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**Speech by Anne Marie Goetz**  
At the Ford Foundation Launch of the UNRISD Report

**Gender Equality:  
Striving for Justice in an Unequal World**

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UNRISD, Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: (41 22) 9173020  
Fax: (41 22) 9170650  
E-mail: [info@unrisd.org](mailto:info@unrisd.org)  
Web: <http://www.unrisd.org>

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There isn't anything that I am going to say that Pregs Govender did not already say or imply about gender and the challenges of advancing women's rights through politics. I am going to go over the same type of territory but in a much more prosaic and definitely less moving way. Before I start I would like to stress that the part of the report that I am discussing- the part on politics, policy making and governance, is the product of many different people and some of them are here today on our panel, Amrita Basu and Onalenna Selolwane wrote background papers. There is at least three people here that also wrote background papers, Virginia Bouvier on the Latin American women's movement, Du Jie on China and women's politics in China and Fatou Sow on West Africa women's movements.

What is all this about- women in politics and policy making? Really in the end what we are after is governance for gender equity. Gender equality has always raised governance concerns understood as a whole range of issues around the state's capacity to defend women rights and equality in gender relations. And as we know states have rarely met the targets that they set themselves in signing international agreements or on agreeing to protect women's rights. There are all kinds of reasons for this. They have to do with state-gendered capacity failures, gendered capacity failures in state institutions which we hear graphically in the presentation of Chin Kwan Lee about China, where the state has perfect legislation but it is unable, has not got the capacity to implement it. In many more cases male biases are institutionalised in formal legislation and laws. So gender equitable governance raises a whole pile of concerns that are related to current good governance agendas; getting rid of corruption, dealing with bureaucratic ineptness and incompetence and inadequacies, dealing with economic mismanagement but from a gender sensitive perspective and the report deals with this.

The first step and the step that has been addressed most successfully in tackling the governance challenge is getting more women involved in public decision making, not just through the numbers with women in public office but also of course through opening up government decision making and accountability structures to women's direct participation. A terrific example of this is of course gender sensitive budgets. But just for a moment, looking at the numbers challenge, this is a challenge that we now know how to crack. It is one of the goals of the Beijing platform for action but has seen a lot of response. And we now have a doubling of the proportion of women in parliaments from 1995 to now. But it is still very low, it is still abnormally low. Around the world the global proportion of women in parliament is only 16% which is still very low. We do have 16 countries at the moment where there is a critical mass of women in politics, more than 30%. If you turn to page 148 of the report you will see a list of the 16 countries in which there 30% women in office and if you look at the list, you will see that in almost every single one of them artificial and somewhat non-democratic means were needed to get women into politics, in order words quotas, affirmative action and reserved seats. We know that electoral systems make a difference for getting women into office. PR systems are more effective at getting women into office, even without quotas, voluntarily adopted quotas in parties and so on. But we know getting women into office, even the low number that we have in office today, is not a "natural result of the working of equal electoral systems". It has to be forced, it has to be pushed and this is one problem actually for the women's movement. By the way, here is a representation of the slowly rising tide which started out in 1989 with a terrible crash from Central Asia and Eastern Europe as these

countries went through democratic transitions and then gradually around the world we see number of women in public office increasing to the level that they are at today. It is nice to see Africa in this chart, not bumping along the bottom entirely.

But the question we have to ask when we see charts like this and we are thinking of getting more women into politics is: What difference does this make? Is it enough? Are these measures to bring women into office simply bringing in more elite women? And Pregs Govender referred to this problem discussing the possible choice of a presidential candidate in Zimbabwe who is a woman not known for her support for feminist causes to say the least. If all this is about is getting elite women into office, it is certainly not good enough but it is not the worst thing. You may as well have elite women as well as elite men in office. Although of course there is a huge problem that when women mess up in office, their punishments are much more severe than when men mess up which just seems to be a routine part of being in office.

So beyond the numbers from a presence to a real influence. The four chapters on this section deal in detail with a range of obstacles to the political influence of women and obstacles to the capacity of women in office to develop a feminist perspective or act on it. I can't go into all of them in detail but there is a factor having to do with the institutional machinery of the state; the lack of capacity to advance what are often very counter cultural agendas of women's rights. It takes an awful lot of capacity and political will to advance gender equality agendas. This has to do with the implementability of gender equity measures.

Another area of enormous constraint are political parties which I am going to talk about in more detail in a moment and the reason, this is very important, this is one of the critical arenas in which women and everybody else can experience a *political apprenticeship*. One of the problems with the slightly less democratic measures to bring women into office is they short-circuit political apprenticeship for women and they short-circuit the kind of training and politics, the toleration of opposition and debate in developing constituencies that important for people to have political impact.

