

Peru: A Spotlight on Women in Political Leadership, Lima, Peru, 20 January 2004

Under the auspices of IDEA and Transparencia, a local non-governmental organization, representatives of political parties, Congress, electoral organizations, academia, and civil society bodies attended a workshop in Lima on 20 January to analyze the recently approved [Political Party Law](#) and its potential for promoting female participation. Experiences shared by Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico and the USA demonstrated that seemingly minor adjustments to electoral systems can have a strong impact, positive or negative, on female representation. At the end of the workshop, three seasoned politicians, IDEA Board Member Lourdes Flores from Peru, ex-President of the Lower House of Mexico, Beatriz Paredes and former Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Relations Nina Pacari, shared their experiences during a public roundtable on 'Women and Political Leadership'.

The challenge now is to ensure effective implementation of the many provisions of Peru's Political Party Law, not least of which is its quota mandate for 30 per cent female representation on party lists and in internal party leadership positions. Currently, women make up 18 per cent of the Congress.

University of Houston Professor Richard Matland, and one of the contributors to *IDEA Handbook Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, stated in his [presentation](#) to the workshop that women have to overcome three types of hurdles in order to be elected to public office: they have to be willing to stand for election; they have to be nominated by the party; and they have to be elected by voters. Of these three barriers, Matland argued that nomination by the party is the most critical. With this in mind, workshop participants analyzed proactive steps that parties can take to promote female participation and leadership, including training, advantageous placement on party lists, equality in regard to campaign funding, and media support.

Some of the workshop sessions were dedicated to issues likely to surface in this year's deliberations on electoral reform. Participants concurred that decisions on district size, placement of female candidates on the lists, and campaign costs will have a decisive impact on female participation for many years to come. Throughout 2004, IDEA will continue to support analysis of, and debate and inter-party dialogue on, electoral reform issues, ensuring that special attention is paid to the inclusion of women and other underrepresented groups.