

## UPF London, UK marked International Women's Day 2019 in the House of Lords

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London, United Kingdom -- International Women's Day 2019 was marked by UPF with a program in the House of Lords.

Women and men had come from all over the country to be a part of the evening program on March 25.

Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece warmly welcomed the guests to the Parliament. Then Margaret Ali, the director general of UPF-UK, gave introductory remarks to open the event. She emphasized women's power to negotiate in areas of peace and development and to utilize unique nurturing compassion, often demonstrated in the home, to show the world how men and women can work together in society.

Madi Sharma, an entrepreneur who heads the Madi Group, spoke passionately about how she ensured women are included in all policymaking at the European Economic Council. Consequently, women are now included at all levels, whether in parliament or in work.

Gender equality is not a female issue; it's an issue for all of society, Ms. Sharma said. Women have created the greatest number of small and medium-sized enterprises, the most jobs since the recession, and are the most active peace negotiators, she said. When women are in politics or indeed in any endeavor, productivity increases, she said.

Women possess different qualities from men but nevertheless are equal to men, Ms. Sharma said. She encouraged women to have many experiences in life and to give less weight to CVs. She based this statement on her own personal experience of having no academic qualifications and being a survivor of victimization at home, among other obstacles. Today she is a highly efficient entrepreneur, helping hundreds of women, and has become one of the top 100 influential women in the realm of gender equality and more.

Dr. Dan Guinness, director of the organization Good Lad Initiative, spoke about his work with boys in schools and universities. People often ask him how to change policies to have better equality and pay, he said. However, his organization works in the culture of the people he works with. One aspect of his work is with defensiveness, he said; men in workplaces often talk in terms of being apologetic because of not understanding women colleagues. Another major point is active resistance, in which men feel triggered by female activism as an attack on them as men.

Paola Diana, the best-selling author of *Saving the World*, described having grown up with violence in the home directed toward herself and her mother. Ms. Diana, however, wanted to change this cycle. Coming from Italy, a country where feminism is still considered negatively, she actively worked to promote taxation policies that enhance gender equality. She expressed how basic processes of life, such as safety features in cars, are still designed for men. She urged women to rise up to break the cycle and open up the era of women.

Author and broadcaster Carole Stone, CBE, told the story of the development of her career, describing the dozens of organizations she has started, as well as others with which she has actively worked.

She related that a friend once told her, "It's amazing what you have done, despite having children and a husband." She responded, "Well, I am what I am because of them."

Ms. Stone encouraged women to "have a go at what you want to achieve!" She presented her story of experiencing victimization in her marriage, and how easy it is to accept this role.



Wellness advocate Dr. Gill Barham observed that women often lack energy and vitality. She quoted the Dalai Lama, who said, "The age ahead is when the world will be saved by the Western woman."

We have left the age dominated by masculine power and are moving into an age of love, compassion and community, where women are the activists, Dr. Barham said. However, we don't want to collapse on the way, trying to be superwomen both at home and in the world. Therefore we need self-care to fulfill our role of contributing to this new age, she said.

Dongsoon Chen, a representative of Women's Federation for World Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF, said she has seen women working so hard that they become exhausted. As an intern with WFWP, she said she wants to see women break through.

Recently Ms. Chen attended the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. She explained that one woman said, "What we are working on now is to secure the prosperity of 50 percent of the world." From her recent journey to the United Nations, she said she felt empowered and hopeful for the future of women.

International Women's Day is the time when we check our inner compasses to find how we can contribute to the world through our female powers, Ms. Chen said. What is important for true awakening of all people is to foster understanding, she said.

David Mahoney, whose organization is creating fairer environments, told how he had been oblivious to the sadness women go through because of unfair environments until his wife expressed how she was affected by this. He emphasized the importance of understanding and choosing to act differently in meeting with women and the importance of encouraging others to do so.

Maisha Sumah, only 20 years old, is the youngest expert in the National Health Service with regard to young people's mental health. She is a confident and eloquent speaker but told of growing up in an environment of abuse, to which her mother was also subjected. Everyone is focused on their own life, but as a part of society we need to be aware of others' needs, especially the needs of the young, she said. To that end, Ms. Sumah joined community groups; helping other young people.

A supportive community can provide the environment and impetus for young people to turn their lives around, she said. Ms. Sumah was so passionate that she moved many in the audience to tears.

Michael Balcomb, the regional chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, mentioned that women are experts at listening, which is what the world needs to come to peace. Because we are spiritual beings, he said, we feel lacking in today's world where politicians emphasize practical solutions but forget spiritual values.

The event was only two hours long, but each speaker was so inspiring, it was commonly felt that this event should have lasted longer. Indeed, the room was buzzing with activity at the end as everyone hastened out of the room, but so engrossed in sharing insights that the discussion followed with them. It is our hope that the energy from this conference can drive men and women to create a society that is more respectful to women and uses women's unique qualities for the betterment of society.