

Ethiopians Explore the Empowerment of Women

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—UPF-Ethiopia leaders and four Ambassadors for Peace were invited to take part in a conference on women’s role in Africa’s sustainable development.

The Seventh Joint International Conference on Women’s Role in the Sustainable Development of Africa took place on November 27, 2015, in the new Headquarters building of the African Union in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. The conference was organized jointly by the International Leadership Institute and the University of Greenwich (United Kingdom).

Ms. Bethelhem Taye, director of the Research, Publication and Quality Assurance office of the International Leadership Institute (ILI), knowing well the UPF statement on the role of women, invited UPF to be part of the conference. Ms. Bethelhem is actually a committed Ambassador for Peace of UPF. This was not the first time she had requested UPF-Ethiopia to be part of higher-level conferences. In fact, she already had arranged lectures in the UPF offices, notably on UN International Women’s Day.

Once again, Ms. Bethelhem with her colleague Frewoyne Fitsum (marketing officer at ILI) took the responsibility to fully organize this conference on the role of women.

The program started with the opening speech of Professor Badeg Bekele, president of the International Leadership Institute.

Here are some of his remarks:

“This year’s conference, which is the seventh of its kind, is especially dedicated to women’s role in the sustainable development of Africa. One of ILI’s main goals is to aggressively work toward the improvement of the leadership role and status of women in Ethiopia as well as Africa, and, as a testimony, ILI intentionally has an increasing number of its female students and/or graduates in its master’s-level programs over the past few years who have already assumed potential leadership positions in different sectors of the society.

“A woman is a mother, a sister and a daughter. Empowering her means empowering all the three and our family as a whole, so let us all be wise enough to stand by her side and support. Thank you.”

After a talk by Dr. Tesfamariam Mehari, a representative of the University of Greenwich, guest of honor

Dr. Tewabech Bishaw gave the keynote speech. A key sentence summarizing her speech is “There can be no development without involving women, for they are part of the society and they play a big role in it.”

At the fourth session, Mrs. Mulu Solomon, guest of honor of ILI, who is also an Ambassador for Peace, delivered her so inspiring and moving keynote address.

Mrs. Mulu said that women in Africa are submissive to cultures and religious traditions that deprive them of their rights to have their proper position in the society. That is the reason why they cannot participate in development unfortunately. On the contrary, they are marginalized, mistreated and even beaten.

Mrs. Mulu added that we are living in a new era in which women should have their due places. They should have equal value with men and instead empower them, for women have the potential and capabilities to change our society for the better.

Furthermore, Mrs. Mulu attracted the attention of participants on one point: We all are the same and equal, and as so, we should unite to create one big human family. All conflicts and problems arise from divisions and discriminations. For Mrs. Mulu Solomon, the remedy to the problems of our world is equality and unity.

Participants were so moved by her words that Mrs. Mulu was greatly applauded and congratulated.

Her Excellency Mrs. Tadelech Haile Michael, former minister of women and youth and also representing UPF-Ethiopia, having been appointed as an Ambassador for Peace in Paris, had the opportunity to present briefly her viewpoint and comment in this conference.

Mrs. Tadelech stated that women, especially in Ethiopia and also Africa, lack the commitment to change their status. The key word for change to come is commitment. We do not see commitment from women; first because they are not given this opportunity but also because most women are fatalistic to accept their conditions, she said. Committed women should inspire others to change.

Mrs. Tadelech noticed there is also a lack of information coming not only to women but to all of us. Information should reach all of us, she said, particularly women so that we can be aware of all the changes and happenings in this world today.

This is what motivated Mrs. Tadelech to write some books on women’s status and role, for them to be inspired and change.

The UPF secretary general affirmed that, besides all the mobilizations done in the society, it is crucial to work on the family entity wherein we acquire good habits and character, the family being the start of everything. It is in the family that we learn respect for our siblings.

Several researchers from Ethiopian universities presented their studies on women’s case and conditions in our society today. We could get of a lot of knowledge and information from their informative presentations.

To conclude, UPF-Ethiopia would like to thank Ms. Bethelhem Taye for inviting and associating UPF in the fight to empower women. We’d like to recall that one of UPF’s missions is giving women their rightful position, for the UPF founders believe this era is the era of women. Today, Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon and Mrs. Sun Jin Moon are leading UPF and its affiliated organizations devotedly for the sake of a better world in which all human beings live happily with no discrimination at all and with equality.

