

Women's Political Participation and Gender Equality in Inner Mongolia BI Junmei (China)

Currently, the population of Inner Mongolia is 23.864 million people, 11.571 million of whom are women. In Inner Mongolia, women play a major role in every field of society, such as politics, economics, and culture.

According to data analysis of the third-phase social status survey in Inner Mongolia, there is progress in the region's gender equality, and political incorporation of basic concepts regarding gender equality has clearly raised the social status of women. Compared with a few years ago, improvement can be found in the general index of gender equality in Inner Mongolia.

In the survey, 65.9% of respondents say that the social statuses of men and women are almost the same. In addition, an overwhelming majority of respondents agree to the following questionnaire items: "the abilities of women are not inferior to those of men (85.8%); "men should share household chores with women (88.9%)," and "it is necessary to realize a gender equal society (86.9%)." (The figures in parentheses indicate the percentages of those agreeing to the items.) At the same time, for the questionnaire item "men should work outside home, while women should take care of their families," 60.8% of male respondents and 51.5% of female respondents agree.

According to statistics of women's engagement in public-interest policies in Inner Mongolia, 94.8% of women pay attention to important office work both at home and abroad. In Inner Mongolia, the number of women participating in political activities in political parties, legislative bodies, political consultative conferences, and also small units of administrative organizations is larger than the national average. When women participate in political activities, however, it seems that generally they are assigned less important administrative jobs.

In Inner Mongolia, governmental organizations and local government bodies are positive about employing women. Women working in political decision-making organizations help increase other women's attention to politics. This is an imperative requirement for reflecting women's opinions in public-interest policies. Outside such governmental organizations and local government bodies, there are many commercial corporations, which by nature focus on pursuing profits. Compared with governmental organizations and local government bodies, it can be said that their employees show little interest in politics.

Women are important to society. Women's political participation is the first step toward a gender-equal policy. I believe that for both men and women, the achievement

of gender equality will serve as a good opportunity to realize a harmonious, excellent society.