on the issues of women, youth and ethnic communities, in political parties that have their parliamentary groups in the Parliament of Kosovo, namely, in Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Movement for Self-determination (VETËVENDOSJE!), Alliance for Future of Kosovo (AAK), and in the New Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA). The regulation of these issues by the Serbian List (Lista Srpska) are not treated in this paper given that this political group is a citizens' initiative and holds no status of political party. The data for this research are taken from the statutes and programmes of political parties, from their election programmes, as well as from the interviews conducted with the members of the leaderships of these parties.

Results of this research show that strengthening of women and youth in the decision-making of political parties in Kosovo depends on the will of the leaders of these parties, who possess the statutory right to propose the full or partial composition of leaderships within their parties. In the leaderships of these political parties, the youth is represented only symbolically, whereas the representation of women varies from 11% (NISMA) up to 21% (LDK).

Kosovo's political parties do not have an established decision-making system for youth and women, notwithstanding the fact that there are internal organizations in them for these social categories (apart from VV, which has only the secretariat for gender issues). Also, the youth and women are treated very poorly in the party and elective programs of these parties. It is a fact of concern that the representation in the leaderships of political parties, and in particular that of women, was not translated proportionally in the policy-making, and this stresses the discrepancy between the decision-making representation and the internal policy-making capacity.

The policy-making in political parties for ethnic communities is of sporadic and proactive nature, and in practice this is treated more as governmental and legislation policy, and not as an internal policy of the party.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Political parties in Kosovo must build in functional systems for policy making and should interrelate them to the decision-making representation for women and youth within their structures.
- Leaders of political parties should take into consideration the need for increasing representation of women, and in particular of youth in their party leadership.
- Political parties must build in within their structures policy-making sectors for ethnic communities, with the aim of building the expertise for addressing their developmental needs.

I. THE STATUTORY REGULATION OF WOMEN'S AND YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

In this section is analysed the statutory regulation and factual condition of women's and youth's representation in the decision-making of the parties, with the aim to examine their capacities for affecting the decision-making within political subjects regarding the issues that are of their direct concern.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), in its statute mandatorily determines the internal organization of women and youth within the party, through the Democratic Woman (GD) and the Democratic Youth (RD).¹ The normative role of these organizations is to promote the ideas, values and the vision of PDK in the social groups in which they act², and their work is regulated with specific regulations that are approved by the leadership of the party³.

In terms of representation in the decision-making bodies of the party at the local level, the Statute of the party foresees *ex officio* membership in the leaderships of the PDK branches of the heads of the branches of GD and RD.⁴ The same representation at the central leadership of the PDK is enjoyed as well by the head of the RD and the one of the GD. Similarly, the members of the Central Leaderships of the DW and DY, are also members of General Convention of PDK.⁵ However, the Statute of the PDK doesn't foresee the representation of the RD and GD in the Management Council, which is the highest decision-making body between two conventions of the party. In this PDK body, women are represented with 28.5%, that is, with 33 out of 110 members of the Management Council⁶.

However, the leader of the PDK holds the decision-making role in the further strengthening of the representation of women and youth, and, based on the Statute, he possesses the right to propose the deputy leader, vice-presidents and general secretary, and members of the Central Leadership,⁷ elected by the Managing Council of PDK⁸. Nevertheless, within the central leadership that consists

¹ The Statute of PDK (2013), Article 55

² *Ibid.*, Article 57

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 31.

⁶ The Managing Council of the PDK, <http://pdk.info/sq-al/udh%C3%ABheqja/keshillidreitues.aspx>

⁷ The Statute of the PDK, Article 37

⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 42.

of 30 members of PDK proposed by its leader, the representation percentage of women is 16.6%, that is, 5 leadership members, whereas the youth is represented by Mr. Memli Krasniqi, the vice-president for organizational issues and for youth. Mr. Krasniqi was previously the Leader of the RD, and he still exercises this function, in spite of the fact that he is over 30 years of age⁹.

