

STORY: AMISOM holds public forum on women's rights and political participation

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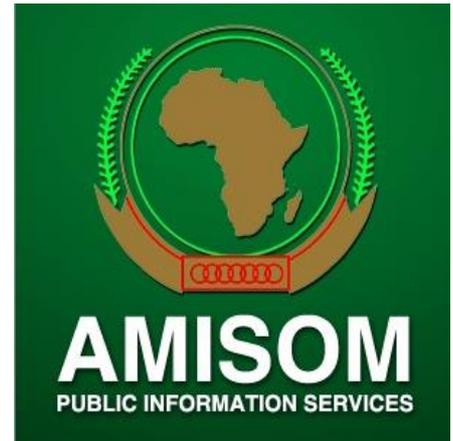
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AMISOM holds public forum on women's rights and political participation

Baidoa, April 14, 2016 - The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in collaboration with communities in Bay region recently hosted a public forum on women's participation and representation in politics ahead of the 2016 general elections in Somalia.

The engagement was facilitated by AMISOM and the Federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to raise awareness among young women in South West region on the importance of gender mainstreaming in the democratization process in Somalia.

The discussion, attended by some of Somalia's influential women, also provided a platform for the intergenerational learning and exchange of views, all aimed at preparing young female university students to take active role in the forthcoming elections and peace making initiatives in Somalia.

The event was graced by top personalities including the Bay Region Governor, Abdirashid Abdullahi; Deputy Chairperson of Female Caucus of the Federal Parliament, Maryam Maalim Issack; the head of women in Bay region, Muraya Ibrahim Mader; representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights and Women's Development; representatives from AMISOM and members of the local community.

Speaking at the forum, the Bay Region Governor, Abdirashid Abdullahi, emphasized the need for women to actively participate in the country's political and democratization process, to help achieve peace and development in Somalia. Mr Abdullahi appealed to young women, to take up politics and seek representation in both the 2016 general elections and in the on-going state formation process in Somalia.

"Your role is to participate in all issues of politics because no one will stand up for your rights if you don't. Your positions will be filled by men if you are not there. Fight for your rights," Governor Abdirashid said.

Hawa Sokor Ali, the head of Baidoa Women Group, said women have registered considerable success under the ISWA Administration because of unity among residents.

"The secret to our success is that we involved and consulted with our traditional elders, our youth, our district and regional administrations and our Members of the Federal Parliament. As a result, our role was clearly defined. The South West Constitution stipulates that women should be allocated 20 percent of the seats, we got 21 percent," she said.

Muraya Ibrahim Mader, the head of women in Bay region, urged women to participate and ensure representation at all levels in the political process of the country, if their voices are to be heard.

"We need to be part of every administration at district and regional level. We want our voice in every aspect of politics. We are appealing to women in South West to partake in the politics and peacebuilding initiatives, in military and police recruitments," Muraya noted.

Honorable Maryam Maalim Issack, the Deputy Chairperson of Female Caucus of the Federal Parliament, shared her experience in politics and urged young women to take up the career and be part of the decision making process.

Ms Mane Ahmed, AMISOM Gender Officer, thanked the women in Baidoa, youth and leaders for supporting participation of women in the affairs of the country.

“We came here today to congratulate the South West women and especially Baidoa women for their great achievement in fighting for parity in the Regional Parliament. We also came to learn from your experience so that we can support women to properly address the barriers to their political participation,” said Ms Ahmed.

She added that women have a stake in the country’s political process and urged them to mobilize each other to fully participate in the 2016 electoral process.

Strengthening women’s rights and addressing barriers to political participation are critical to achieving Agenda 2063.

END.