ICAPP/7CON/003

Seoul Declaration on Women's Leadership and Empowerment

We, the leaders and representatives of thirty two political parties of Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkey, and observers from the Council of African Political Parties (CAPP), the Permanent Conference of Political Parties from Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPPAL) and the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) attended the Special Conference of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) on Women's Leadership and Empowerment which was convened in Seoul, Republic of Korea from September 12th to 14th, 2013.

During the conference, we extensively shared our experiences in, and exchanged our views on, promoting women's leadership in politics, expanding women's participation in economy, and strengthening women's role in peace-building.

First of all, we confirmed our commitment to the work of gender mainstreaming, adopted at the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in June 2000, as the major global strategy, approach and means to achieve the goal of gender equality by ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all central political, economic and social activities, including development, implementation and monitoring of policies, and resource allocation.

In particular, we reaffirmed the critical importance of removing all legal and social barriers that undermine the participation of women, especially women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in politics and economy. Such creation of safe environment for women to be actively involved in political decision-makings and entrepreneurial activities without structural discrimination and prejudice will subsequently build women's collective capacities and further strengthen women's leadership. It will also help realize full potential of women in society and shape our lives in accordance with our own aspirations.

In this regard, we shared the view that our goal of strengthening women's status can be better achieved by encouraging joint and harmonious efforts of men and women. We also agreed to recommend our respective governments and parliaments through our political parties to create a Ministry or Department of Women's Affairs in every country in the region, which will be dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

We also called for the implementation of the international conventions related to human rights to fulfill gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination and prejudice against women, and U.N. Resolution 1325 of October 2000 on women, peace and security to increase participation of women at all levels of decision-making: national, regional and international.

We welcomed with great delight the launching of the ICAPP Women's Wing, and expressed our strong commitment to its playing a salient role in strengthening cooperation, coordination, and communication among Asian political parties for our common strategy and efforts "to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity,"

as determined in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women (WCW) in September 1995.

We endorsed all the agreements reached at the First Meeting of the ICAPP Women's Wing in April 2013. In particular, we recommended our respective governments to endorse and implement the ICAPP's recommendation to establish an Asian All-Women Anti-Poverty Bank or Fund to micro-finance business of as low as $500 or $1,000.

We agreed to provide necessary support to the future work of the ICAPP Women's Wing, as agreed at its Second Bureau Meeting in June 2013, to raise public awareness on the seriousness and urgency of the issues relating to women, to establish trans-border networks for exchange of information on crimes and violence against women, and to explore practical system to prevent such crimes and violence.

We also supported the proposal made by the United Nations on International Women's Day on March 8, 2012 to convene the 5th WCW in 2015. We believe that convening the 5th WCW is important not only to look closely at the implementation of the landmark Beijing Platform for Action but also to deal squarely with the newly emerging issues and the enormous changes taking place in the world which are having both positive and other implications for women.

Finally, we expressed our gratitude to H.E. Park Geun-hye, President of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations for their congratulatory messages. Our sincere thanks also go to the *Saenuri* Party and the Democratic Party for co-hosting this historic event and to the Government of the Republic of Korea for providing warm hospitality during our stay.

Adopted in Seoul, Republic of Korea on the 14th of September, 2013