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), in its Statute specifies the internal organization within the party for women and for youth, through Women's Forum (FGLDK), and the Youth Forum (FRLDK)¹⁰. The normative role of these organizations is to affirm and to carry out the policies of LDK in the fields they act, and they support the bodies of the party for the creation of sustainable policies. The organization of, and the elections in, the FGLDK and FRLDK are regulated with specific regulations, subject to approval by the General Council of the party,¹¹ whereas the age for the youth to engage within the FRLDK is limited to 26 years.¹²

In terms of representation in decision-making bodies of the party at the local level, the Statute of LDK determines the ex-officio membership for leaders of the FRLDK and FGLDK branches in the leaderships of those branches¹³. The Central Presidency of the LDK foresees the same representation for the Heads of FRLDK and FGLDK¹⁴. Concerning the representation of women and youth in the General Assembly of the LDK, the Statute of LDK, requires, for the selection of the delegates, from its branches to ensure the representation of women and youth, without determining any percentage or number of representatives. Meanwhile, concerning the representation in the General Council of the party, the Statute determines the participation in its meetings of the leaders of the FRLDK and the FGLDK, but with no right to vote, except for the case when they are elected members of this body of the party. Still, in spite of the absence of quota, women are represented in the General Council with 20%, that is, with 22 out of 110 of its members.¹⁵

Given that the statute of LDK grants the mandate to its President to propose the vice-presidents, the General Secretary and the members of the Presidency, which are elected by the General Council¹⁶, the strengthening of the representation and of the role of youth and women in the executive body of the party hereof depends from its own will. In the 19-member Presidency of the

⁹ Memli Krasniqi was born in 1980.

¹⁰ The Statute of the LDK (march 2013), Article 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The Statute of the LDK, Article 45.3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Article 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 29.3.

¹⁵ The General Assembly of the DLK, <http://www.ldk-ks.eu/Al/organizimi/keshilli-pergjithshem/>

¹⁶ The Statute of the LDK, Article 24.1.

LDK, with the proposal of the President Isa Mustafa, the women are represented with 21%, that is, with 5 members, including here the Vice-president, Mrs. Teuta Sahatqia, whereas the youth is represented only by the President of the FRLDK, Mr. Armend Ibrahim.

The VETËVENDOSJE! Movement (LVV), in contrast to PDK and LDK, has no organization for women and youth within its structures. However, at the level of centres and at the national level of the LVV, it foresees the secretariats for activist woman, which have the status of statutory secretariats, and are sections of the secretariats of the centres and of the general ones¹⁷. The secretariats of the centres and the general secretariat are executive bodies of the presidencies and councils at the respective levels of organization within the LVV. However, factually, women are represented with 20% in the Presidency of the LVV, that is, with 3 out of 15 of its members, with 23.60% in the General Council, as well as with 36.6% in the General Secretariat.¹⁸ The LVV has no special organization for youth within its structures¹⁹.

The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) is currently in the process of internal elections, and during the March of this year has approved the new Statute of the party, based on which it will be led during the following period. This new Statute of the AAK, determines the Alliance of Women of Kosovo (AGK) and the Alliance of the Youth of Kosovo (ARK) as the forms of party organization of women and youth,²⁰ and these have independent structures of their own, as well as their rights to issue their own documents that should be in cohesion with the Statute of the party²¹. Also, the Statute limits the age of the members of the ARK into 30 years.²²

The representation of the AGK and ARK begins at the level of the sub-branches, and, based on the quota determined by the regulation on internal party elections, it is foreseen that, at this level, each of these two organizations in their assemblies elect 10 delegates for assemblies of their branches²³. Also, the Statute envisages for each of the assemblies of the AGK and ARK to elect 20 delegates for Central Assembly of AAK.²⁴ AAK is the only party in Kosovo that has foreseen in its Statute the quota for women and youth in its Managing Council, according to which the AGK and ARK are represented by 5 members each, and in councils of the branches they are represented by 3 members

¹⁷ The Statute of the VETËVENDOSJE! Movement, Article 59 and 77.

