



**LI Women's Workshop & CALD General Assembly
Advancing Women in Politics: The Role of Political Parties
Taipei, Taiwan, October 2005**

The women's workshop and CALD General Assembly, "Advancing Women in Politics: the Role of Political Parties," held in Taiwan from October 13 to 14, was the third of a series of events organized in line with the Win with Women Global Action Plan. This two-day conference was jointly organized by the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) and Liberal International (LI) and was hosted by the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan (DPP) and the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

The first day of the conference consisted of a workshop and training session directed at women who are planning to run for political office along with political party staff and campaign workers. The trainers for these sessions were Ms. Sarah

Brinton and Ms. Victoria Marsom, who are members of the Liberal Democrats of the United Kingdom. The first session focused on the role of women in political parties. Participants discussed how women can develop and manage their role in their respective parties, how to overcome obstacles, and how to find help and support within their party. In the second session, it was discussed how to develop campaign skills, including identifying key campaign messages and getting them across, engaging and influencing the electorate, finding and motivating volunteers and finally creating personal action plans. In the last session of the day, participants learned about confident communication skills, specifically gender style of communication, public speaking and appearing on the media.

After the end of the training sessions, participants visited the campaign headquarters of DPP candidate for Taipei County Magistrate, Luo Wen-Chia. At his campaign headquarters, participants were welcomed by Luo's wife and members of the women's "Shui Tan Tan" group, who expressed the importance of the women's vote in Taiwan's upcoming local elections.

In the conference opening ceremony, the host, Vice President Annette Lu addressed the changes that have disrupted the traditional male-dominated political power structure and have led to a rise of prominent female leaders around the world. She also discussed the role of women in Asia's democratization, citing the need for women to become agents of democratization and to share power in decision-making. Vice President Lu briefly described the democratization and women's movement in Taiwan, and attributed Taiwan's success to its "soft power," namely human rights, democracy, peace, love and technological innovation. She proceeded in her speech to say that women must enhance their soft power of mercy, beauty, wisdom and courage in order to strengthen the role of women in politics. Vice President Lu explained that these four qualities will allow women to break away from their traditional, passive role in history ("his story") and to become actively involved in creating "her story." When women and men both become agents of change, then that is the real "human story."

The second day of the expanded conference coincided with the CALD General Assembly, and it involved women leaders and party executives interested in advancing women in politics through political parties. In her opening remarks, Madame Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Minister of State of Belgium and past President of Liberal International, talked about how she became involved with the Global Action Plan after attending the Win with Women conference hosted by

Madeleine Albright in December 2003. Ms. Neyts-Uyttebroeck described her experiences at previous women seminars where a common view among the female participants was that women should play a larger role in politics provided that they are competent. She disagreed by arguing that there is a double standard because men are not restricted in their political participation based on competency. Also, in her speech, Ms. Neyts-Uyttebroeck discussed her experiences traveling abroad after assuming her official position. All the foreign officials she met expressed similar sentiments regarding women's low participation in politics, claiming that it was because of the culture and that it would take time for change to occur. Given the existing male culture that exists most everywhere, she proposed working with women individual groups to enable them for better use of their skills, and having a concrete gender equality provision in constitutions. Finally, Ms. Neyts-Uyttebroeck described the proportional representation system used in Belgium that has allowed women to occupy 38-42% of all positions. Although women's participation has considerably increased, she concluded that it is not a "magical formula."

The first session of the conference was titled "Experiences and Best Practices by Women Politicians from Asia," which was moderated by Dr. Rajiva Wijesinha, President of the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka. Speakers participating in the session included Dr. Kim Myung-ja of the Uri Party of South Korea, Ms. Deutemduang Na-Chaingmai of the Democrat Party of Thailand, and Ms. Liu Shyh-fang, International Policy Advisor to DPP-Taiwan.

Each speaker gave a brief overview of women's political participation in her respective country. Ms. Kim discussed measures that have been taken to increase women's participation including a proportional electoral system, establishing a women's political development fund, and maintaining systematic party support for women candidates. She believed that other strategies should also be pursued such as setting a higher quota for women members, promoting leadership training, linking with NGOs and building a volunteer support system. Ms. Deutemduang advised that women need to stay dedicated to their political life despite family responsibilities, to deter from using money to gain power, and to be perseverant. She concluded that women must erase the part of their culture that restricts them to stay at home in order to care for the family, and that women should be the ones that push for greater participation. In discussing Taiwan's situation, Ms. Liu pointed out that Taiwan is the leading country in Asia for women's political participation. In Taiwan, 25% of legislative seats are proportionally reserved for women, and female legislators are on average higher educated than their male counterparts. The current goals of the women's movement in Taiwan include domestic violence prevention and equality in

the workplace.

The second session of the day, “Strategies for Broadening Women’s Participation: Party Regulations and Legal Mechanisms,” was moderated by Ms. Chee Siok-chin representing the Singapore Democratic Party. Participating speakers included Professor Krishna Bose of the India Trinamool Congress Party, Ms. Anisah Mahfudz of the Indonesian National Awakening Party (PBK), Ms. Tan Lian Hoe of the Malaysian People’s Movement Party (Gerakan) and Ms. Chinami Nishimura of the Democratic Party of Japan.

