

# *Chilean senate approves gender parity for constitutional process*

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Santiago de Chile, March 6 (RHC)-- The Chilean Senate has approved a bill on gender parity in the body charged with the eventual drafting of a new Constitution. The initiative was approved with 28 votes in favor, six against and four abstentions, but voting by article is still pending, changes that will have to be reviewed again in the Chamber of Deputies in a third legislative process. Earlier the bill passed the Chamber of Deputies with 98 votes in favor, 53 abstentions and three against.

"The representation of women on the political scene is the main deficit of democracy in Chile (...) We need to ensure a constituent process where all voices are heard," Senator of the Party for Democracy (PPD) Ximena Orden said.

With the vote, the initiative will become law regardless of what happens in the April plebiscite. For her part, Senator Carolina Goic of the right-wing Christian Democratic Party (DC) also said that "the incorporation of women into political, social and economic life has been difficult. That is why we must ensure gender balance in this constituent process and reach 8M with guaranteed parity."

According to a study published this week by the Ministry of Women, 40 percent of the candidates for Congress were women in last elections but only 22.6 percent got a seat in the Lower House. "We women have always been invisible, double burdened and underrepresented," socialist Isabel Allende added.

More than 14.5 million Chileans are called to decide on April 26 the continuity or not of the Constitution inherited from the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), if they vote for non-continuity, the corresponding body in the wording of the new text must respond to a gender parity according to the new law.

The plebiscite right-wing President Sebastian Piñera is betting will defuse the serious social crisis that erupted in October, the most serious protests in three decades that have already taken the lives of dozens of people, in addition to causing thousands of injuries.

According to the latest Cadem poll, 74 percent of Chileans will vote for a new constitution and 52 percent will support a constituent convention while 43 a mixed convention.

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