

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, most Merciful

Towards a Distinctive Role by Women In the Development of the Next Constitution

Introduction

As it is known, the word constitution is a Persian term, which in Arabic means *The Basic Law*. In constitutional jurisprudence, constitution means the legal document that includes the political, economical and social components of a nation and its civilization. It reflects the national identity, spiritual values and strategic options of the nation and determines the form of the state, the nature of governance, the public authorities and its components, powers and relations. It demonstrates the state's political order, its social philosophy, economic approach as well as a group of fundamental principles of which no modern constitution is devoid; such as the rule of law, judiciary independence, and separation of powers, democratic orientation, social justice, public freedoms and equity.

No wonder that such a serious document becomes the supreme law of a country and the major reference in any dispute or conflict that affects the fundamentals or branches, or relates to theory or application.

Political scientists see the constitution as a social contract which is adopted by all the people, with their different categories, diverse sectors, multiple elements, various ideologies and perspectives. Consequently, the constitution represents the boundary between legitimacy and arbitrary.

This superior status of the Constitution requires great care and attention regarding its preparation, drafting and adoption; so that it will truly express the shared will of the individuals, embody full conviction and satisfaction thereof, which will form at the end a major guarantee for the reverence, respect and defence of the Constitution.

If this is not the case, due to lack of consensus on the constitution, or because it is being monopolized by one group or category or due to the domination of one group during its development and approval, then it loses its essence and the secret of its strength and sacredness and becomes a mere décor or emblem with no impact on the nation's life and lacks both flavor and glitter.

This proportional relationship between the development of the Constitution on one hand and its acceptance by people on the other, led the classical constitutional jurisprudence confining the methods of constitution-making methods into four scenarios; two of which are described as democratic and the other two as non-democratic as follows:

Non-democratic methods

Firstly: Grant method

It has been called (Grant) Constitution because it is issued out of a king's or ruler's initiative; i.e. generated by individual will, without partnership with the people or their representatives. So, it is a gift from the absolute ruler to his citizens.

Two of the most famous examples are the Royal French Constitution issued by Napoleon in 1814 and the Royal Egyptian Constitution issued by the king and annulled by the Revolution of July 1952.

This kind of constitutions ceased to exist with the growing tide of democracy and shrinkage of absolute monarchies.

Secondly: Contracting method

A Constitution of this method is an outcome of an agreement between the king and the people represented by a council or society. Naturally it is more democratic than the former one; which is Grant Constitution. But, the Achilles heel is that the people's will is not fully free; it is rather restricted by the royal will.

Two of the historical examples of this method in the Arab region are the Iraqi Constitution of 1925 and the Kuwaiti Constitution of 1962. These Constitutions were called Contracting Constitutions because it serves as a contract between two parties.

This type of Constitution is outdated and no longer popular in today's world and is part of the past.

Democratic methods

Firstly: Method of Constituent Assembly

Here, a specially elected committee for the development of the Constitution, will draft and approve it. The most famous assembly of this kind in the world is the American Convention, which included representatives of the American states which recently got independence from the British rule. This Convention developed the American Constitution in 1787.

An example of these constitutions is the first constitution of the French Revolution, which was approved by the National Assembly in 1791.

Secondly: People's Poll method

In this case, the Constitution is approved through public poll. This method is a direct enforcement of democracy, through which people decide directly, without an agent or mediator. However, this method relates to the adoption of the constitution and not its development. And thus, a technical body should be present to prepare the draft before being submitted for plebiscite. The process may be an independent one or may be complementary to an approval which is conducted by a constituent assembly like what happened in Sudan in 1998, when the National Assembly passed the Bill which was submitted afterwards for a general referendum.

Methods of Developing Sudanese Constitutions

Sudanese Constitutions, following the Independence, were six; Sudan's Interim Constitution of 1956 (the 1956 constitution was amended in 1964 after October People's Revolution in 1964), Sudan's Permanent Constitution of 1973 in the May era, Intifada Interim Constitution of 1985, the first Constitution of the National Salvation in 1998 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement Interim Constitution of 2005.

The first Sudanese Constitution was the Autonomy Constitution of 1953, which was the real father of all the constitutions of the partisan periods. Some people like to call it Stanley Baker Constitution, in reference to the British judge of the Supreme Court at that time; Mr. Stanley Baker, who chaired the committee which developed the Constitution.

