

**Speech of Hon (Mrs) F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo,
Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family
Welfare**

Launching of the Model Commission on the Status of Women

Thursday 30 March 2017, at 09:30 hrs

Auditorium Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka

My colleague, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,
Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary
Education and Scientific Research,

The President and Board Members of the National
Women's Council,

The Secretary of the National Women Entrepreneurship
Council,

Representatives of my Ministry,

Educators and Delegates

A very Good-morning to all of you...

It gives me immense pride, to see boys and girls of my
country, sharing the same platform to dialogue on
women's issues, for our own model Commission on the
Status of Women. Maybe some of you, before going
through all the research work to prepare yourself, you

were not even aware that women's roles were still considered in so many countries as non-contributive and insignificant.

Today, you will have the opportunity to exchange and share ideas on the development process that women have been confronted to, in different countries and also in different spheres.

It is for the second consecutive year that the National Women's Council is renewing its initiative to run the "Model Commission on the status of Women". I applaud this initiative since it is important that we encourage youngsters to promote and reflect on the social, economic and political rights of women.

I am conscious that only through formal and informal education that we would be able to progressively bring change in the society and eventually a change in mentality. This may lead to recognition that girls and boys need to have the same treatment and equal chance in decision making processes.

There are several strategies that have been adopted by Government to contribute to gender equality, such as enactment on laws. The Parliamentary Gender Caucus that has been set up. At the level of each Ministry, a Gender Focal Point has been established. These last two years, our government has been taking the boldest stands to raise the status of women. A lady president, a lady Speaker at the National Assembly, and more recently, a lady Chairperson of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

This reflects a strong commitment and a strong leadership. Government has a key role to play in facilitating a development strategy that promotes Gender Equality. I'm convinced that this is the case.

The United Nations' theme to commemorate the International Women's Day this year, as you may be aware, is "Women in the changing world of work: planet 50-50 by 2030". In harmony with this theme, my Ministry's slogan is, 'Working towards a gender inclusive society'

and this sends a strong signal that it is only through the unity of women and men that society would give way to more tolerance and comprehension.

The experts in this field keep highlighting that women rights are human rights. In order to promote gender equality, men and women should work together.

Therefore, as the responsible Minister for Gender equality, CD & FW, I am conscious that my Ministry alone cannot address this issue. It is a national concern which needs the intervention of all Ministries, private sector and civil society. It is only by this synergy that we would be able to strengthen the services dispensed to women and also address prejudices encountered by them.

This reminds me of the words a great lady whom you must have encountered in your research, Mrs Phumzile. Executive Director, of UN Women. I had the tremendous experience of meeting her in NY. She said: "To achieve

gender equality, we need to mobilise not just parliaments but population, not just civil society but all of society”.

In this respect, we need to encourage our young people to come forward with new ideas and strategies which can give a helping hand, to engage more men and boys in the fight against stereotypes and also to address the existing gender gaps.

To align with the mandate of the Ministry i.e promoting gender equality, our government has repealed the National Women’s Council Act 1985 and replaced it by NWC Act 2016, which promotes more a gender in development approach. With the enactment of this legislation the Council will be confronted to a lot of forthcoming challenges such as to rejuvenate the Women Associations and also to have 9 regional committees rather than 4 presently.

The women’s associations would be called upon to become either more dynamic in terms of coming forward with issues and concerns of women and also lobbying

with the regional committees so as the women's matter are taken on board during the National Committee meeting.

Therefore, the Council would have this responsibility to act as advocate and forward the needs of women to policy makers at the level of the parent Ministry.

In all national, regional, international committees, the issue of gender is raised. With the new set of "Sustainable Development Goals" all countries are struggling hard to meet these goals and eventually bring changes in their society. As rightly pointed out in Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5 is to attain gender equality we should reinforce the capacity of women and girls.

The MCSW is a first step for youngsters to say no to discriminations against women. I strongly believe that all girls and women have the right to live free from discrimination and violence, and also to fulfil their potential. But, it should become a recurrent practice and

it should have a trickle down effect. You would be called upon to stand up for the women's cause. Violence against girls and women in all its forms, is a crime and must not be tolerated.

This forum may help you to network with other students so as to create, why not, a platform on facebook and exchange on issues pertaining to gender equality. You may even, eventually, lobby for women to be involved in the development processes.

We need to close to gender pay gap, and work to ensure that all girls pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and also mathematics.

In the socialisation process, parents have a key role to play, if values in terms of equity, equal sharing of responsibilities, tolerance, management of anger in a peaceful manner is inculcated to boys and girls this may bring a demographic change to these children while growing up.

Youngsters, you represent the future leaders. It is of utmost importance that you are conscious and engaged in the fight for gender equality. Today we shall be launching a website that will serve as a platform to access materials on gender equality and on women's movement. A discussion forum will also be available so as to encourage people to interact on these issues.

My dear boys and girls, when you will leave this auditorium, tomorrow afternoon, I'm sure you will see the world from a new perspective. You, young people, you are our strength, our hope. You will be the game changers... Your generation has the responsibility, the duty to bring gender equality, gender diversity in all wakes of life. Gender Equality is everyone's business and we all have a role to play. Let us continue to work together towards women empowerment. Let us recall that empowerment of women and girls, is indeed, the empowerment of all humanity.

Dear students, you have great, exciting years ahead of you. Make the most of it. If I may conclude by saying "best of luck for your studies"...

Thank you.