In her overview of the political atmosphere in India, Ms. Bose said women’s early participation in India began with the resistance movement against the British colonial regime. Despite the important role that women played in this effort, they did not gain complete equality after India achieved its independence in 1947. Ms. Bose recounted her recent experience in trying to pass a quota system for women in Parliament. Despite her efforts to propose various bills to ensure greater women’s participation, she has continued to face male resistance against the legislation. Following Ms. Bose’s speech, Ms. Mahfudz discussed similar difficulties in Indonesia. Although a regulation was passed in 2003 that declares that 30% of candidates *may* be female, it did carry any weight because there are no mechanisms that ensure parties to comply with the quota. In addition, culture and family responsibilities make it difficult for women to become involved in politics. Expressing parallel sentiments, Ms. Tan from Malaysia said it is necessary to have a quota system that is written into national legislation and adopted by political parties in order to overcome gender imbalance. She also discussed the need for resources to promote leadership skills among women and for parties to carry a sincere intent in increasing women’s participation. The final speaker, Ms. Nishimura, talked about the efforts that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has taken to promote gender equality and to raise the representation of women in politics. The DPJ is the only party that has created a fund to financially support female candidates. If a candidate is successfully elected, then she must repay the loan in order to continue support for the next generation of female candidates. Like her other fellow speakers, Ms. Nishimura expressed the need for a quota system to increase the low participation level of Japanese women in politics.

The third session of the conference, “Supporting Women in Meaningful Leadership Roles: Getting There and Staying There,” was moderated by David Taw from Burma. Speakers in this session included Ms. Saumura Tioulong of the

Cambodian Sam Rainsy Party, Ms. Henedina Abad of the Liberal Party of the Philippines and Ms. Yeh Yi-jin of DPP-Taiwan.

In discussing how to support women in leadership roles, Ms. Tioulong pointed out that the debate should not concentrate on whether or not women can become better leaders but instead, it should focus on opportunities for women to attain leadership positions regardless of their leadership skills. Ms. Tioulong then talked about the Women Training Program that was established in her country in 1999 to create effective leaders and politicians. These trainings, which are equally attended by males and females, begin at the grassroots level in close cooperation with the local party structure. Other measures that women have taken include starting a health group that offers free health services and beginning female radio broadcasts with messages about hygiene and health issues. Finally, Ms. Tioulong stressed the need for women to take action themselves instead of waiting for men to make pro-women decisions. Afterwards, Ms. Abad presented women as the best agents of change, and said that they exercise power instead of domination. Ms. Abad suggested enhancing women's participation by building women's capacity to occupy leadership positions, increasing access to information on women's issues, highlighting women's achievements in the media and implementing institutional reforms. Lastly, Ms. Yeh Yi-jin discussed the substantial progress that women in Taiwan contributed in a short period of time. In the next election, an amendment to raise the quota for women's representation to 50% is being promoted. In addition, Yeh said, the DPP has taken great strides to raise women's participation through the establishment of the Department of Women's Development, and through measures aimed at relieving family burdens. Ms. Yeh also emphasized the importance of international cooperation and learning from partner countries.

The final session of the day, "Women in CALD: Action Plan for the Future," was a panel discussion among CALD party presidents and executives, and conference participants. Moderated by CALD Secretary General Bi-khim Hsiao, the session began with a discussion on revisions to CALD Resolution No. 5, which expresses a commitment to the Win with Women Global Action Plan and the implementation of the plan's four-point agenda. After the passage of the resolution, there was a recommendation to create a taskforce committee to further develop an action plan for promoting women's participation and empowerment in Asia. Following this discussion, Secretary General Hsiao shared the contents of CALD Resolution No. 6 and No. 7, concerning the political instability in Singapore and the Philippines respectively. The session ended with a reading of Resolution No.8, which thanked

DPP for its achievements over the past two years as CALD chair party.

Following the end of the conference, members of the CALD General Assembly attended the CALD Chairmanship Handover Ceremony that took place at the Taipei Guest House. In his speech, President Chen Shui-bian extended his best wishes to the Liberal Party of the Philippines, which assumed the position as CALD chair party. President Chen mentioned the achievements that have been made while DPP served as chair party including organizing missions to the home countries of CALD's member parties' to observe election campaigns, and sponsoring a full-time Taiwanese resident staff to the CALD Secretariat in Manila. President Chen expressed his gratitude for the support of CALD members after China passed the "Anti-Secession Law" this past March. He also applauded Mr. Sam Rainsy and his colleagues for their determination in pursuing democracy and freedom against their country's authoritarian regime. President Chen reaffirmed Taiwan's commitment to working with CALD members in creating a greater society pillared on democracy and freedom. In his closing remarks, he paid special tribute to Liberal International and Madam Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck for their efforts in creating further exchange among women in politics. Finally, he congratulated the Liberal Party of the Philippines on taking its new role as CALD chair party.