The following is a quick review of how these Constitutions were developed:

Firstly: Interim Constitution of 1956

According to 1953 Constitution, an elected constituent assembly was supposed to have prepared a new constitution for the country, concurrently with the independence era. However, the time limit was tight and political forces were eager to complete the manifestations of sovereignty of the newly born state as soon as possible. So, it was agreed to adopt the Autonomy Constitution, after a package of slight amendments had been inserted thereto by a committee composed of legal experts. The Parliament had already approved the Constitution as a whole, during its 31/12/1955 session, despite the objection raised by the leftist representative; Mr. Hassan Altaher Zaruq, who proposed patience.

Secondly: 1956 Constitution (1964 Amendment)

Following the victory of October's People Revolution and collapse of Lieutenant General Ibrahim Aboud's regime, representatives of the Military Forces and the United National Front including political parties and unions, agreed to issue a national work charter. The Charter contained interim measures, the most important of which was the re-enactment of the Constitution of 1956, pending the election of a constituent assembly for the development of a permanent constitution.

That Constitution was later subjected by the assembly, to four amendments, in the period from 1965-1968.

During this time, a parliamentary committee was elected. It made good progress in the preparation of the draft of 1968 Constitution which was clearly characterized by an Islamic orientation. But, before the completion of that work, May Revolution of 1969 came to power and the project was aborted.

Thirdly: Sudan's Permanent Constitution of 1973

This is the only constitution that has been developed by a constituent assembly. The assembly was called the First People's Council. It was partially elected and included representatives for women, youth and the different professions and categories. It was fully formed on 12/10/1972 and was headed by the Khartoum University former Rector; Dr. Annazir Daffaa Allah. The work on the Constitution continued and was finished on 11 April, 1973. The Constitution, having been signed by President Numairi, was issued on 8/5/1973.

Fourthly: Sudan's Interim Constitution of 1985

Following the collapse of the May regime on 6 April 1985 through a people's uprising which was aided by the army, a military council, headed by Field Marshal Abdelrahman Suwar Addahab, took over the sovereignty and legislative powers and assigned a legal experts committee to develop a draft constitution. The draft was discussed during a joint session with the Council of Ministers and the Constitution was issued. The Constitution- as usual – provided for the establishment of an elected Constituent Assembly for the issuance of a Permanent Constitution. On 2 April, 1987, that committee made an amendment to the Interim Constitution, but could not even form a committee to handle the issue of the constitution until it was overtaken by the National Salvation coup on 30 June, 1989.

Fifthly: Sudan's Constitution of 1998

Throughout the first ten years of the Salvation government, the country was administered through constitutional decrees which were issued by the Revolutionary Command Council headed by President Omer Hassan Ahmed Albashir. In July 1997, two committees were formed: a national committee chaired by the former head of the Judiciary, Justice Khalaf Alla Arrashid, and a technical one, chaired by the former head of the Judiciary, Justice Daffaala Arradi. In February 1998, the draft was referred to the National Assembly who adopted it after making amendments which sparked intense controversy. The draft was presented to the people in a vote which was the first of its kind. After that, it was signed by the President and came into effect and then it was invalidated following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005.

Sixthly: Interim Constitution of 2005

The CPA stipulated the codification of the political agreement between the Sudan's Government; namely the National Congress Party – the ruling party – and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and to convert it into an interim constitution to govern the country throughout a 6-year transitional period. The National Commission for Constitutional Review which comprised the SPLM, the NCP and other political parties, was tasked to draft the Constitution. Then the Constitution was forwarded to both the National Liberation Council in Rumbik (the SPLM Parliament) and the National Assembly. Following their approval, the Interim Constitution of 2005 was issued.

This quick review concluded that:

- 1) Most former Sudanese Constitutions were developed by political, legal and military elites and relied on political consensus rather than on the will of the masses.
- 2) Most onstitutions, except the 1973 May Constitution, were approved by established parliaments, and not through a constituent assembly.
- 3) Except for the 1973 May Constitution and the Salvation Constitution of 1998, Sudan's Constitutions were replications of the Autonomy Constitution of 1953, which had the features of the British Westminster version.
- 4) The only constitution developed by a national committee from outside the Parliament was that of 1998.
- 5) The only constitution on which referendum was held was that of 1998.