¹⁸ The interview with Mr. Boiken Abazi, The Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the LVV, March 2015.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ The Statute of the AAK (2015), Article 4

²¹ *Ibid.*, Articles 33 and 34.

²² *Ibid.*, Article 34.

²³ *Ibid.*, Article 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

each.²⁵ However, even in the current composition of the Managing Council in resignation of the AAK, this quota is convincingly surpassed in the representation of women, with 25%, that is, 25 out of its 100 members.²⁶

In every organizational level of the AAK, the leaders of the AGK and ARK are ex-officio members of the respective presidencies of the party²⁷. However, in contrast to other parties that haven't determined the quotas, the strengthening of women's representation depends from the president of the party. The Statute of the AAK foresees women's inclusion in the presidencies of the branches and of the party with at least, 30%²⁸. As far as the actual condition of the representation is concerned, in the current presidency in resignation of the AAK, women are represented with 20%, that is, with 11 out of its 51 members²⁹. However, the new Statute of the AAK doesn't foresee representation quota for its young members.

The New Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA), as a new party, does not have yet the statute of the party, and its work is based on a provisional regulation³⁰. The Statute of the NISMA is planned for approval in the General Convention, which is expected to take place during this year. In the current composition of the leadership of NISMA, women are represented with 11%, that is, with two out of its 17 members.

Conclusion: The above given data and facts indicate that in spite of the fact that all the political parties have regulated in their statutes the internal organization of women and youth (with the exception of the VETËVENDOSJE! Movement, which only has the secretariat for women, without having any for the youth), the strengthening of these two categories in the party decision-making depends in a large measure from the wills of their presidents, who possess the statutory right to propose full or partial composition of the presidencies of these parties.

The leaders of the political parties have shown smaller sensitivity towards the representation of the youth, which is minor within the presidencies of the parties, and does not surpass the guaranteed representation through the leaders of the youth organization. The symbolical participation of the youth in the party decision-making, is also a huge handicap for policy-making on the issues of their concern.

²⁵ *Ibid*, Article 18.

²⁶ See the list of the Managing Council of the AAK.

²⁷ *Ibid*, Article 20.

²⁸ *Ibid*, Article 36.

²⁹ See the list of the Presidency of the AAK.

³⁰ The interview with Mr. Jakup Krasniqi, the General Secretary of NISMA.

The representation of women in the presidencies of the parties is higher than that of youth, and it is 21% at LDK, 20% at LVV and AAK, 16.6% at PDK, and 11% at NISMA. In spite of the fact of being inadequate, this representation, in contrast to that of the youth, provides space for more significant impact of women in the policy-making of parties on gender issues. In this aspect, the AAK has made one step forward, by foreseeing in its new Statute the 30% quota for women's representation within the presidencies of the branches and of the party.

II. PROGRAMATIC PROVISIONS AND POLICY-MAKING PRACTICES IN POLITICAL PARTIES FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH

This section treats the programmatic provisions and the party practices in policy-making for women and youth, with the aim of examining the impact of their organization and representation in the policy-making within the parties.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), has dedicated, in its Program, one section for each, the youth and women. The youth section of this Program, emphasizes the commitment of PDK for education, employment and engagement of youth in the political and social life of the country, as well as for its professional improvement, employment and specialization in the foreign countries.³¹ Meanwhile, the section of the program dedicated to women, emphasises the engagement of PDK for equal salaries for the same work regardless of gender, and its willingness to combat every form of discrimination of women in this, and in other aspects, as well as its commitment to fight against all the forms of trade with women, and prostitution.³² Regarding the formulation of policies in these fields, the elective program of PDK has dedicated a sub-section to each, women and youth, which foresee concrete policies for their development and strengthening³³.

Nevertheless, PDK has not created in practice any particular system to shape policies for women and youth.³⁴ As far as gender policies are concerned, based on high officials of this party, a part of the initiatives comes from women of PDK, but the largest part of them comes from the European

³¹ The Program of the PDK, the Section 'Youth.'

³² *Ibid.*, the Section 'The Emancipation and the Rights of Women.'