And the third area looked at in the report is the importance of civil society of course, this is the area of great success for women in public life over the last century where as we all know the women's movement is responsible for the most extensive, bloodless revolution in human relations that the world has ever seen. It's not a finished revolution as we all know but it is something to be very proud of and the report does discuss it in some detail.

Now, the problem of *political apprenticeship*. Parties remain amazingly hostile arenas for women's political engagement and they do so in three ways which is hard to explain from the point of view of political competition. There are good reasons for parties to take gender equality seriously, yet they fail to do so. Women in many countries form the majority or a serious part of the grassroots membership of political parties, the foot soldiers that knock on the doors and collect the money and bring out the vote. And yet this foot soldier category rarely translates into an appearance in the party membership.

On another page of the report I have got the national executive (on page 160), the national board of the workers parties in Brazil- 40% of the grassroots membership of

that party is women and yet until the quota was forced on the national executive there were never more than 6% of the executive composed of women. So there is a failure to translate the grassroots membership into leadership, there is an inexplicable failure to seek to exploit a gender voting gap. Now, many people think that because the voting gap has been slow to emerge but you would think that parties would want to encourage a gender voting gap and seek to capture it.

There are very few countries in which this gender voting gap has been exploited. Chile is a good example, where women's votes are decisive for the presidency and the presidential election which I believe is due sometime later this year, something very interesting has happened. All the major contenders are fronting female presidential candidates in the recognition of the importance of women's vote. And the last way in which parties have been hostile to women is this failure to translate their presence amongst the membership and to influence on party platforms and so on.

Now, there is a reluctance, frankly, of feminist movements and women's associations to engage with parties, partly because of their hostility, partly because cultures of politics are often in many countries uncongenial arenas for women, there may be a lot of corruption or violence associated with party politics and also donors don't engage with political parties, or promote internal democratisation to address these issues. This means that there is more of an emphasis on the top down imposition of quotas or encouraging parties to take on quotas or reservation of seats in parliament. As we suggested in the report rather carefully, this problem reinforces for many elite women the fact that your route to politics is through family connections in countries where there is dynastic politics in parties, or through top level presidential patronage. This imposes a constraint on women's political legitimacy and credibility once in office. I believe that Amrita and Onalenna Selolwane will add some more detail in the discussion of political parties in particular regions.

Another element of this question of women's political influence is the apparently, growing phenomenon of conservative mobilization of women around the world which is something that Amrita Basu is going to discuss. This is something we must take very seriously. There are no concrete numbers on this, we do not know how many more women are associated with conservative ethnic or religious forms of mobilization than secular and feminist forms of mobilization. But we do know that these forms of mobilization offer women things that they need and want: social recognition, a secure space for engaging in the public sphere and definitely social services which states may not be necessarily be providing.

I will just wrap up with saying that one of the main messages of this section of the report is that we must look beyond the idea and certainly abandon expectations that women qua women are going to be able to advance gender equality. It does not work that way. Women in politics have to be associated with women's movements, have to be rooted in them, have to be able to front these things within their own parties and also there is an important level at which political competition is one thing but we need to look at the gender sensitivity and accountability of formal public institutions. The report looks into the issue of how we can start thinking about gendered accountability by looking at the phenomenon and tackling and addressing and objecting to the phenomenon of masculine capture of public resources and masculine bias that may be built into the terms of access to public institutions starting with masculine capture

of justice which has long been a feminist campaign objective to tackle and object to the masculine capture of justice and justice institutions.

But when it comes to gendered unaccountability and gender and good governance at the moment there are only several ways in which these issues are coming into formal governance debates. For example, in World Bank or IMF discussions there are several places where you see this. One is in relation to decentralization and the report spends a fair bit of time on decentralization, gender and human rights. There is also a new area of expectation that women are good for governance because they are apparently less corrupt than men. We don't have time to go through these claims but a statistical correlation has been observed between the number of women in government and lower levels of corruption. I am sceptical about this for reasons that you will already have guessed from listening to me but also I think that what is equally interesting is that these correlations also go along with greater wealth and democracy, and this is associated with more women in government and greater wealth and democracy is also associated with lower levels of corruption. So these things go together.

The most interesting discussion is the last one there but I am sorry, my time is up. Does it make a difference to have women in politics? The report says it is too early to tell, but it is filled with many examples of evidence of women's positive impact on politics. And I do want to draw your attention to another interesting statistical correlation for which not too many truths will be claimed but it is worth thinking about. On page 164, an IDS student discovered this in a term paper . She is called Hanny Cueva and she is a brilliant economist who found an interesting correlation between numbers of women in office and abortion rights and for those of us interested in reproductive rights I think this is a correlation we cannot ignore: with every 1% increase in the proportion of parliaments that are female there is a 1% increase in the chance that you will have strong free, fair, full access to abortion.

This is not a causal relationship as far as we know, it could be it works the other way around but it is something quite exciting to think about. THANK YOU.