Political Participation of the Sudanese Women

Since the involvement of women in the development and approval of the constitution presents one aspect of women's political participation, and in preparation to explore the expected role of the society's second half in the making of the country's new constitution in the next few months, we would like to have a quick look at the political background of women and their contributions to making the general policies in the past.

We have tackled these contributions through two approaches: the first one is their electoral and parliamentary role and the second is their role in the development of previous constitutions, as follows:

Women and Elections

The electoral right, including its two components; voting and nomination, is considered one of the most prominent civil and political rights of women. This is because it is tightly linked to democratic practice, choosing the rulers and the institutions of public authority.

As it is known, Sudanese women, like their counterparts in the third world, had suffered, though to varied extents, of marginalization and exclusion in the electoral field.

As a confirmation of what we have said, we refer to the fact that legislative institutions remained in the grasp of men since the first parliamentary elections were conducted in Sudan in 1948 for the selection of members of the Legislative Assembly up to the Autonomy elections in 1953 and the second parliamentary elections in 1958 following the independence.

The sole contribution of women in that period was limited and confined to the Graduate's Constituencies elections in 1953, when the Indian Chairman of the Elections Committee, Mr. Soko Marsin, in response to a protesting demonstration that was organized by a group of pioneer women from the Feminist Movement, allowed educated women only to cast their votes but not to stand in those elections.

Although only limited number benefited from that opportunity, it opened a glimmer of light at the end of the dark tunnel. It was hoped that after the Independence, that achievement would be dedicated and expanded. But the opposite was true; the seats allocated for graduates were cancelled, and as such, women were deprived even from this symbolic contribution.

However, the major victory and real liberation of women were realized with the onset of October's People Revolution in 1964, which provided women with their full political rights. This was crowned by the entry of the first female member to the Constituent Assembly in 1965, Ms. Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim.

Despite the explicit provisions in the National Work Charter of 1964 and the Elections Act of 1965, the reserved mentality, particularly in rural areas, hindered practical implementation of these provisions. Furthermore, historical parties were not enthusiastic regarding the electoral and parliamentary participation by women. Thus, candidate lists all over the country, were devoid of women. What made things worse is that, graduates constituencies had been cancelled again in the Second Constituent Assembly elections in 1968.

When the May Revolution came in 1969, a dramatic change took place, as leftists, Arab Nationalists and the intellectuals and custodians of the May Revolution, opened the door widely for a wide-scale political participation. This facilitated the adoption by the regime of the formula of “labor coalition forces” within the framework of single-party policy. According to it, seats were allocated for women in the parliament, the ruling party and in the units/councils of Local People’s Government. This led to relatively large number of women joining the legislative institutions, heading parliamentary committees, becoming leaders at the political office of the ruling party and becoming a minister.

During the democratic period, the representation of women declined and it was confined to two seats in the Constituent Assembly.

During the era of National Salvation, women participation got a boost in the People’s Committees and inside the Legislative Institution of the Interim National Assembly. This was culminated by the statement in the Constitution of 1998 to adopt a Quota System for the representation of women.

The Interim Constitution of 2005 provided for the promotion and protection of women rights through the application of the concept of affirmative action. Nevertheless, it did not specify a certain percentage for that. This constitutional right presented a crucial support for a successful inclusion of the Quata system in the National Elections Act; women’s representation in the National Legislative Council and State Legislative Assemblies is 25%.

The 25% presented a positive sign for the representation of women in the Legislative Body. However, it remains less than the 30% and 50% percentages respectively which had been determined by Beijing Conference and the African Union for the representation of women.

The table below shows the gradual participation of women in the Legislative Institution, starting from Zero in 1948 to nearly 25% in 2010.

Constitutional System	Legislative Institution	Total No. of Members	No. of women	Representation %
Condominium	Legislative Assembly 1948	79	-	-
Autonomous period	The First Parliament 1954	98	-	-
Dawn of Independence	The Second Parliament 1958	173	-	-
President Abuod era	Central Council 1963	72	-	-
Second Democracy	First Constituent Assembly 1965	261	1	0.3%
	Second Constituent Assembly 1968	261	-	-
May Era	Peoples First Council 1972	225	13	5.1%
	Peoples Second Council 1974	250	12	4.8%
	Peoples Third Council 1978	304	17	5.5%
	Peoples Fourth Council 1980	368	18	4.9%
	Peoples Fifth Council 1982	153	11	7%
Third Democracy	Third Constituent Assembly 1986	301	2	0.7%
National Salvation	Interim National Assembly 1992	301	26	8.8%
	First National Assembly 1996	400	22	5.1%
	Second National Assembly 2001	360	35	9.7%
	Third National Assembly 2005	450	81	18%
Interim Period	Current National Assembly 2010	450	112	25%

The above table summarizes the stages of the Sudanese women struggle since the colonial period up to date which is witnessing a substantial women representation of 25%.

