The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has ranked Seychelles the 5th highest country in the world according to the proportion of women in national parliament. Seychelles National Assembly one of the most gender-balanced in the world

This is a testament to the strides Seychellois women are making in politics and decision-making. To put things into perspective; the United Kingdom is ranked 53rd (22.3% women), France 69th (18.9%) Mauritius 70th (18.8%) and USA 78th (16.8%). This is an important achievement for Seychelles as we get closer to fully realising the 50/50 target set out in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. What makes this accomplishment even more impressive is the fact that Seychelles achieved this impressive result without a quota system, which is used by many countries to reserve seats for women.

Rwanda tops the table with 56.3% women in its lower house and Andorra, a small country in Europe, comes in second with 50.0%. These are the only two countries in the world which are at the 50% mark and beyond. One might assume that as a small country Seychelles has an unfair advantage to achieving gender parity in a national assembly with only 32 members - but this is not necessarily the case. Some of the top ranking countries have large parliaments; including Cuba ranked third with women making up 45.2% of the massive 856 parliamentary seats; while Sweden which is ranked fourth with 44.7% women out of 349 seats. On the other end of the scale, small states are found throughout the table including the bottom, with Comoros ranked 136th with only 3.0% of women out of 33 members and Haiti which came 130th with only 4.2% women out of 95 members of parliament.

Therefore the high representation of women in parliament is more to do with political commitment rather than size and level of development, a testament to the success of Rwanda. Even having a woman Head of State does not guarantee gender parity. Despite having a woman President, Liberia is ranked 113th with only 9.6% (or 7/73) women and Brazil is ranked 116th with only 8.6% (44/513) women in their lower house of parliament.

For more information visit: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif311211.htm