³³ See the elective program of the PDK, "The New Mission", http://www.hashim-thaci.com/files/pages_files/14-05-30-07-36-00PROGRAMI_FINAL.pdf

³⁴ The interview with Mr. Zenun Pajaziti, a Member of the Presidency of the PDK, march 2015.

Union, and different international organizations, as well as from local and international NGO-s³⁵. Also, these policies in Kosovo have taken a character beyond parties, given the activities of the Women's Group in the Parliament of Kosovo, which has taken a very important role in this field³⁶. In contrast to gender issues, the initiatives related to policy creation in the PDK regarding the youth issues, came directly from the youth representatives of the party. But, having in mind that the PDK was a governing party for 8 consecutive years, the policies in this field were generated within respective departments of the Government of Kosovo that were led by it. Also, as far as the decision-taking and policy-making is concerned, the youth of the PDK has had in practice more significant impact than the one of women. Young leaders within the party have managed to get posts of ministers in the Government of Kosovo, whereas the influence of women was more limited³⁷.

The Democratic league of Kosovo (LDK), in the section “Human Vision for Society” of its Program, expresses its engagement for “full gender equality”, but it has no detailed policy on how this is going to be achieved. In spite of the fact that the youth is qualified here as “the biggest value of Kosovo”, and “the major source of economic development, and the most decisive potential for the construction of democratic and sustainable state’, this Program, apart from the declared commitment for the qualitative education³⁸, and for the opening of the party for its inclusion, does not foresee any policies for this social category³⁹. One section of the governing program of LDK is dedicated to youth,⁴⁰ and this program has no specific section regarding women, and the policy towards their strengthening is treated in only one paragraph in the section on economic development and employment.⁴¹

However, in the practice of policy-making within the LDK, based on high officials of this party, women and youth are included in various sectors of the Council of Experts of LDK, and the FGLDK and FRLDK are consulted during the formulation of the elective program⁴². But, as it can be seen from the above mentioned facts, the representation of women in the decision-taking bodies

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ The Program of the LDK, the Section “The Governance in the Service of Citizens”

³⁹ *Ibid.*, the Section “ The Reformation and Modernization of the Party”.

⁴⁰ <http://www.ldk-ks.eu/public/uploads/pdf/tresh-1401819799.pdf>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² The interview with the Vicepresident of the LDK, Mrs. Teuta Sahatqia, March, 2015.

of the LDK was not translated into concrete party policies for strengthening their position and addressing the gender problems.

Nevertheless, based on the high officials of the LDK, this policy deficit for women is being compensated by the Deputy Women's Group in the Parliament of Kosovo, which leads in policy initiatives in this field, compared to parties and other government institutions.⁴³

The VETËVENDOSJE! Movement (LVV), in contrast to other parties, has no special sections for youth and women in its Program, and does not pay any attention to these matters in its programmatic policies⁴⁴. In practice, gender issues are dealt with by the Secretariat of the Activist Woman. This Secretariat, among other things, does the monitoring of women's inclusion in LVV, which has now grown to 23%. According to the officials of this party, the lack of specific organizations for youth and women is a consequence of relatively young membership, and the dedication for full split of responsibilities with men, which is explained also with the election of 4 from 5 women directly by vote in the last parliamentary elections⁴⁵.

The Alliance for Future of Kosovo (AAK), in the Program of its party has no specific section for youth and women. In its elective program, "The New Direction," the AAK has treated youth in the common section on sport and culture, and this program foresees almost nothing concerning the strengthening of women.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, according to high officials of AAK,⁴⁷ the party, apart of quota for the representation of women and youth, has established the culture of communication, which implies consultations, before taking any decision, with the representatives of the Alliance of Women and Alliance of Youth. However, the internal party consultations have not resulted in concrete policies for women in the Program of AAK, as well as in its elective programs.

