# 'Ensure women 10pc general seats'

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ISLAMABAD — Women parliamentarians Saturday demanded of the political parties to develop consensus to amend the Political Parties Act in order to provide mandatory quota of 10 per cent of general seats to women.

Some 13 women parliamentarians made this demand at a press conference after a consultation on 'Provincial Legislative Issues after 18th Amendment.'

The consultation was organised by the Aurat Foundation. They included Shehla Raza, Deputy Speaker (Sindh), Dr Ruqiya Hashmi, Inter-Provincial Coordination Minister (Balochistan), Ghazala Gola, Minister for Women's Development (Balochistan), Heer Soho, MPA (MQM Sindh), Nusrat Saher Abbasi, MPA (PML-F Sindh), Humaira Alwani, MPA (PPP Sindh), Shameela Aslam, MPA (PML-N Punjab), Faiza Malik, MPA (PPPP Punjab), Amna Butter, MPA (PPPP), Deeba Mirza, MPA (PML-N Punjab), Shazia Tehmas, MPA (PPPP Khyber Pakhtunkhawa), Nargis Samin, MPA (PPP-Sherpao), and Noor-us-Sehar (PPPP Khyber Pakhtunkhawa).

They said the general seats quota was necessary to mainstream grass-root level leadership in electoral processes before the next elections.

The quota should be in addition to the already available reserved seats for women, they said.

Shehla Raza said, "We believe provision of the reserved seats for women is their constitutional right under Articles 25, 34, 51 and 106." Quoting Article 25 (3) they said, "Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the protection of women and children."

The women parliamentarians also asked the government and civil society organizations to re-affirm their commitment to protect and preserve the provision of reserved seats as well. "We believe the women parliamentarians' role in assemblies helps to initiate debates on issues of women's empowerment both within and outside legislatures, and eventually, lead to their playing a key role in law-making on crucial issues which concern women and citizens of Pakistan."