

APPWA Freetown dialogue

On the 24th of May 2011, the Political Parties Registration Commission/UNIPSIL organized a one day dialogue in Freetown for the All Political Parties Women Association (APPWA). The dialogue which took place at the Atlantic Hall, National Stadium is a follow up programme of the regional validation tour which formed part of the action point from the January workshop.

The Freetown dialogue which started with the chanting of Party slogans is the final dialogue after regional dialogues in Bo, Kenema and Makeni. After the January workshop, it was agreed that the Interim executive embark on a regional tour in other to disseminate the idea of APPWA as well as validating the constitution of the association. This according to the participants will build the confidence of women nationwide and see the association as a national institution that will foster unity and advocate the concerns of women. The dialogue brought together women from different constituencies in the Western Area who discussed and made input to the draft constitution of APPWA.

In her opening statement, the Interim President of APPWA Isata J. Kabbah says the association was formed to promote and empower women in Sierra Leone. Women she says formed 51% of the population of Sierra Leone and are the backbone of Political Parties in the country. Even with the 51% she says women are not adequately represented in Governance and Political Party positions. She says since the formation of APPWA, members now think beyond party lines during their deliberations. She says they are happy that the President has also made commitments to support the women in Sierra Leone.

In his statement on behalf of the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Registrar Abraham John says APPWA is a novelty in West Africa. He informed participants that the Commission is working on a concept note advocating for 30% representation of women in Political Parties before registration. This he says will be tabled before parliament to be made law. He advised the women to forget about party colours and move the association forward. He also pledged his personal support to the women and promise to take the issue of APPWA to the New Chairman and Commissioners of PPRC.

In her statement on behalf of the All Peoples Congress APC, Magrette Conteh says they are optimistic that there will be more women representation in parliament come 2012. She says

since President Koroma has promised them the 30%, she believes the President will not let them down. She asked members to stand firm to promote women empowerment in Sierra Leone.

In her statement on behalf of the National Democratic Alliance, the women's leader Isata Harding admonished women to move away from being shy and take up political appointments. She says women should make sacrifice for the empowerment of women. The NDA Chairman she says has consented to give the women of NDA 30% representation.

Speaking on behalf of the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change PMDC, Rosaline Marcarthy says women should absorb the culture of love and care. Women she says should love and care for themselves so that they can achieve whatever they want. If they speak with one voice and avoid jealousy and pettiness, they will move forward she added. She says if they see competent women even if she is not from their party, they should support that individual.

Speaking on behalf of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party SLPP, Haja Memunatu Koroma, says women should make frantic efforts to ensure that the 30% quota be included in the laws of Sierra Leone and Political Parties Constitutions. She says the SLPP believes in women and that is why in 2009 the party made a woman the Deputy Chairman of the party.

Making her statement, the facilitator Helen Bash Taqui says the draft constitution will held the women move forward ahead of its convention in Bo. She says other women in the other regions have made their own inputs into the document, so it is the duty of the women in Freetown to make their own input into the document that will help the women move forward.

Participants were later divided into group and they later made their recommendations to the draft document which will be looked at during the national delegate conference in Bo.