The New Initiative for Kosova (NISMA), as a new party, created at the dawn of the last general elections, has presented a short elective program that doesn't treat at all the issues concerning youth and women. Based on its high officials⁴⁸, NISMA is building a culture of prior discussion with forums of women and youth on their issues, but this discussion has not resulted in policy-making within the party for treating issues that are of concern for both these social categories.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ See the Principles and the Program Priorities of the LVV, http://www.vetevendosje.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/programi_i_shkurte.pdf

⁴⁵ The interview with Mr. Bojken Abazi, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the LVV, march, 2015.

⁴⁶ See the elective program of the AAK, "The New Direction": <http://www.drejtimiri.com/fo/Broshura.pdf>

⁴⁷ The interview with mr. Ardian Gjini, the Vicepresident of the AAK, March, 2015.

⁴⁸ The interview with Mr. Jakup Krasniqi, the President of the General Council of the NISMA, March 2015.

Conclusion: Based on the results of the above examination, we can conclude that political parties in Kosovo have no established system for policy-making for women and youth, notwithstanding the fact that they all proclaim a culture of internal consultations within the party. Also, the youth and women are treated inadequately in both, party programs, and the elective ones. Nevertheless, PDK stands better as far as the programmatic formulations for women and youth are concerned, LDK and AAK pays programmatic attention to youth only, whereas, the LVV and NISMA don't treat them at all. These facts bring us to the conclusion that representation, and particularly that of women, in the leaderships of political parties, is not proportionally translated into the policy-making. This fact exposes the disproportion between the representation and policy-making capacity within the political parties, and in particular on the gender issues.

III. PROGRAMATIC PROVISIONS AND POLICY-MAKING PRACTICES OF POLITICAL PARTIES ON ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

This section treats programmatic provisions and policy-making practices on ethnic communities, with the aim of examining the policy-making in parties on this field, in a condition of the lack of party memberships from this segment of society.

In the ***Democratic party of Kosovo (PDK)***, ethnic communities have no direct role in decision-taking and policy-making of the party, due to the fact that they are absent from its membership⁴⁹. However, in its political program⁵⁰, as well as in the elective one⁵¹, the PDK has expressed its commitment towards freedoms and rights of ethnic communities, but without any generation of concrete policies of the party on these issues. The creation of concrete policies in this field by PDK has had a proactive approach, that is, during the governance and in cooperation with governmental partners from ethnic communities, and in these cases the decisive role was played by international partners.⁵²

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), is also confronted with the lack of membership from ethnic communities. According to LDK, the constitutional and legal framework of Kosovo has had

⁴⁹ The interview with the member of the Presidency of the PDK, Mr. Zenun Pajaziti, march 2015.

⁵⁰ See: "The Tolerance and the Interethnic Understanding", The Program of the PDK.

⁵¹ See the elective program of the PDK "The New Mission", http://www.hashim-thaci.com/files/pages_files/14-05-30-07-36-00PROGRAMI_FINAL.pdf

⁵² The interview with the member of Presidency of the PDK, Mr. Zenun Pajaziti, March 2015.

as an impact of its own the integration of ethnic communities through ethnic parties., and these circumstances have created a situation in which community members have no reasons and no incentives to become part of the parties in which the Albanians are in majority. As a result, the relation between parties with Albanian majority and those of ethnic communities is “not with us, but close to us”⁵³. in its program, the LDK expresses its commitment for the rights and freedoms of communities by putting them together with other endangered groups of the society. Also, in its elective program, the LDK doesn't t treat at all this field of policy-making.

The VETËVENDOSJE! Movement (LVV), in the programatic aspect engages for the rights of ethnic communities, but it nominates them as “minority” rights. LVV considers that “the Kosovo Serbs, like all the other minorities, must enjoy all the human, citizen, and minority rights⁵⁴”, and it expresses its engagement “for maximal cultural authonomy of these minotirities”⁵⁵, although, by stating, on the other hand, that it is against decentralisation on ethnic bases⁵⁶. In practice, the LVV claims to have good relations with all the communities, except for a bigger distance from Turkish minority, members of which, according to the high officials of this party, remain distant given that they are closer to PDK. Concerning the policy-making for the communities, the LVV engages for the dialogue with Kosovo Serbs⁵⁷. All the same, within the LVV there are no mechanisms for dealing with policy-making for communities.

