



Embassy of India
Tunis, Tunisia

PRESS RELEASE



International Women's Day celebrated with gusto in Tunis on 8th March 2014

The National Constituent Assembly of Tunisia (NCA) organised a celebratory ceremony on the occasion of International Women's Day on Saturday, 8th March, 2014 in the audience hall of the more than 300-year old Bardo Palace which houses the Assembly. The ceremony was presided over by Mrs. Mehrzia Laabidi, Deputy Speaker of the NCA. Also present were Mr. Larbi Abid, second Deputy Speaker, several serving and former women Ministers, most of the women Presidents of the Commissions of the Assembly and a host of women legislators. Women Ambassadors accredited to the Republic of Tunisia were invited as Special Guests. Ambassador Mrs. Nagma Mallick attended this event. The opening statement was made by Mr. Larbi Abid, in which he spoke in glowing terms of the extraordinary role played by women legislators in the work of drafting and negotiating the Constitution, which was adopted on 27 January, 2014. He began his remarks by outlining the important traditional role of women in Tunisian society; he mentioned with pride that out of 217 members of the Assembly, as many as 66 MPs were women, i.e., around 31% of the Tunisian legislators were female.

Mrs. Mehrzia Laabidi, Deputy Speaker gave more details on the exemplary contribution by women from across the political spectrum to the work of constitution drafting, highlighting the work done by the women Presidents of the Commissions entrusted with scrutinising important areas of the constitution. In

the same vein, Mrs. Farida Laabidi, President of the Commission on Women's Rights and Liberties detailed the rights available to Tunisian women under the constitution. Mrs. Selma Mabrouk of Al-Massar party made a presentation on the career of Mrs. Radhia Haddad, the first women MP of Tunisia who was the only female legislator in the first Constituent Assembly of Tunisia from 1956 to 1959.

The event finished with a traditional musical programme presented by an ensemble of women in traditional Tunisian dress, interspersed by presentations by two women poets of Tunisia, Mrs. Beya Jawadi and Mrs. Wafa Nefissa Marzouki. A new television channel devoted to women, *Nisa*, was launched at the same event.

Ambassador Mallick also attended a special event organised by Ennahda party, the single largest party in the NCA, the same evening to felicitate women legislators of Ennahda party and women workers from across the country. The ceremony was a moving one in which women who had long fought for women's rights in Tunisia were honoured. The role played by women legislators of Ennahda in the Constituent Assembly was emphasised: 42 women out of Ennahda's 89 legislators are women. Sheikh Rashid Ghannouchi, President of Ennahda and Ali Laarayedh, former Prime Minister, in their speeches, called, in rousing terms, for ever greater participation by women in the work place and for equality between men and women inside homes. Tunisian songs, both traditional and revolutionary, were sung by an all-women ensemble in traditional Tunisian dress during the event.

10th March, 2014
Tunis