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Show Your Worth, Mongella Dares Women MPs

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NEWS

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By Felly Kimenyi
Kigali

The Pan African Parliamentary (PAP) president has urged Rwandan women Parliamentarians to take up the challenge and utilise the opportunity they were given by Rwandans to work for the development of the nation.

Gertrude Mongella, who was in the country to attend the celebration of the recently attainment of 56 percent female representation in Parliament, said that Rwandan women will be flag bearers not only to Rwandans but also to their African counterparts.

Rwanda made history in September when 45 out of the 80 members of the Lower Chamber voted were women, making Rwanda the first country in recent history to have over 50 percent women representation.

"They have a challenge of ably representing the Rwandans who voted for them and I have no doubt they will perform because of what has already been achieved," said Mongella during an exclusive interview Sunday evening.

She said that the female dominance in Parliament was not through affirmative action as many may think.

"There was nothing like affirmative action. Women competed just as their male compatriots and were elected, meaning that for those who were elected, it was purely on merit," she said, adding that what the government did was to put mechanisms in place giving all citizens equal opportunities to compete.

She emphasised that the women's victory in Rwanda's Parliamentary polls was not accidental rather a result of putting up good policies that allow them to compete effectively.

Mongella added that whereas some countries, including European, are struggling to attain at least 50 percent women representation in Parliament, that Rwanda made history even with what the country went through.

"Even my own country has not got there with the political stability it has enjoyed for years," said Mongella who hails from Tanzania.

She came to Rwanda on the invitation of the Unity Club, a body that brings together present and past leaders in the country and their spouses to celebrate the women's victory in Parliament.

The colourful ceremony which was graced by First Lady Jeannette Kagame, who is also the chairperson of Unity Club, was held on Saturday at Kigali Serena Hotel.

Mongella said that Rwandan women have already 'made their mark' in the different attributions they already have.

"For example Kigali City has a woman mayor and look at it it is Africa's cleanest city! The head of police is a woman (acting Commissioner General of Police, Mary Gahonzire) and look at the safety Rwanda is enjoying," she observed.

She also said that the world should borrow a leaf from the Rwandan experience and open up opportunities for women to participate in decision making organs, "because they are known to be thorough."

Mongella travelled to Rwanda, despite the PAP session that is underway in Johannesburg, South Africa. "I even travelled with four PAP Parliamentarians to witness this important milestone despite the fact that the invitation was for me personally," she revealed.

Based in South Africa, PAP brings together Parliamentarians from African Union member states where each is represented by five law lawmakers.