The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), considers that it possesses a good knowledge on ethnic communities, due to the integration into its parliamentary group of the New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK), a party of Kosovo Egyptians and Ashkalis, as well as due to its participation in the Parliamentary Commission on Minorities which supported the clarification of their interests⁵⁸. However, in both, the programatic, and governmental, aspects, the AAK does not emphasise any engagement regarding the ethnic communities⁵⁹.

The New Initiative for Kosovo, NISMA, as a new party, has no members from communities in the party, and, also, its program does not include any provision dedicated to ethnic communities.

⁵³ The interview with the Vicepresident of the LDK, Mrs. Teuta Sahatqia, March 2015.

⁵⁴ The Point 36, The Programatic Priorities and Priciples of the LVV, http://www.vetevendosje.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/programi_i_shkurte.pdf

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Point 97.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, thSection “Decentralization”.

⁵⁷ The interview with Mr. Boiken Abazi, the Secretary Foreign Relations in the LVV, March, 2015.

⁵⁸ The interview with Mr. Ardian Gjini, the Vicepresident of the AAK, March, 2015.

⁵⁹See, the Program of AAK (2013) and the elective program “The New Direction”: <http://www.drejtимири.com/fo/Broshura.pdf>

Conclusion: The examination of the above facts shows that political parties in Kosovo have not developed any policy making system for ethnic communities, and also, there are no sectors within the parties for dealing with these matters. The policy-making in this field is of sporadic and reactive nature, and it is much more a response to the pressures exercised by international community, than a creation of ideas and proactive policies for treating the problems of communities. Also, a huge handicap in this is the absence of any internal policy-making sectors within the parties for dealing with issues of ethnic communities. In essence, the policies towards ethnic communities in Kosovo, are treated by Albanian majority parties as governmental and legislative policies, rather than as internal policies of these parties.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research results show that women and youth strengthening in the decision-making of the political parties of Kosovo depend from the wills of party leaders, which have the statutory rights to propose full or partial compositions of the leaderships of their respective parties.

The leaders of political leaders have shown less sensitivity towards the youth representation, which is minor in the leaderships of their parties, and these do not surpass the guaranteed representation with the leaders of the youth organizations, while the VETËVENDOSJE! Movement has no such organization at all. The representation of women in the leaderships of political parties is much higher than that of youth, and in the LDK it is 21%, in the LVV and AAK 20%, in PDK 16.6%, and in NISMA 11%. In spite of being inadequate, this representation, in contrast to that of youth, at least provides space for more important impact of women in policy-making on gender issues.

However, political parties in Kosovo have no established systems for policy-making for these social categories (apart of LVV, who only has the secretariat on gender issues), and they all address the culture of internal consultations. As a result of these circumstances, youth and women have been treated very poorly in the parties programs, as well as in the elective ones. A fact of great concern is that representation, in particular that of women, in the leaderships of political parties, is not translated proportionally into the policy-making, and this exposes the disproportion between the decision-taking representation and the internal policy-making capabilities. Such a condition of internal decision-taking and policy-making within the political parties, puts in question the rationale of the existence of the organizations for youth and women within them.

Concerning the ethnic communities, policy-making within the parties is of sporadic and reactive nature, and this is a response to the requests of political representatives of ethnic communities in the government and parliament, and to the pressure exercised by the international community, rather than a creation of ideas and proactive approaches in treating their problems. The parties with Albanian majority, in practice, consider the policies towards ethnic communities in Kosovo to be the governmental and legislative policies, rather than the internal policies of the parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Political parties in Kosovo must build in functional systems for policy making and should interrelate them to the decision-making representation for women and youth within their structures.
- Leaders of political parties should take into consideration the need for increasing representation of women, and in particular of youth in their party leadership.
- Political parties must build in within their structures policy-making sectors for ethnic communities, with the aim of building the expertise for addressing their developmental needs.