The number of women participating in the political process is not the only one important aspect to look at (although the quantitative indicator is significant). We must also consider it in the frame of the possibility of attaining their full rights. Because if we consider only their increasing participating numbers regardless of obtaining their rights including the right to full democratic participation in decision making, this may provide us with false results.

The lessons learned from the weak quantitative women participation in parliaments and commissions during the periods of democratic regimes; indicate that despite the broad-scale participation by women in bringing about democratic changes in Sudan, their participation at the quantitative level is not in conformity with their highly effective roles they played afterwards. This requires full attention that women

participation indicators are to be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The latter implies the opportunities of getting the rights and fully enjoy them.

Now, in preparation to discuss the issue of women participation in developing the coming Constitution, which is our main objective, we are going to compare between the past and future through a quick review of women's contribution to the development of Constitution in the past.

Women Role in the Development of the Previous Sudanese Constitutions

We have mentioned that most of the previous Sudanese constitutions were developed by the elites, and that the role played by ordinary individuals; even men, was either weak or absent, except with few cases. As for women, their absence was semi complete; since earlier parliaments contained no feminine element. These included Constitution 1953, Constitution 1956, National Committees for 1957 and 1968 in addition to the two Constitutions of 1964 and 1985 which were, actually, not issued by the Parliament.

On the other hand, women participated in the development of May Constitution 1973 and National Salvation Constitution 1998. They played a lesser role in the development of the Interim Constitution 2005 (due to non existence of women among the delegates of Naivasha negotiations).

The strange thing is that, women contribution was greater and wider during the totalitarian regimes eras. For further explanation, we will discuss in details, the methods which were followed in the development of Constitution 1973 and Constitution 1998 as well as the role played by women therein.

1973 Constitution

Three years after Numairi's Coup in 1969, it was decided that a permanent Constitution would be prepared for the country. To that end, President Numairi issued the Presidential decision No. (104) 1972, which provided for the establishment of the Peoples First Council. That Council was shouldered with the development and approval of the Constitution.

The membership of the Council was a mixture of appointed members and members who were elected from popular and categorical organizations, among which was women sector.

The members had been divided into ten committees, to whom an elite from the government leaders referred a preliminary draft prepared by them. Each committee was expected to submit a separate report, covering all the chapters of the Constitution. What draws the attention is that, all of the ten committees were chaired by men.

A committee was selected to undertake the responsibility of coordination between the committees. The committee included a five-member technical committee, in which only one female member was present; Dr. Fatima Abdel Mahmoud; one of the female leaders of that era.

Regarding women representation at the ordinary membership level, the number reached up to fifteen women (15) out of the 225 total memberships. Those female members had been chosen on regional geographic bases, from the different provinces that were present at that time.

Referring back to the meetings' records of the Council, we notice the presence of female leaders, among whom were Ms. Nafisa Ahmed Elamin, Dr. Fatima Abdel Mahmoud, Hajwa Eljizoli, Alawia Abdel Farraj, Mary Sersio, Victoria Raaul, Aljanna Hassan and Alsham Mohamed.

When the concerned committee had finished the preparation of the final draft, a voting was carried inside the council on that version.

In this way, women participated in the drafting and approval processes.

THE CONSTITUTION F THE SUDAN of 1998:

Theoretically, the steps followed in the 1998 Constitution were almost ideal steps, as it was prepared by a national Committee in collaboration with a Technical Committee, then approved by the parliament and it was finally presented to the people in a referendum.

Out of 109, women were represented in the National Committee by 16 and 3 out of 61 in the Technical Committee.

The list included Ms. Badriya Sulaiman and Faridah Ibrahim (they both worked as legal advisors to the President) and the journalists Afaf Bukhari and the Yusriya Mohamed Alhassan, Judge Rabab Abugsaish and the first female Sudanese judge Ehsan Fakhry, and Helen Andrew, Mary Ayat, Elizabeth Scholl from the south and three Police officers and others.

Women again participated through their membership, when the draft was presented before the National Assembly and again as society members in the referendum.

