

## Warrap parliament establishes women's caucus

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October 20, 2012 (JUBA) - The parliament of South Sudan's Warrap State on Friday established a women parliamentary caucus, making it the first state in the history of the world's youngest country to create a body dedicated to women's affairs.

In September the Warrap State Legislative Assembly passed a new law abolishing the position of Controller and creating a positions of a Chief Whip and a Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

On Thursday 13 heads of parliamentary committee chairpersons were appointed days after the appointment government chief whip. The 49 MPs elected to the Warrap parliament in the 2010 elections are all members of the country's governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Warrap's Nyandeng Malek Deliech is South Sudan's only female governor.

Speaking in an interview with *Sudan Tribune* on Friday from Kuacjok, capital of the state, Ariec Mayar Ariec, a member of the Warrap State Legislative Assembly said the speaker had appointed the new leadership of the parliament in compliance with the constitutional requirements which limit parliamentary terms for chairpersons to only two years.

"The speaker has appointed the chairpersons. There is now a new leadership. It is a mixed appointment. There are new faces and there are old faces", Ariec said.

Ariec said he has been moved from legislature and constitutional development affairs to the committee for information and public relations.

"All of us are new faces in the committee. The current chairperson of the committee was heading different committee in the last two years. He was the chairperson for security and public order. Now he is the chairperson for information and public relations", explained Ariec.

James Macok, another member of parliament in the state confirmed the appointment of the new leadership, expressing his disappointment with the way it was made. He explained that the appointment tried be geographically representative "but failed to extend this inclusiveness within counties."

Dominic Deng Mayom MP, a newly appointed chairperson for Labour and Public Service Committee said the creation of the women's parliamentary caucus in the state would be role model for other states to follow.

The women's caucus "will serve as forum or focal point for women leadership to meet and discuss challenges and possible solutions to issues which affect women", he said.

It will also serve as a "lobbying center against stereotype about women in the society. It will [be] a forum where women discuss their roles in the society as well as acting [as a] bridge between women leaders in various government institutions, those in the community and in the private sector", Mayom told *Sudan Tribune* on Friday.

The legislator went further to explain that the creation of the body sends a message to the other states.

"We in Warrap recognize strengths of the women in the society. This was why we elected first woman governor."

He said that he hoped this would promote the SPLM's policy desire to have at least 25% of government positions filled by women. Illiteracy is among the highest in the world in South Sudan, especially among women.

"All humans are equal regardless of the gender. This means a woman can do what a man in the society can do", he explained.

Many in the state view appointment of Dominic Deng Mayom into the top parliamentary position as an attempt by the speaker to reconcile with the state governor, Nyandeng Malek, and possibly recruiting him into being her one of her closest allies in the house.

Last year Mayom was one of a group of MPs who voted to remove the Governor from office, strongly criticising her performance. Mayom was arrested and harassed by security services in the state and was held at the military barracks outside Kuacjok town, despite showing his identification cards.

He accused governor Malek of being his arrest, an accusation she denied.

Appointed heads of parliamentary committees:

- Security and public order, Zachariah Thokyok Magol MP - Tonj East
- Public accounts and governance, Mario Malok Lual MP - Tonj North
- Finance and economic, Anei Mawien Abiik MP - Gogrial East
- Labor Public service, Dominic Deng Mayom MP - Tonj North
- Legislator and Legal Affair, General Bona Bang Dhel MP - Gogrial West
- Member Affairs, General Mathou Deng MP - Tonj East
- Information and Public relations, Arop Deng Kuol MP - Abyei
- Human rights, Mary Nyibol Arou MP - Tonj South
- Land, Agriculture and Animal Resources, Mayar Deng Mayar MP - Gogrial West
- Services, Atong Manyual MP - Gogrial West
- Gender and Social Development, Marko Malou Choldit- Tonj South
- Peace and Reconciliation, Tong Makuac Kur MP
- Women caucus, Adut Madut Akec MP - Gogrial East

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