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Women demand 15pc party tickets on general seats

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Ensuring women's voting, their equitable representation in Parliament, provincial assemblies and local bodies and inclusion of marginalised segments of society in the Constitution and Election Act 2016 was the crux of the proceedings of the National Consultation on 'Strengthening gender equality and social inclusion under Jazba programme' organised by Aurat Foundation and South Asia Partnership-Pakistan (SAP-PK)

PPP leader Senator Taj Haider said that a mindset change is needed despite electoral reforms for women em-

powerment. He endorsed the proposals and promised to convey them to his party chairperson. He said that Constitutional Amendment takes time but women issues are not expected to face opposition and will sail through. He said education spread is essential for women emancipation.

Mehnaz Akbar Aziz, Parliamentary Secretary, Law and Justice, said that she agreed with the proposed suggestions and would present these to the Law Minister so that the issue of legislation could be expedited. She narrated several pro-women initiatives in the legislature.

Canadian Embassy diplomat Paul Godbout appreciated the reform package and

lauded the efforts of JAZBA programme. Tahira Abdullah, human rights activist, said that provision of reserved seats for women need to be extended for 30 years and to be reviewed after every 10 years. The purpose is to see whether women are coming on general seats or not.

She demanded to increase the representation to 33 % from current 17 pc. This will include seats for persons with disability, transgender people, labour and peasants. One key suggestion was to increase political party tickets on general seats from 5 to 10 per cent in all houses/assemblies. The candidates should have their own merit. "You bring women for 'dharms' and marches but

why not in executive committees and other decision-making bodies," she said.

Ms Tahira said that we struggled for two centuries and got some seats. The seats were not given as charity. She said that ECP should reduce application and security fees for women. Parties should provide 50% election expenses to female candidates. State and parties should provide security and protection to candidates. She stressed that women Parliamentary Caucuses should vote outside party discipline on women issues. Harris Khaliq, Secretary-General, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan endorsed all proposals.