WOMEN AND THE COMING CONSTITUTION

This historical and legal trip on the political progress of Sudanese women since the dawn of independence, was meant to be an introduction to our main topic; the forthcoming role to be played by women in the preparation of a new constitution for the country that would be accepted by the majority of our people and all political and social forces, and at the same time meet the National ambitions and express the real will of the Nation and reflect its aspirations, values and heritages. A constitution that can address the concerns and challenges of the different sectors of which women come first.

What gives the next Constitution its importance and vitality are the political and social circumstances within which it is being created.

The new Constitution comes when the CPA transitional period is approaching its end, which means the end of the present Constitution; the Interim Constitution of 2005. It is true that article 226 of the same constitution stipulates that it shall continue in force until a permanent constitution is adopted but this does not mean the continuation of the Interim Constitution for ever, as its replacement with a new one is a matter of time, as I see it.

One of the new developments is the separation of the South, and this will bring about several arrangements and changes in the identity and shape of the State in the North.

In addition, there are several variables in the domestic theatre and so many matters must be reconsidered accordingly. The gaps resulted from the previous exercises should be abridged and the government mechanisms must also be updated and some concepts reconsidered so that we can be in line with the great changes that are taking place in the area around us in order to start building a modern State and a strong national unity.

The new Constitution will encounter great issues and challenges such as the identity issue, presidential or parliamentary system of government, decentralization, wealth distribution and power sharing, the future of the popular consultation and the difficulties facing balanced development and social justice and the consolidation of the national unity, social peace and economic renaissance and the balance between power and freedom, how to overcome the effects of armed conflicts and civil war and before this and that the establishment of good governance, rule of law, support of democratic transformation, respect and protection of human and women rights, the active participation of women and ethnic minorities and promotion of political practices.

All these considerations assert that our country is approaching a sensitive and vital stage of its history to the extent that some people have called it the second Republic.

Since women are an important element of the Sudanese Society and a genuine partner in the national concern, they are therefore, very concerned with the constitution matters and reconstruction issues as a citizen and a woman.

In addition to the general concern women have their own concerns, requirements and aspirations that should be addressed in the constitution or the other complementing laws.

Women are still suffering from marginalization, different types of violence, exclusion and social injustice especially, in the rural areas and from the sense of superiority they are being treated with, in the conservative societies. The vast majority remain suffering under poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and harmful customs. Women always suffer from the consequences of the armed conflict and tribal fighting by being displaced and losing their husbands. Women are always vulnerable to different types of violence.

The above facts give women an expected role in the making of the next constitution. To this, international standards and principles should be adopted to ensure an active, responsible and positive participation to support the gains achieved and to achieve more.

International Standards for Constitution Making

These standards are represented in three main principles:

1. Participation
2. Inclusiveness
3. Transparency.

Participation:

Effective participation means giving enough and fair opportunity to all citizens to freely express their views, provided that this is preceded by an intense civic education campaign to enlighten the intended sectors on the essential nature of the constitution; its contents, importance and how it affects the citizens. The alternatives presented must be explained.

To ensure that information reach the concerned people, simple language that is understandable by the majority of the people or the local dialects prevailing in certain places must be used.

One of the participation mechanisms is the holding of open meetings with all sectors particularly, disabled women, women living with HIV, refugees, girls and those belonging to ethnic minorities. Discussions must be organized all over the country so that people can freely express their views on the issues to be addressed by the Constitution. The body responsible for seeking the opinions of the public must record these opinions very honestly, analyze and classify them and then refer same to the committee or forum responsible for the compilation of the Constitution.

Participation does not end here but extend to after the preparation of the initial draft that should be presented to the public once again, before its approval.

Inclusiveness:

Since there is practically difficulty for all the-30-million Sudanese citizens to be members of the Constitution Technical or National Committees the alternative is that the above committees should include representatives to reflect the opinions of all society forces.

Society forces in this respect include political parties, civil society organizations, youth associations, ethnic, linguistic, religious and geographical groups. Since women constitute 50% of the society their representation should observe this weight.

Normal representation requires refraining from deciding matters by mechanical majority. Unanimous resolution is always recommended. It is always recommended, when there are conflicting opinions, that both views be mentioned in the report

Transparency:

Transparency means that deliberations on the constitution should be open in all stages. People must be given the chance directly or through different means of information, to follow what's going on. Discussions must not be held behind closed doors. These sessions can be held in clubs, schools, cultural centers, sport grounds, mosques and public parks. Those interested should be allowed to access these deliberations in the committee's head office or its website.

