



Speech by
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on the occasion of the
International Women's Day

Organized by
AMFCE , together with partners EFOI and WIN LTD and the South African High Commission

Theme: Women in Democracy

Indian Ocean Commission, Ebene
8 March 2013, 18.00 hours

Your Excellency Dr Nomvuyo Nontsikelelo Nokwe, South African High Commissioner

Ms. Aline Wong, Commissioner of the World Organisation of Women's Entrepreneurs

Mrs Vimi Appadoo, President of Association Mauricienne des Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises

Mrs Fatoumia Ali Bazi, Representative of the Indian Ocean Commission

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for the UNDP and UN agencies to be associated with this function being organized by AMFCE , together with its partners EFOI and WIN in collaboration with the South African High Commission to mark the International Women's Day. The theme chosen for today's panel discussion "Women in Democracy" is very pertinent globally and for Mauritius and we look forward to hearing to the views of the eminent panelists present here today.

Democracy is one of the core principles of the United Nations. Democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. A fair representation and active participation of

women in governance is one of the key preconditions for achieving genuine democracy. Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the key Millennium Development Goals as you all know. There can be no real democracy if half the population is excluded from participation and power. In Mauritius, women represent 52% of the population. Yet, in the last general election, the percentage of elected women in Parliament was 17.8%. Fortunately, there has been an improvement and women's representation at local government increased from 6.4% to 26.2% following the last elections.

Achieving gender equality as a tool to strengthen democracy remains one of the top priorities for the United Nations. UNDP, for its new 2013-2016 Country Programme, has set a special focus on gender equality, and will develop activities together with UN WOMEN; a Delivery As One Gender Focal point has been appointed since January 2013.

The UN's Theme to commemorate this year's International Women's day is, "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women." Indeed ladies and gentlemen, we cannot be contented with mere words and thoughts if we want the gender agenda to gain momentum. We need collaborative action from all the stakeholders, particularly the younger generation, to make it happen.

Allow me now to read out the message of the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

Quote

"As we commemorate International Women's Day, we must look back on a year of shocking crimes of violence against women and girls and ask ourselves how to usher in a better future.

One young woman was gang-raped to death. Another committed suicide out of a sense of shame that should have attached to the perpetrators. Young teens were shot at close range for daring to seek an education.

These atrocities, which rightly sparked global outrage, were part of a much larger problem that pervades virtually every society and every realm of life.

Look around at the women you are with. Think of those you cherish in your families and your communities. And understand that there is a statistical likelihood that many of them have suffered violence in their lifetime. Even more have comforted a sister or friend, sharing their grief and anger following an attack.

This year on International Women's Day, we convert our outrage into action. We declare that we will prosecute crimes against women – and never allow women to be subjected to punishments for the abuses they have suffered. We renew our pledge to combat this global health menace wherever it may lurk – in homes and businesses, in war zones and placid countries, and in the minds of people who allow violence to continue.

We also make a special promise to women in conflict situations, where sexual violence too often becomes a tool of war aimed at humiliating the enemy by destroying their dignity.

To those women we say: the United Nations stands with you. As Secretary-General, I insist that the welfare of all victims of sexual violence in conflict must be at the forefront of our activities. And I instruct my senior advisors to make our response to sexual violence a priority in all of our peace-making, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.

The United Nations system is advancing our UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, which is based on the simple but powerful premise that all women and girls have a fundamental human right to live free of violence.

This week in New York, at the Commission on the Status of Women, the world is holding the largest-ever UN assembly on ending violence against women. We will make the most of this gathering – and we keep pressing for progress long after it concludes.

I welcome the many governments, groups and individuals who have contributed to this campaign. I urge everyone to join our effort. Whether you lend your funds to a cause or your voice to an outcry, you can be part of our global push to end this injustice and provide women and girls with the security, safety and freedom they deserve.”

End of quote .

Thank you very much for kind your attention.