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CONSTITUTIONS, ELECTORAL LAWS AND OTHER LEGAL INSTRUMENTS  
RELATING TO POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Memorandum by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to circulate herewith the annual memorandum on progress achieved in the field of political rights of women<sup>1/</sup> prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 120 A (VI) of 3 March 1948.
2. In preparing the present memorandum the Secretary-General has also been guided by Economic and Social Council resolution 587 B (XX) of 3 August 1955 by which the Council requested him to include in this report information on all the States which are Members of the United Nations and/or the specialized agencies and/or Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, and to include information available to him on States non-members of these organizations or not parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice in an annex to the report.
3. In accordance with a request of the Commission on the Status of Women, made at its tenth session,<sup>2/</sup> the Secretary-General has included in his present memorandum information on the eligibility of women for election.

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<sup>1/</sup> For previous reports, see documents A/619 and Add.1 and 2 and Corr.1; A/1163, A/1342 and Corr.1, A/1911, A/2154 and Add.1 and 2, A/2462, A/2692 and Corr.1, A/2952 and Add.1, A/3145 and Add.1 and A/3627 and Corr.1.

<sup>2/</sup> E/2850, para. 30.

4. Since the publication of the last memorandum (A/3627 and Corr.1) circulated to the General Assembly at its twelfth session which presented the information available as of 7 August 1957, legal instruments relating to women's political rights in the following countries have been brought to the attention of the Secretary-General:

Federation of Malaya  
Honduras  
Sudan  
Tunisia  
United Arab Republic

The text of the relevant provisions of the legal instruments referred to are given below.

FEDERATION OF MALAYA - Constitution of 23 August 1957

Article 14

- (1) ...the following persons are citizens by operation of law, that is to say:
- (a) Every person who, immediately before Merdeka Day, was a citizen of the Federation by virtue of any of the provisions of the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948, whether by operation of law or otherwise;
  - (b) Every person born within the Federation on or after Merdeka Day;
  - (c) Every person born outside the Federation on or after Merdeka Day whose father is a citizen at the time of the birth and either was born within the Federation or is at the time of the birth in service under the Government of the Federation or of a State;
  - (d) Every person born outside the Federation on or after Merdeka Day whose father is a citizen at the time of the birth, if the birth is registered at a Malayan Consulate within one year of its occurrence, or within such longer period as the Federal Government may in any particular case allow.

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Article 47

Every citizen resident in the Federation is qualified to be a member:

- (a) of the Senate, if he is not less than thirty years old,
- (b) of the House of Representatives, if he is not less than twenty-one years old, ...

Article 119

Every citizen who has attained the age of twenty-one years on the qualifying date and has been resident in a constituency for at least six months immediately preceding the qualifying date is entitled to vote in that constituency in any election to the House of Representatives or the Legislative Assembly ...

HONDURAS - Constitution of 19 December 1957

Article 39

Suffrage is an essential civic function. Its exercise by citizens is a right which cannot be renounced and a duty the fulfilment of which is compulsory.<sup>3/</sup>

SUDAN<sup>4/</sup> - Transitional Constitution of 1 January 1956

Article 46

(1) Sudanese who are not less than 40 years of age shall be eligible for membership of the Senate.

Provided that Sudanese standing for Southern constituencies shall be eligible if not less than 30 years of age.

(2) Sudanese who are not less than 30 years of age shall be eligible for membership of the House of Representatives.

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<sup>3/</sup> See footnote b/ to table IV.

<sup>4/</sup> General elections were held in the Sudan from 27 February to 8 March 1958. The five seats reserved in the former House of Representatives for Graduates' representatives were abolished; these were the only ones for which women were allowed to vote according to the Self-Government Statute of 21 March 1953.



Parliamentary Elections Act of 29 June 1957 (No. 23)

Article 5

A person shall be qualified to vote in a constituency for the House of Representatives if he:

- (i) is a Sudanese, and
- (ii) is a male, and
- (iii) is not less than 21 years of age, and
- (iv) is of sound mind, and
- (v) has been ordinarily resident in the constituency for a period of not less than six months immediately before the closing of the electoral roll.

Article 7

A person shall be qualified to vote in a constituency for the Senate if he:

- (i) is a Sudanese, and
- (ii) is a male, and
- (iii) is not less than 30 years of age, and
- (iv) is of sound mind, and
- (v) has been ordinarily resident in the constituency for a period of not less than six months, immediately before the closing of the electoral roll.

