



**B'nai B'rith Europe**

*A Division of B'nai B'rith International*

## **Message from B'nai B'rith Europe on International Women's day**

Dear members of the European Parliament, dear Panelists, dear colleagues from religious and cultural organizations as well as fellow Jewish organizations, dear distinguished guests,

On behalf of B'nai B'rith Europe and its members from 25 European countries, I would like to thank members of the European Parliament Mrs Metsola, Mrs Kyenge, Mr Koster, Mr Zala and Mr Khan for hosting this conference on the international women's day.

As the oldest Jewish organization working towards living together in harmony, we are very happy to join the European Jewish Community Centre in co-organising this conference to address our concern regarding challenges Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist women face today in their working environment.

Looking back at the past decades, it is obvious that society went a long way but there is a long journey in front of us.

As a woman who grew up in a religious background, I myself encountered glass ceilings in my life. My personal experience showed that some of those glass ceilings were set up by my working environment or raised by my own community, while others were actually created by my own belief system.

As much as it is legitimate to feel frustrated, I tend to start by looking within, and to ask myself: have I ever done or not done something that made me be in this unwanted situation? I believe that my journey towards equity started within myself by fine tuning my own belief system, seeing myself as an actor, taking responsibility for my choices and be the change I want to see; because beliefs turn into assumptions, assumptions translate in behaviors, and behaviors achieve results. Author Mrs. Anderson wrote: "Women are already strong, it's about changing the way the world", including women themselves, "perceive that strength". The journey towards equity is a vector of self-empowerment.

Equality is giving the same rights to everybody. Equity is giving each person what they need to be successful.

In the work environment it provides a safe place for different cultures, that allows people to bring their entire self at work, it puts in place optimal conditions for workers to fully contribute to the success of the company they work for. Inclusiveness is a vector of creativity and grander business achievements.

Diversity in work space is an opportunity to enhance communication and establish better understanding between people from different communities. As workers have the opportunity to share their cultural values, they expand their views through encounters with alterity; bridges between cultures are created. Diversity in the workplace is a vector of communication between communities.

Women's equity and diversity of cultures within working environments reinforces business, builds bridges between communities and is a way to instill peaceful evolution in today's society.

To conclude, I would like to quote former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Anan, "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."

I'm very much looking forward to listen to our panelists who will be introduced by Alfiaz Vaiya, coordinator of anti-racism and diversity intergroup who I thank very much for coordinating this event.

Thank you

H.K. Director B'nai B'rith Europe