

### **IPU lauds voter turnout in Kuwait**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) congratulates Kuwaiti women on their participation in the elections held in Kuwait last Thursday, but regrets that women did not succeed in their bid to be elected to Parliament.

The IPU acknowledges that this is a historical moment because Kuwaiti women have voted and stood for the first time in legislative elections and this has changed the nature of the process and put the question of women's rights in the public spotlight.

The challenge remains for other women in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States to follow suit and efforts must therefore be pursued. To that end, the IPU, together with the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain, is organizing a Regional Conference for Women Parliamentarians in the GCC States on 4 and 5 July. For the first time ever, women parliamentarians, ministers, candidates from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, and women from Saudi Arabia, will meet to discuss the challenges facing women in the political process and strategies to improve the participation of women in politics in the GCC States.

The Conference will take place in the run-up to the elections due to be held in Bahrain later this year. H.H. Shaikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, wife of H.M. the King of Bahrain, will address the meeting, which will be opened by Dr. Faisal Al-Moussawi, Speaker of the Shura Council of Bahrain.

The Conference will provide a forum for women parliamentarians and women in political decision-making positions of the region to debate questions relating to the development of political and parliamentary working skills, including the examination of other types of practical experiences from the Gulf and other regions. MPs from Sweden and Egypt, as well as international experts will have an opportunity to exchange experiences with the women present.

For the IPU, the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity.

*Established in 1889 and with its Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPU, the oldest multilateral political organization, currently brings together 146 affiliated parliaments and seven associated regional assemblies. The world organization of parliaments has an Office in New York, which acts as its Permanent Observer at the United Nations.*

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