Article 11

(1) Any person who is qualified under the Law for the time being in force to be elected as a member of either House of Parliament for a constituency, and who is willing to stand, may be nominated as a candidate for that constituency.

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Parliamentary Elections Rules 1957

Part I

...

3. "Act" means the Parliamentary Elections Act 1957.

"Candidate" in relation to elections shall include a woman candidate.

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TUNISIA - Decree concerning the election to the  
Constituent National Assembly of  
6 January 1956 (22 Jomada I 1375)

Title I - The Electorate

Article 2

Subject to the exceptions set out below, every male Tunisian who has attained the age of twenty-one years (reckoned according to the Gregorian calendar) living in Tunisia on the date of closure of the final registers of voters shall be entitled to vote.

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Title II - Right to be elected

Article 11

Any voter who can read and write and who has attained the age of thirty (reckoned according to the Gregorian calendar) may stand for election anywhere in the Kingdom, ..."

...

Decree of 14 March 1957 (12 Shaban 1376) constituting municipal law

Municipal Councils

Constitution of municipal councils

...

Article 6

Municipal councillors shall be elected by universal direct suffrage.

Article 7

Subject to the disabilities prescribed by law, all Tunisians of either sex who have attained the age of 20 years (reckoned according to the Gregorian calendar) shall be entitled to vote if they fulfil either of the two following conditions:

1. That they are genuinely domiciled in the commune or have dwelt there for at least two years; that period, however, is not required of persons whose place of residence is determined by their functions.

/...

2. That, in the year of the election, they have paid for three consecutive years rates or taxes on property situated or on activity exercised within the territory of the commune and, if they do not reside in the commune, that they have made a declaration that they wish to exercise their electoral rights there.

...

#### Article 16

Electors of either sex who have attained the age of 25 years (reckoned according to the Gregorian calendar) are eligible for election to the municipal council, subject to the restrictions contained in the following articles.

### UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC<sup>5/</sup> - Provisional Constitution of the United Arab Republic

#### Article 7

All citizens are equal before the law. They are equal in their rights and obligations, without distinction of race, origin, language, religion or creed.

#### Article 68

All laws, decrees and regulations in force in each of the two regions of Egypt and Syria at the time this Constitution comes into effect shall remain valid within the regional spheres for which they were intended. These laws, decrees and regulations may, however, be abrogated or amended according to the procedure established in the present Constitution.<sup>6/</sup>

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<sup>5/</sup> United Arab Republic consists of two regions: Egypt and Syria (article 58 of the Provisional Constitution).

<sup>6/</sup> The relevant provisions at present in force are the following:  
Region of Egypt - Constitution published 16 January 1956; came into operation 24 June 1956

Article 19. The State shall make it possible for women to reconcile their public activities with their family duties.

Article 31. All Egyptians are equal before the law. They have equal rights and duties without distinction as to race, origin, language, religion or creed.

Article 61. Every Egyptian has the right to vote as prescribed by law. Participation in public life is a patriotic duty.

Article 67. The National Assembly shall be composed of members elected by secret ballot in public elections. The number of members, the qualifications of membership and the electoral procedure and provisions shall be determined by law.

(Footnote continued on following page)

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Footnote 6/ (continued)

Act No. 73 of 3 March 1956 to organize the exercise of political rights

Article 1. Every Egyptian man and woman who has attained the age of eighteen years (Gregorian) shall personally exercise the following political rights: (1) the right to vote in any referendum held in accordance with the Constitution; (2) the right to vote in any referendum held to elect the President of the Republic; (3) the right to elect the members of the National Assembly.

The above-mentioned rights shall be exercised in the manner and under the conditions prescribed in this Act.

...  
Article 4. The name of every male person who is in enjoyment of his political rights and of every female person who personally applies for registration shall be entered in the electoral registers. Nevertheless, persons who acquired Egyptian nationality by naturalization shall not be registered unless at least five years have elapsed since their naturalization.

National Assembly Membership Act No. 246 of 11 June 1956

Article 3. A candidate for election to the National Assembly shall (1) be an Egyptian national. If he acquired Egyptian nationality by naturalization, not less than ten years shall have been elapsed since his naturalization; (2) be listed in one of the electoral registers; (3) be able to read and write well; (4) not be less than 30 years of age (Gregorian) on the date of the election; (5) not be related to the dynasty that formerly ruled in Egypt.

Region of Syria - Constitution of 5 September 1950

Article 38. Electors are Syrian men and women who have completed the eighteenth year of their age, who are listed in the civil census register and who have all other qualifications specified in the electoral law.

