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### Civil society seeks 50% quota for women in local bodies

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Notable persons belonging to various civil society organisations on Sunday demanded that the Odisha Government should immediately issue notification for 50% reservation of women in the local bodies. For ensuring more empowerment to women, the delegates also demanded that the rotation of women seats under reservation should be done every 10 years instead of existing 5 years.

A State convention organised by Odisha Election Watch concluded on Sunday. The delegates who spoke on the occasion also demanded that the two child norm should be removed as the qualification for contesting local body elections. They expressed that the two child norm was a very harsh rule and was preventing the true democratic process in the State by disempowering women in the grassroots.

They also demanded that the State Election Commission should implement a toll-free helpline for providing information to the voters and candidates during elections. The security of women candidates in the areas not reserved for women for the elections should be enhanced. The delimitation should be done once in 10 years instead of every 5 years.

Although the Local Body Elections are held on party-less basis, there was a lot of political interference in the process from various political parties. The delegates demanded that strict measures should be taken to stop this interference.

Agreeing with the delegates for much needed reforms, Panhayati Raj Minister Prafulla Samal, who attended the convention as the chief guest said though the Sarpanches are elected by the voters, they are removed by the collusion of the MLA, MP, Ward Members and Zilla Parishad members. He assured the delegates to work on their recommendations.

Among others, ex-Minister Panchanan Kanungo, Narendra Swain, former SEC Sanjeev Chandra Hota, Chairman PG Council, Utkal University Rita Ray, Samir Mohanty of BJP, Ramakurshan Panda (CPI), Mr Suresh Panigrahi CPI(M), Sahadev Sahu of Odisha Election Watch, Ex-DGP AB Tripathy, Ranjan Mohanty of Pecuc, founder member ADR Trilochan Sastry and national coordinator NEC Anil Bairawal attended the meeting.