

News Release

National Democratic
Institute for
International Affairs



THE FIRST
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
INTERNATIONAL CAUCUS
OF WOMEN POLITICAL
LEADERS

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WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD
TO ATTEND PRECEDENT-SETTING SAN FRANCISCO CAUCUS

Washington, D.C. March 2, 1987 -- Approximately 70 of the world's most prominent women political leaders, including cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, party officials and representatives from more than 40 countries will meet in San Francisco, California March 12 - 14 for The First Eleanor Roosevelt International Caucus of Women Political Leaders.

They will examine the experience of women in political life from democracies around the globe and suggest ways of accelerating access to leadership positions.

The precedent-setting event, based at the Fairmont Hotel, is sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Geraldine Ferraro is the Chair; Mayor Dianne Feinstein is the official host; Walter F. Mondale will deliver the closing remarks.

International delegates include Helen Suzman, a member of Parliament and former leader of the Progressive Party in South Africa; Cecilia Munoz Palma, Chair, Constitutional Commission from the Philippines; Maimouana Kane, Counselor to the Supreme Court from Senegal; Nita Barrow, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations from Barbados; Catalina

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Soberanis, Minister of Labor and Social Security from Guatemala; and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, former Prime Minister of Portugal. (See complete participant list attached.) In addition, there will be 30 U.S. and international observers.

Women comprise over half of the voting population in most democratic countries. Nevertheless, in no country have women gained access to political office or decision-making positions in proportion to their numbers according to NDI.

Less than five percent of decision-making positions/elected offices on the state, provincial or national level are held by women. Only six women are heads of national governments.

During the opening session of the Caucus, March 12, Kathleen Staudt and Jane Jaquette will lead a presentation on the "Political Status of Women." Barbara Mikulski, United States; Nita Barrow, Barbados; Victoria Garron de Doryan, Costa Rica; and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portugal will be panelists.

The afternoon session will see participants divide into Caucus Committees on five key areas for political access: Political Parties, Media, Resource Development, Leadership Development, and Constituency Building. These Committees will continue to work on Saturday, March 14 with the objective of reporting out recommendations and lessons from their experience.

Geraldine Ferraro has said in her invitation to delegates: "In bringing together for the first time women political leaders to explore paths to leadership, NDI is filling a vacuum that has

existed since the UN Decade for Women concluded in Nairobi in July, 1985."

As part of the preparation for the Caucus, NDI conducted a comprehensive survey among participants. Overall responses indicate that in contrast to their diverse cultures and backgrounds, women political leaders share the same challenges and obstacles.

- * The greatest single obstacle has been the stereotyping of politics as a male arena.
- * Women are challenged to find the balance for career, politics and motherhood which has forced the development of special skills in organization and stamina.
- * Although most respondents felt that they were treated as seriously as men candidates on the public policy issues, they also believe that the press spent more time reporting on their personal characteristics and family status.

A more complete summary of survey findings will be available in the Caucus program.

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n.b. Sessions of The First Eleanor Roosevelt International Caucus of Women Political Leaders are open to credentialed media. For further information, call NDI in Washington (202/328-3136) or Tom Eastham, Press Secretary, Office of the Mayor (415) 554-6114 in San Francisco. During the Caucus, media coordination will be arranged by Theresa Donovan in the Far East Room, Fairmont Hotel (415) 772-5000 .