Article 39. Any Syrian (Souri) may stand for election as a deputy if he qualifies as an elector, if he is educated, has completed his thirtieth year of age and has fulfilled all other conditions specified by the electoral law.

Electoral Law No. 17 of 10 September 1949, as amended by Law No. 188 of 28 June 1954

Article 7. Every Syrian, male or female, who has attained eighteen years of age at the beginning of January of the year of the elections, shall have the right to vote. Each person shall vote in the electoral district where he is listed in the census register, provided that he enjoys his civil and political rights and that he has not previously been deprived of his right to vote. Women must have at least a certificate of primary education in order to be allowed to vote. Separate polling booths shall be established for women voters.

Article 22. A candidate for parliament must fulfil the following conditions:

(a) he must have been a Syrian national for the last ten years at least; (b) he must be a male elector listed in the electoral register; (c) he must have completed his thirtieth year of age at the beginning of January of the year of elections; (d) he must be able to read and write; (e) he must stand for election in one electoral district only.

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TABLES

CONTAINING INFORMATION CONCERNING COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS AND/OR SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND/OR PARTIES TO  
THE STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

TABLE I

Countries where women may vote in all elections  
and are eligible for election on an equal basis  
with men  
(70 countries)

Albania	Denmark	Italy	Poland
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Japan	Romania
Australia	Ecuador <sup>b/</sup>	Korea, Republic of	Spain <sup>d/</sup>
Austria	El Salvador	Laos	Sweden
Belgium	Ethiopia	Lebanon <sup>b/</sup>	Thailand
Bolivia	Finland	Liberia	Turkey
Brazil <sup>a/</sup>	France	Luxembourg	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
Bulgaria	Germany, Federal Republic of	Malaya, Federation of	Union of South Africa
Burma	Ghana	Mexico	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic	Greece	Nepal	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Cambodia	Haiti	Netherlands	United States of America
Canada	Honduras <sup>c/</sup>	New Zealand	Uruguay
Ceylon	Hungary	Nicaragua	Venezuela
Chile	Iceland	Norway	Viet-Nam
China	India	Pakistan	Yugoslavia
Colombia	Indonesia	Panama	
Costa Rica	Ireland	Peru	
Cuba	Israel	Phillipines	
Czechoslovakia			

<sup>a/</sup> Voting is compulsory for all men and for women who are engaged in gainful occupations.

<sup>b/</sup> Voting is compulsory for men, optional for women.

<sup>c/</sup> The Constitution of 19 December 1957 made voting equally compulsory for men and women.

<sup>d/</sup> There are no general elections for the National Legislative Assembly.

/... (



TABLE II

Countries where the right to vote and the eligibility of  
women are subject to restrictions not imposed on men

(5 countries)

<u>Guatemala:</u>	Women may vote in all elections and are eligible for election subject to the requirement of literacy which is not applicable to men.
<u>Monaco:</u>	Women may vote and be elected in municipal elections only.
<u>Portugal:</u>	Women may vote in all elections and are eligible for election subject to educational requirements not imposed on men or, when fulfilling the same tax qualifications as those prescribed for men, must be heads of families.
<u>Tunisia:</u>	Women may vote and be elected in municipal elections only.
<u>United Arab Republic:</u>	
<u>Region of Egypt:</u>	Women may vote in all elections on an equal basis with men but their eligibility for election is subject to certain requirements not imposed on men.
<u>Region of Syria:</u>	Women may vote in all elections subject to educational requirements not imposed on men, and are not eligible for election.

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TABLE III

(a) Countries where women have no voting rights but are eligible for election

Sudan<sup>a/</sup>

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<sup>a/</sup> On the information at present available to the Secretary-General (see pages 3-4) this appears to represent the position in Sudan.

(b) Countries where women have no voting rights and are not eligible for election

(11 countries)

Afghanistan	Paraguay
Iran	San Marino
Iraq	Saudi Arabia <sup>a/</sup>
Jordan	Switzerland
Libya	Yemen <sup>a/</sup>
Liechtenstein	

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<sup>a/</sup> No electoral rights for men or women.

TABLE IV

Countries in which action has been taken since 1945 extending full or limited rights to women

(37 countries)

Albania:	Constitution of 1946
Argentina:	Act of 1947
Belgium:	Act of 1948
Bolivia:	Constitution of 1945 (municipal elections only); full rights by Presidential Decree of 21 July 1952
Bulgaria:	Constitution of 1947
Burma:	Constitution of 1947

/...

