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Women and Media Collective

Women's rights organizations call to safeguard and protect the 25% quota for women in Local Government despite having a reduction in Local Government bodies

10th October 2022

Hon. President Ranil Wickremesinghe

CC to:

Hon. Prime Minister Dinesh Gunewardena

Hon. State Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils Janaka Wakkubura

Safeguard and protect the 25% quota for women in Local Government

We are five women's organizations from various districts that have worked continuously to increase the representation of women in politics, in Sri Lanka, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We advocated for over 20 years to increase women's political representation and welcomed the mandatory 25% quota for women in Local Authorities enacted in 2017 and operationalized in 2018.

Approximately 2000 women entered political office through this quota, and many have engaged in exemplary work in local government validated by substantial achievements and research. (Research Study - <https://womenandmedia.org/necessary-yet-insufficient/>, Video - <https://womenandmedia.org/lets-strengthen-and-safeguard-the-womens-quota-animation-video/>, Film - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J8SbT8_czE)

We refer here to a recent media report on the 9th of October 2022 indicating that President Ranil Wickremesinghe has called for a reduction of the number of council members for Local Authorities (Pradeshiya Sabhas, Municipal Councils, Urban Councils) from approximately 8000 to 4000. While the reduction of members has both positive and negative implications, we wish to highlight that this move will have direct consequences for the operationalizing of the women's quota.

As we know the need for greater representation of women in politics has never been more pertinent than it is today. Sri Lanka still has one of the lowest representations of women in politics, a situation that was remedied for local government representation but not for Provincial government or for Parliament. In 2017 amendments to the Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act, no 16 were made introducing a women's quota of 25%, increasing the representation of women from approximately 100 in the year 2011 to about 2000 in the 2018 election.

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Sarasavi Lane, Castle Street, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka

We strongly urge that this positive achievement be further strengthened through both affirming legislation and policy interventions. We also reiterate that any changes to the Local Government Elections (Amendment) Act and other related legislation are done in a manner that protects and extends the women's quota so that these hard-won gains will not be diminished or lost.

Therefore, we as women's organizations working closely with women in politics and working for an inclusive, democratic, and ethical political culture call on the President, Prime Minister, and the Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government to safeguard, protect and extend the 25% women's quota in Local Government if the number of members is reduced as proposed.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Kumudini Samuel, Director Programmes, Women and Media Collective, Colombo

Sumika Perera, Director, Women's Resource Centre, Kurunegala

Chandra Wedagedara, Chairperson, Women's Development Centre, Badulla

H. Inthumathy, Head of Programmes, Viluthu

P. Logeshwari, Programme Coordinator, Women's Solidarity Front, Kandy

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