



OFFICE OF THE DELEGATED MINISTER OF THE HAITIAN ELECTORAL PROCESS AND OF RELATIONS WITH THE HAITIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Thirty-Five Percent of Elected Posts Reserved for Female Candidates

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I. Encouraging Women to Run for Public Office

In order to encourage women to run for public office, the 2015 Electoral Decree reduced registration fees by 40 percent for any political party or group that complied with the 30 percent quota for women prescribed by Article 17.1 of the 1987 Amended Constitution. Despite this reduction, the participation of women in Haitian political life remains lamentable. Without the requirement of one woman per *Conseil d'Administration de Section Communale* (Communal Section Administration Council, hereinafter referred to as "CASEC") and per *Cartel de Mairie* (City Hall Cartel), there would have been virtually no women elected in the 2015 elections.

Of the 6,844 officials elected in the 2015 and 2016 elections, only 2,600 were women. The election results revealed a failure to reach the quota in the Parliament (i.e., the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate): of the 118 elected Deputies, only three (3) were women and of the 30 elected Senators, only one (1) was a woman.

II. Thirty-Five Percent Quota for Women and Five-Percent Quota for the Diaspora

The Draft Constitution should elucidate the 35 percent quota for women. Article 16 should be reworded as follows:

The principle of a quota of at least 35 percent of women is recognized at all levels of the national political system, particularly in public administration and in elective representations.

To prevent the total exclusion of women from the political arena, it is important to set forth in the National Charter the quota of 35 percent of seats that must be reserved for women in the Chamber of Deputies.

In Article 100 of Title III, Chapter II of the Preliminary Draft Constitution, which addresses the legislative branch, a paragraph stipulating the quota of 35 percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies reserved for female candidates must be inserted.

III. Parliamentary Seats in the Chamber of Deputies Reserved for Female Candidates

Sociocultural discrimination against women seeps into the Haitian electoral process. It is particularly seen in the electoral violence that often discourages women from participating in elections and in the lack of funding for female candidates due to stereotypes about women. The eradication of sociocultural discrimination against women in the Haitian electoral process fundamentally requires consensual decisions. Social inequalities are often eliminated through positive discrimination, a principle that is recognized the world over. In Rwanda for example, 24 of the 80 parliamentary seats in the Chamber of Deputies (i.e., 30 percent) are reserved for women in accordance with Article 9 of the Rwandan Constitution. Furthermore, two (2) seats are reserved for the youth and one (1) seat for individuals with disabilities.

As a step towards alleviating gender inequality in the Haitian political system, the Haitian government aims to add to the 118 existing seats in the Chamber of Deputies 41 additional seats reserved solely for female candidates of political parties or groups, which is equivalent to the aforementioned 35 percent quota. By adding these seats on the basis of the 118 constituencies that existed in 2015, we will have the following distribution:

- ❖ Seven (7) seats in the West
- ❖ Five (5) seats in Artibonite
- ❖ Five (5) seats in the North
- ❖ Five (5) seats in the South
- ❖ Three (3) seats in the Northwest
- ❖ Four (4) seats in the Southeast
- ❖ Four (4) seats in the Centre
- ❖ Three (3) seats in Grand'Anse
- ❖ Two (2) seats in Nippes

Article 250 of the Preliminary Draft Constitution proposes the creation of a *Conseil Départemental* (Departmental Council) composed of three (3) members—one (1) President and two (2) Vice-Presidents. Per Article 100 of the Draft Constitution, the diaspora living abroad would constitute the 11th department with a quota of 5 percent in the Chamber of Deputies.

The next Electoral Decree must define the mechanism for identifying the constituencies solely reserved for the candidacy of women for the Chamber of Deputies.

IV. Conclusion

The substantial reduction of elected posts proposed by the Preliminary Draft Constitution would impact the total number of elected representatives provided for by the 1987 Amended Constitution. The Draft Constitution proposes the reduction of the total number of elected posts by 5,913, from 6,844 to 931 elected posts. The addition of 41 seats to the Chamber of Deputies reserved exclusively for female candidates would not negatively impact the national treasury as the total number of elected posts would be considerably reduced. The addition of reserved seats would not only benefit administrative management by reducing the number of paid elected officials but, more importantly, would guarantee the effective participation of 41 women in the legislative branch.