Cambodia:	Constitutional Amendment of 1956
Chile:	Act of 1949
China:	Constitution of 1947
Colombia:	Constitutional Amendment of 25 August 1954
Costa Rica:	Constitution of 1949
El Salvador:	Electoral Act of 1946 <sup>a/</sup>
Ethiopia:	Constitution of 1955
Ghana:	Order in Council of 22 February 1957
Greece:	Act of 7 June 1952
Haiti:	Constitution of 1950
Honduras:	Presidential Decree of 24 January 1955 <sup>b/</sup>
Indonesia:	Provisional Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia of 1949
Israel:	Election Ordinance of 1948
Italy:	Constitution of 1947
Japan:	Constitution of 1946
Korea:	Act of 1948
Laos:	Revised Constitution of 1956
Lebanon:	Legislative Decree of 4 November 1952 amending the Elections Act of 10 August 1950 <sup>c/</sup>
Liberia:	Constitutional Amendment of 1945
Malaya (Federation of):	Constitution of 23 August 1957
Mexico:	Constitutional Amendment of 1947 (municipal elections only); Constitutional Amendment of 1953 (all popular elections)
Nepal:	Act of 30 March 1951
Nicaragua:	Constitutional Amendment of 20 April 1955
Panama:	Constitution of 1946
Peru:	Constitutional Amendment of 18 August 1955
Romania:	Electoral Law of 1946
Tunisia:	Decree of 14 March 1957
United Arab Republic:	
Region of Egypt:	Constitution of 1956
Region of Syria:	Legislative Decree of 1949 <sup>d/</sup>

(Footnotes on following page)

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Venezuela:	Constitution of 1947
Viet-Nam:	Constitution of 1956
Yugoslavia:	Constitution of 1946

- a/ Subject to conditions not required for men. Full voting rights granted to women by the Constitution of 1950.
- b/ Voting compulsory for men and optional for women. In the Constitution of 19 December 1957 voting became compulsory for women also.
- c/ Full voting rights granted to women by amendment of 18 February 1953 to the Elections Act.
- d/ Subject to conditions not required for men.

TABLE V

Dates on which women were first  
granted the right to vote a/

Albania	1946
Argentina	1947
Australia	1902
Austria	1919
Belgium	1921
Bolivia	1952
Brazil	1932 <sup>b/</sup>
Bulgaria	1947
Burma	1935 <sup>c/</sup>
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic	1917
Cambodia	1956
Canada	1918
Ceylon	1931
Chile	1949
China	1947
Colombia	1954
Costa Rica	1949
Cuba	1934

(Footnotes at end of table)

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Czechoslovakia	1919
Denmark	1915
Dominican Republic	1942
Ecuador	1929
El Salvador	1946
Ethiopia	1955
Finland	1906
France	1944 <sup>d/</sup>
Germany (Federal Republic of)	1919
Ghana	1957 <sup>e/</sup>
Greece	1952
Guatemala	1945 <sup>f/</sup>
Haiti	1957
Honduras	1955
Hungary	1920
Iceland	1915
India	1935 <sup>g/</sup>
Indonesia	1949
Ireland	1918
Israel	1948
Italy	1945
Japan	1946
Korea (Republic of)	1948
Laos	1956
Lebanon	1952
Liberia	1945
Luxembourg	1918
Malaya (Federation of)	1957
Mexico	1953
Nepal	1951
Netherlands	1917
New Zealand	1893
Nicaragua	1955
Norway	1913

/...

Pakistan	1935 <sup>h/</sup>
Panama	1946
Peru	1955
Philippines	1937
Poland	1919
Portugal	1945 <sup>i/</sup>
Romania	1946
Spain	1931
Sweden	1921
Thailand	1932
Turkey	1934
Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic	1917
Union of South Africa	1930
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	1917
United Arab Republic Region of Egypt	1956
Region of Syria	1949
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1918
United States of America	1920 <sup>j/</sup>
Uruguay	1932
Venezuela	1947
Viet-Nam	1956
Yugoslavia	1946

a/ This table indicates the year in which women were granted the right to vote in national elections. Information relating to countries where the grant was not in the first instance on an equal footing with men or where grants of municipal franchise preceded the grant of franchise on a national scale can be found in A/2692, table VII, and in A/3627, table VI.

b/ In the state of Rio Grande do Norte, women had voting rights previous to 1932.

c/ Burma achieved independence in 1947; its Constitution of the same year provides for equal franchise for men and women, which had been previously also granted in the Government of Burma Act, 1935. Some categories of women, however, had voting rights since 1922.

