**ICAPP/8WW/004**

# Concept Paper

## Background

At their meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea on January 23, 2014, Hon. Chung Eui-yong, Chairperson of the ICAPP Standing Committee and Hon. Nomin Chinbat, Minister of Culture of Mongolia and Chairperson of the ICAPP Women's Wing, tentatively agreed to hold the 8th Meeting of the ICAPP Women's Wing in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, during the Nomads World Cultural Festival in August 2024. The Mongolian People's Party (MPP) later proposed to hold the meeting during August 17-20, 2024 under the main theme of "Empowering Women in the Asia Pacific."

The previous seven meetings of the ICAPP Women's Wing had been held in Baku (2013), Colombo (2014), Baku (2015), Kuala Lumpur (2016), Moscow (2018), Baku (2019) and Ulaanbaatar (2023).

## Objective

The primary objective of the 8th Meeting of the ICAPP Women's Wing is to enhance women's participation in leadership roles across political, economic and social sectors. This objective can be achieved by identifying and addressing barriers to gender equality, and strengthening local, national and international networks and partnerships among women leaders and organizations. Such activities can be further facilitated by sharing best practices and concrete action plans among women leaders and organizations.

## Key Issues

The UN Development Programme reported in July 2021 that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were not gender-neutral, as women had a limited role in decision-making processes to fight the pandemic and to seek fast recovery in the aftermath. It warned that excluding women from decision-making process in critical times threatened both inclusive and smooth recovery from the pandemic.

Given these challenges, political empowerment of women has become more vital, considering the significant underrepresentation of women in the public sphere, particularly in rural areas. According to the UN Women's report, *Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis*, in 2021, women are significantly underrepresented in less urbanized areas with traditional gender norms and in political offices or positions of greater authority, such as higher tiers of executive roles. In response, numerous countries have enacted policies to enhance female representation in political offices and decision-making bodies. For instance, the UN Women's report highlighted that 44% of countries with elected local deliberative bodies have introduced gender quotas to improve women's representation in local government. Implementing such strategies to increase female representation is essential for achieving political empowerment.

Economic empowerment of women is equally important to enhance women's independent livelihood by supporting women's entrepreneurship and enhancing their access to economic resources. According to *Women, Business and the Law 2024* published by the World Bank

Group, the global gender gap for women's economic opportunities was, however, significantly wider than previously known. Today, women enjoy less than two-thirds of the legal rights available to men, not three-quarters as previously estimated. Although countries around the world have made substantial progress in enacting laws to provide equal opportunities for women, half of humanity — 3.9 billion women worldwide — still face legal barriers that affect their economic participation.

Social empowerment of women is also crucial for uplifting the status of women in the society. Education, healthcare, and social services are key tools to enhance social empowerment of women. Education provides them with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in development processes. However, over one-third of the world's adults, most of whom are women, lack access to printed knowledge, new skills, and technologies that could enhance their quality of life and help them adapt to social and economic changes. Furthermore, the World Health Organization reported in 2022 that unequal power dynamics between men and women and restrictive social norms limited women's access to quality health and social services, thereby hindering their ability to achieve optimal health.

Given the current complex challenges facing women, political parties in the region are strongly encouraged to develop and formulate common strategies to advance women's empowerment and gender equality in the region, and closely coordinate among themselves to promote their implementation and application throughout the region. In particular, special attention should be given to the remaining gaps among countries in the scope of the legal and policy frameworks for women's empowerment.

**Ulaanbaatar Statement**

The "Ulaanbaatar Statement" that reflects the key outcomes of the discussions at the 8th Meeting of the ICAPP Women's Wing will be adopted at the closing session. The first draft of the statement will be circulated to all participants prior to the meeting.