

IFUW 31st Triennial Conference

Women's role in achieving a sustainable future:
Education, Urbanization, Violence and Human Rights,

17 August 2013

*Opening Address by Nazan Morođlu,
President Turkish Association of University Women (2010 - 2014)*

Distinguished Guests,

Dear friends, dear sisters coming from five continents,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Turkish Association of University Women I would like warmly welcome you to the IFUW 31st Triennial Conference. As Turkish Association we are honored to host an IFUW Conference for the first time in our country.

I hope for those who have travelled long hours, far across seas and continents the sunny weather and beauty of İstanbul city and the Turkish hospitality will help to soothe the travel fatigue. We hope that your stay here will mark a sustainable lasting relationship between us. Yesterday at the Opening Ceremony in Bosphorus University Albert Long Hall we had a wonderful evening. Two distinguished ladies were with us, the human rights activist and the member of the Parliament Ms. Şafak Pavey and the world - known pianist Ms İdil Biret. I hope we all have enjoyed it.

Dear Guests, Dear friends, 13 years have already passed since the 21st century began. It is often said that the 21st century will become the "Women's Century." Women shall play active roles in every corner of society and fulfill their potential, while making full use of the sensitivity and flexibility that are unique to women.

In light of this, as members of IFUW we are giving efforts to advance the status of women in society, promoting secondary and higher education and life long learning among women, to empower women..

Let's think about it, IFUW was founded in 1919 as an international network, with the mission linking women graduates from all cultures, all fields of study, all professions and all generations, to provide a global voice for peace and equal rights. If we go back to 1919, globally there was no legal right for women to vote and to be elected to the parliament.

In 1919 in my country the Ottoman Empire was still governing. And it was a men's world and women's life was designed under the patriarchal mentality. Women have to be at home.. only with some legal rights in the family.. The first codification of Islamic family law in the Middle East was the Ottoman Law of Family Rights of 1917, giving the right to women whenever her husband wants to marry another women (as the second wife) "to say no or to give permission to him"...

In the beginning of the 20th century traditionally if look back to the society, women has to stay at home, to marry as a girl child, looking after the children.. even in civil codes "husband was the boss of the family". The definition of women was that she is a "daughter of his father, wife of his husband, and mother of the children".

But not as an **individual** having her own human rights.

Turkey is an interesting example, between modernization and tradition. After the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923. Equality between women and men was one of the fundamental principles since the very beginning.

Modernisation as guiding principle was adopted by the government and a series of reforms were implemented to foster the adoption of secular justice system and life style.

Laws pertaining particularly Family Law that had been valid up until 1926 with the adoption of civil code, like male polygamy and single-sided divorce by men were abolished. Monogamy became mandatory.

The Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic script (in 1928), that made to read and write easier and has built a bridge to western contemporary culture.

Turkish women granted the right to vote and to be elected as MP in 1934. After the elections in 1935, women had 18 chairs in the Parliament. In 1935 Turkey was the 2nd country in the world in terms of "the number of women MP's" but in 2013 it is ranked 98th..!!

The aim of Atatürk's Reforms I want share with his own words he said in 1928 "...The social reforms and progress will not be actualized without the support of women, **a society that neglects women is destined lag behind.** It is a **must** that women become a part of the society as free individuals..."

And when we look today to the status of women in Turkey. Many progress has been realized.. today we have legally equal rights in all field of life.

But as in most of the other developing countries we need to be a part of international institutions and international organizations to follow the achievements. That is of one of the main reason TAUW is a member of IFUW. To support each other and be a part of the women's global voice.

Efforts to eliminate gender-based discrimination on the international arena; like UN World Women's Conferences; and the Convention to Eliminate of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have all been the driving force for Turkey's preparations of legal changes.

And after Turkey ratified CEDAW in 1985, Comprehensive work has been done to meet the norms arising from the Convention:

- In 1990 Women and Family Issues Ministry and the General Directorate on the Status of Women were established.
- 1990 While women's organizations were working intensively in the area of gender equality, the study of women's rights were also being carried out in academia.
- The first graduate program for Women's Studies was established at Istanbul University.
- Nowadays in more than 40 universities Women's Studies Centers were established.