(Footnotes continued on following page)

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Footnotes to table V (continued)

- d/ Decree of Provisional Government 1944; right subsequently confirmed in the 1946 Constitution.
- e/ Ghana, comprising the former Non-Self-Governing Territory of the Gold Coast and the former Trust Territory of Togoland under United Kingdom administration, became an independent State on 6 March 1957. The Ghana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1957, provides for equal franchise for men and women which had already previously been granted in the Gold Coast under the Election (Legislative Assembly) Ordinance, 1950. In Togoland, the Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship (Plebiscite) Order in Council, 1955, provided for equal franchise for men and women in the plebiscite to be held under United Nations auspices in 1956 to determine whether Togoland should be united with the Gold Coast.
- f/ Subject to educational qualifications not applicable to men.
- g/ Between 1919 and 1935, by provincial legislation of seven of the provinces of India (which at that time included India and Pakistan, subsequently in 1947 set up as two independent Dominions), certain categories of women in those provinces gained voting rights. In 1935, the Government of India Act provided a wider measure of enfranchisement. Under the present Constitution of India, equal voting rights are established.
- h/ Between 1919 and 1935, by the provincial legislation of seven of the provinces of India (which at that time included India and Pakistan, subsequently in 1947 set up as two independent Dominions), certain categories of women in those provinces gained voting rights. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, as adapted by Pakistan (Provisional Constitution) Order, 1947, voting rights in provincial elections were granted to certain categories of women. By Acts of 1951 and 1952, full right to vote and to be elected in provincial elections was granted to women. The present Constitution of Pakistan establishes equal voting rights for men and women.
- i/ Subject to special qualifications, not applicable to men (see table II).
- j/ By virtue of the 19th amendment of the Constitution adopted in 1920, women throughout the United States obtained voting rights both in federal and state elections. The provisions of the United States Constitution apply also to Hawaii. Women also have equal voting rights with men in Guam (Civil Regulations 1936), Puerto Rico (Electoral Law 1935), and the Virgin Islands (Organic Act 1936). Previous to 1920, women, by reason of state laws, already possessed these rights in the following states: Arizona, 1912; Arkansas, 1917; California, 1911; Colorado, 1894; Idaho, 1896; Illinois, 1913; Kansas, 1912; Massachusetts, 1918; Michigan, 1918; Montana, 1914; Nebraska, 1917; Nevada, 1914; New York, 1917; North Dakota, 1917; Oklahoma, 1918; Oregon, 1912; Rhode Island, 1917; South Dakota, 1918; Texas, 1918; Utah, 1895; Washington, 1910; Wyoming, 1869 as a territory, 1890 as a state.

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TABLE VI

Countries where women may vote on equal terms  
with men, but where suffrage grants originally  
involved limitations on the ground of sex

There is no change in the information given under this heading in the memorandum issued on 7 August 1957 (A/3627).

TABLE VII

Countries where women have been granted the  
right to vote but have not had an opportunity  
to participate in an election

(2 countries)

Ghana: No elections have taken place since Ghana became an independent State on 6 March 1957<sup>a/</sup>

Malaya: No elections have taken place since Malaya became an independent State on 31 August 1957

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<sup>a/</sup> See footnote e/ to table V. In the Gold Coast, women participated in elections for the Legislative Assembly in June 1954. In Togoland, women participated in the plebiscite held in May 1956.

TABLE VIII

Countries which have signed, ratified or acceded to,  
the Convention on the Political Rights of Women as of  
1 August 1958

The following changes have occurred in the information given under this heading since the issuance of the memorandum A/2952 (table IX) as supplemented by the memorandum A/3145 and Add.1 (table XI) and the memorandum A/3627 (table VIII).

Ratifications and Accessions

<u>Haiti</u>	(Ratification)	12 February 1958
<u>Philippines</u>	(Ratification)	12 September 1957

As of 1 August 1958, the Convention had been signed by forty-one States and ratified or acceded to by twenty-nine States.

RESERVATIONS TO THE CONVENTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS  
OF WOMEN AND OBJECTIONS TO THE RESERVATIONS

There is no change in the information given under this heading since the issuance of the memorandum circulated in 1957 (A/3627).



ANNEX

There is no change in the information given in the annex to the 1955 Memorandum on Constitutions, Electoral Laws and other Legal Instruments relating to Political Rights of Women (A/2952).

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