The Gender Cohort on *Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy* held its second global meeting on 8th November 2022. The meeting was convened and led by the Co-leads Sweden, Romania, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), and International IDEA (Secretariat and Co-lead). At least 50 representatives of Governments, global and national NGOs /CSOs and private sector entities participated in the meeting.

As the Secretariat for the Gender Cohort, International IDEA, presented on the outcomes of the Gender Cohort survey. The survey was carried out as an outcome/follow up on the Cohort meeeting held on 11 July 2022. The survey collated the challenges and solutions on women’s political empowerment and effective participation and representation in democracy development.

**The following major challenges were identified;**

* Complex-patriarchal norms-cultural barriers- socio-cultural attitudes/perceptions on women's leadership capabilities; sexism; nepotism; rigid gender norms and roles-societal expectations related to gender roles.
* Political systems/structures and practices and electoral systems/processes and the related financing for political/electoral campaigns-intersection with economic empowerment- women have significantly lesser financial means and less power to decide on how to use the financial resources.
* Women's representation by and in the media- lack of support/encouragement to women who are interested in running for office/taking on leadership roles from family, friends and community; undermining of self –confidence, fear, lack of role models. Generally, the widespread negative attitudes towards women politicians and women active in politics, especially young women and women with disabilities.
* Tolerance of violence against women-societal discrimination/hostility to women seeking to serve in leadership roles, participate in public life, and/or run for office; violence against women, both in public (VAW in politics, in elections) and security of the person. Shrinking democratic space and the growing anti-gender movement narratices.
* Unequal care burdens- lack of well-established support from the state for mothers (kinder-gardens, nurseries, emotional support etc).
* Legal barriers and ineffective enforcement of legislative frameworks/measures on women's empowerment and gender equality and lack of intersectionality between different policies and strategies to address women's issues.

**The following strategic solutions to be implemented were identified;**

* Awareness campaigns/advocacy on combating stereotypes and gender roles/stereotypes including ending violence against women and gender based disinformation; transformational innovative approaches to tackle stereotypes, social norms and root causes of gender inequalities across all democracy strengthening initiatives.
* Adoption of enabling empowerment conditions and their effective implementation/enforcement, for instance making quotas work effectively and research on what works to promote substantive women's political participation versus the prescriptive alone and what works to shift attitudes and patriarchy in politics.
* Link between women in politics and the goal of getting more women involved in peace processes (active participation in negotiations, transition processes-mediation and post-conflict political settlements).
* Strengthening women’s position in political parties through a range of measures, including: training for politicians, multiparty dialogue forums for women politicians, peer to peer learning and workshops, supporting political parties in internal gender reviews, and supporting political parties in crafting their own internal policies regarding gender.

The Gender Cohort will conduct Regional Dialogues **on *Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy*** that will focus on the following three dimensions which will be addressed from an Access=Participation&Representation=Transformative (AP&RT) intersectional ecosystem approach :

* + **Inclusion=** unpacking the root causes or informal factors – including social norms and cultural practices – that perpetuate harmful stereotypes and undermine gender equality and women’s access, voice and influence in political and public life.
  + **Legislative and policy frameworks=** formal/substantive laws and policies and the extent to which the laws in place are translated or not translated into substantive gains/reality.
  + **Conflict prevention, peace and security =** at the individual, community, and societal levels- focus on the status of women, peace, and security broadly; national action plans and their implementation; the full and active participation of women in peace processes; and the security of women and girls, especially those living in fragile or conflict-affected countries.

**The Online Regional Dialogues on *Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Democracy* are planned as follows;**

* Wednesday 7th of December at 06.00-08.00AM CET (English) **Asia and the Pacific**
* Thursday 8th of December at 09:00-11:00 AM CET (English & French) **Africa**
* Tuesday 13th of December at 15:00 a 17:00 CET (English & Spanish) **Latin America and the Caribbean**
* Wednesday 14th of December at 14.00-16.00 CET (English) **Europe and North America**

Contact Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu ([r.kandawasvika-nhundu@idea.int](mailto:r.kandawasvika-nhundu@idea.int) ) for more information