- In 1998 a special law, "the Family Protection Law 4320" was adopted for combating violence against women and domestic violence
- The collaboration of women organizations working for women's rights was strengthened, Istanbul Women Associations Union, İKKB.
- In 2001, the principle of "**Equality between Spouses**" has been entered into force in the Article 41/1 of the Constitution.
- In 2004, The provision "**Men and women shall have equal rights. The State has the duty to ensure that this equality is put into practice**" was added into Article 10 of the Constitution.
- In 2010 "**measures to be taken to this effect cannot be considered contrary to the principle of equality**" was added.
- **Turkish Civil Code** came into force on 1 January 2002:
 - The new law meets Turkey's obligations under the CEDAW
 - Spouses have equal rights over property acquired during marriage
 - The rule "surname of the wife" is still against CEDAW Art.16 and Turkish Constitution's "equality before law principle".
- In 2003 the **Labour Law** the "**principle of equal treatment**" was accepted;
 - In Art. 5: "*lower pay based on gender difference cannot be justified for an equal or equivalent job*".
 - In line with provisions of the Labour Law such as "maternity leave - 16 weeks" and "*sexual harassment being a justified reason to annul the employment contract*" Turkey has harmonized with the EU Directives.
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- In 2003 '**Family Courts**' have been *established*.
- On July 30, 2003 the **Optional Protocol** to CEDAW is ratified.
- In 2004 Turkish Parliament adopted the new **Penal Code**.
 - Under the new Penal Code, perpetrators of "*honour killings*" should be sentenced to life imprisonment,
 - "*virginity tests*" without a court order are prohibited and "*sexual assault in marriage*" will qualify as a criminal offence.
- Turkey has ratified Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2011.
- On 8 March 2012 a new law to protect women against violence is adopted, which is the fruit of hard work of women lawyers and associations. The new Law No. 6284 brings preventing and protecting measures for both victims and perpetrators of violence against women.

Today we as women in Turkey have equal rights before law.

But to change the society and patriarchal mentality is not easy only with changing the laws.

We all know passing legislation and implementing these reforms on the ground are two different things.

Gender equality must be respected as a common issue for men and women and also taken as an **indicator of democracy**.

To support Women to be aware of their rights, and to benefit of them legal Literacy Project is tool advocating women.

Dear Friends,

A century ago, only in a limited number of countries, women could achieve suffrage. At that time, the female labour force and women profession women constituted a small minority in industry, sales, trades, enterprise, politics, law firms, medicine, academia and elsewhere. Women were rarely assigned to decision- making posts. Our present economic, social and educational environment cannot be compared to what it was a century ago.

And just three years ago, the European Council Convention was not in the agenda of IFUW 30th Conference in Mexico.

The progress has speed up.

In 2011 The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, (called Istanbul Convention) has been adopted. The Convention is based on the understanding that violence against women is a violation of womens human rights.

The Council of Europe has established a crucial landmark on the way to ensuring the equal enjoyment of human rights by women and men.

The Convention gives the obligation to the states to fully address and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. To come into force The Convention needs to be ratified by 5 more countries, would you please urge your govents to ratify it.. I think it must be one the issues of IFUW, and UWE..

Dear friends,

And in coming three years there is an very important agende waiting for us. Beijing Plus 20 in 2015 is a golden opportunity to "scale up and speed-up" implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As IFUW with all NFA's we

want to take an **active role** in the campaign. Always going forward that is our duty and responsibility.

Dear Friends, a whole new generation has grown up since Beijing in 1995. We need to harness the energy of young women who are on the front lines of women's issues.

I hope and wish this conference will serve as an excellent platform to share best practices and to benefit from lessons learned by others..

I would like to extend my very best wishes for the success of the Conference and the further prosperity of IFUW taking roles in achieving a sustainable future.

Thank you.