Application of International standards to the Sudanese case:

On analyzing the three international standards with the details and measures as mentioned in the Secretary General's above mentioned memorandum, we note that:

1. It does not cover only the discussions, but it moves on to cover the campaigning and enlightenment of people stage, before the deliberations.
2. It concentrates on the dissemination of the constitutional culture and epistemological qualification.
3. The importance of the constitution to reflect the aspirations of all sectors of the community including women in a way that is up to the international standards.

Illiteracy among women and the vastness of the geographical area represent challenges that must be considered when the constitution is being prepared so that we can reach and consult with all possible sectors including women especially those with special needs, internally displaced women, those living with HIV, refugees, girls and those belonging to ethnic minorities.

A Package of Measures for a Constitutional Making Process Sensitive to Gender Issues:

First: in the field of enlightenment:

1. Employ mass media to educate the masses and exploit the recent election experience where the television and radio were used to raise the electoral awareness through directed programmes, symposiums, reports and interviews with the experts.
2. Use of colloquial language and local dialects to explain the constitutional terms and legal issues and to utilize smart information and attractive drama in direct and spontaneous addresses to women groups and to be keen to associate the constitutional making with the day to day problems of these people. A message should reach them that the constitution is not for the elites only; it is the concern of all the people of the Sudan.
3. Holding direct and open meetings in the rural and urban areas as well between well trained activists and the community women to pass to them the basic information about the constitution and to answer any questions they raise.

4. Use the civil society organizations, especially those working in the field of gender or human rights to explain the concepts of gender, gender equality, empowerment of women and their relation to the Constitution.

Second: in the field of participation:

1. There must be an all-inclusive forum or a National Committee to be set up by a decree from the president in his capacity as the symbol of National Unity with members representing the political forces, civil society, women organizations, social groups, economic interests, religious and lingual groups and different professions. Geographical, gender and professional distribution should be observed. Membership should be selected in consultation with the political forces.
2. Women should be represented in a fair way according to their social and humanitarian weight through women organizations or political parties. Representation should not be less than 30%.
3. Composition of a technical committee from experts in constitution, political science and drafting. Women representation should not be less than 30%.
4. Representation of the Sudanese members of parliament at the national and state levels. The Committee should be supported by national female figures.
5. The Constitution should be divided into chapters and sections that can be easily understood.
6. Entrust the Technical Committee to prepare studies on the main topics particularly, those involving several options. The advantages and disadvantages of each option should be clarified and gender issues should also be put into consideration.
7. Gender-related issues should be studied and the experiences of the other countries utilized.
8. Specifying the main duties of the National Committee and the Technical Committee as well.
9. The National Committee shall be asked to issue a regulation to organize its work. The regulation should cover the manner of meetings, deliberations, presentation of proposals and making of decisions.
10. Selection of well qualified secretariat to record the events, prepare and summarize minutes.
11. Prepare a sufficient budget to be funded by the Government and international community.

Additional arrangements and controls:

1. Subject all issues to discussions. No exclusions or red lines.
2. Observe the rules of disagreement and not to insult each other. Prepare for free discussions without guardianship or ideological intimidation.
3. Make use of the Sudanese previous experiences in constitutional making.
4. Women participation should not be restricted only to family, childhood or personal status issues, but it should be extended to include all national matters and concerns.
5. The outcome of the dialogue should be observed. The final draft should honestly and precisely express the soul of the deliberations.
6. It is better to hold separate consulting meetings between women leaders from the entire political and ideological spectrum so as to reach a common vision on the participation of women on the one hand, and the contents of

the Constitution, on the other. These meetings must go past all sectarian or ideological differences between women as what had happened just before the issuance of the National Electoral Law regarding the women quota which brought about positive outcome due to a unified women vision.

Examples of the major topics:

1. The identity of the State and sources of legislation.
2. the system of Government (Presidential - Parliamentary)
3. decentralization of government.
4. general freedoms and human rights
5. wealth and power sharing
6. organization of political activities
7. joint powers between the enter and states
8. electoral system
9. gender and social justice
10. economic system
11. foreign policy
12. general powers
13. dispute settlement
14. Darfur
15. unemployment and poverty eradication

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