

**First Meeting of the Women Parliamentarians at the
6th SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians Conference**

JOINT STATEMENT

The first meeting of Women Parliamentarians on the theme “Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice” being held on the 4th of **November 2012**, as a part of the 6th Conference of the SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, at Islamabad;

Reaffirming the role of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians Conference in promoting friendship and cooperation between our countries and our peoples;

Recalling the special struggles of women of the South Asian Region in helping to build a democratic, just and rights based society;

Commending the South Asian women leaders who stand out in the world for their exemplary leadership, and reaffirming women parliamentarians' central role in raising a voice for gender justice;

Recognising that the available data and statistics highlight that persistence of gender inequalities in education, health and economic development, with women trailing far behind which makes it imperative that women play a central role in decision making of our nations;

HEREBY ADOPT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND AGREE TO UNDERTAKE THE FOLLOWING:

1. Sustain and empower this important forum for women parliamentarians in the Association of the SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians;
2. Build through this forum a network of South Asian women parliamentarians, and use this platform to share and exchange our experiences and best practices so as to strengthen and make more effective our role as parliamentarians;
3. Raise a collective voice for increasing women’s representation in all democratic and political forums, especially our national parliaments, provincial and local councils;
4. Build a common vision for the empowerment of women of South Asia for promotion of gender equality in social, political and economic fields;
5. Work for the mainstreaming of women into the body politic of the parliamentary system;
6. Organize women into women’s groups, where relevant, within parties and on a multiparty level such as, the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus in Pakistan being led by the Hon. Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza;

Further recognizing the widespread discrimination leading to female disadvantage, our parliamentary agenda will focus on:

- Combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women
- Ensuring reproductive health and rights
- Promoting access to education
- Guaranteeing property & inheritance rights
- Eliminating gender inequalities in employment especially amongst the Home Based Women Workers

We, SAARC Women Parliamentarians, meeting for the first time on the occasion of the 6th Conference of the SAARC Association of Speakers and Parliamentarians at Islamabad, **thank** the Honorable Speakers' Council for incorporating this initiative at the 5th Conference held in [July 2011](#) at Delhi;

Further, **request** it is institutionalized through incorporation in the SAARC Constitution and Rules of Association. The suggested name is "Women's Committee of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians". The Meeting has suggested the host country serve as the chair of this Committee, that it meets twice a year at the time of the Conference and mid-year, and makes its own rules;

Transmit this Joint Statement to the Speakers' Council with the **request** that the Honorable Speakers facilitate in taking it forward to the 6th Conference of SAARC Association of Speakers for appropriate attention;