

DECLARATION

We, the undersigned, women with experience of high political office, gathered in Athens on 3 November 1992 at the invitation of the Commission of the European Communities for the first European Summit "Women in Power" have together adopted the following Declaration.

WE NOTE A DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

We note that the current position of women in the Member States of the European Communities as in other European countries is still characterised by profound inequality in all public and political decision-making authorities and bodies at every level - local, regional, national and European.

We note with concern that women's participation in political decision-making has not improved in a number of European countries since the mid-seventies and that recent political developments have resulted in a significant decrease in the proportion of women in decision-making, particularly in the legislative assemblies in some of these countries.

We conclude that women's access to the same formal rights as men, such as the right to vote, stand for election and apply for senior posts in public administration, has not produced equality in practice. We therefore deplore the lack of strategic policies to give practical reality to the principles of democracy.

WE PROCLAIM THE NEED TO ACHIEVE A BALANCED DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC AND POLITICAL POWER BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

A democratic system should entail equal participation in public and political life by its citizens. We demand equality of participation by women and men in public and political decision-making. We underline the need for changes to the structure of decision-making procedures in order to ensure such equality in practice.

WE UPHOLD THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES AND ARGUMENTS

Formal and informal equality between women and men is a fundamental human right.

Women represent more than half the population. Equality requires parity in the representation and administration of Nations. Women represent half the potential talent and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole.

The under-representation of women in decision-making prevents full account being taken of the interests and needs of the population as a whole.

A balanced participation by women and men in decision-making would produce different ideas, values and styles of behaviour suited to a fairer and more balanced world for all, both women and men.

WE CALL UPON ALL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY CONCERNED

We call upon the Commission of the European Communities and all European and international organisations to adopt action program and measures to ensure the full participation of women in decision-making in these organisations.

We call upon the Member States of the European Communities and other European States to integrate fully the dimension of equal opportunities for women and men in their educational system and in all their national policies, and to adopt the measures necessary to implement these objectives, in order to achieve equal sharing of decision-making posts for women and men.

We call upon all the political leadership at European and national level to accept the full consequences of the democratic idea on which their parties are built, in particular by ensuring balanced participation between women and men in positions of power, particularly political and administrative positions, through measures to raise awareness and through mechanisms.

We call upon the leaders of trade unions, workers' organisations and adequate employers' associations at national and European level to recognize the increasing contribution of women to the labour market by ensuring the mechanisms necessary for equal participation by women at all levels of these organisations, including decision-making bodies.

We call upon women's organisations at national and European level to continue their efforts to further women in the exercise of their full rights as citizens by awareness-raising campaigns, training programs and any other appropriate measures.

We call upon those working in the media to present non stereo-typed images of women and men and to inform public opinion of the need for balanced participation in decision-making by women and men and to defend the principles on which this balance is based.

We call upon the women and men of all the countries of Europe to recognize the need to implement a balance between women and men and to accept the consequences of it in order to contribute to building a meaningful and lasting democracy.

WE UNDERTAKE A CAMPAIGN TO STRENGTHEN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

We affirm the need at this time of profound change and hope for Europe to implement the changes in attitudes and structure which are indispensable to achieving a proper balance between women and men in decision-making levels.

These essential changes should accompany contemporary developments in European society developments which will be all the more welcome if women are as equally involved in them as men.

By signing this Declaration we hereby launch a campaign to mobilize all concerned in society to ensure balanced participation of women and men in decision-making at local, regional and national level and in the European Institutions including the next European Parliament.

The people who signed the Athens Declaration included Belgian Employment Minister Miel Smet, former French Prime Minister Edith Cresson, former Greek Culture Minister Melina Mercouri, former Chairwoman of the European Parliament Simone Veil, Dutch Culture Minister Hedy d'Ancona, Danish parliamentarian Lone Dybkjaer, Luxembourg Parliament Chairwoman Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Deputy Chairwoman of the Portuguese Parliament Leonor Beleza, Finnish Housing Minister Pirjo Rusanen, Swedish Public Administration Minister Inger Davidsson, Swiss parliamentarian Judith Stamm, Hungary's Deputy Undersecretary of State of the Culture and Education Ministry Krisztina Dobos, the United Nations Director of the division for the Advancement of Women Chafika Mestem. The Athens Declaration was later signed by Rita Süssmuth, Chairwoman of the German Parliament, Matilde Fernández Saenz, Spain's Social Affairs Minister, and Mary O'Rourke, Ireland's Trade and Marketing Minister. Many prominent women sent letters of support. They include the presidents of Ireland, Mary Robinson, and Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and Hanna Suchocka, who was Polish Prime Minister at the time.