



# WOMEN in DEVELOPMENT

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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN

# Why do we celebrate March 8?

*(Speech delivered by Commissioner Jurgette Honculada during the "Pista ng Kababaihan" at the Luneta on March 8, 1989).*

Dear sisters (and brothers), good afternoon.

Today we are gathered together in memory and in hope, in joy and in pain, in grief and in celebration. For today, first of all, is a day of mourning.

Today, 78 years ago, thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, marched in silence in New York City. It was a funeral march to bury 175 female textile workers who had jumped to their deaths a few days earlier. A fire had broken out in the Triangle Shirt Factory. But women were trapped inside because management had locked all the doors to prevent theft. Women crowded with machines to cut costs and increase production. The women had no choice but to burn to death or leap out of the blazing inferno. One hundred seventy five of them died in the process. I remember seeing a television documentary of that event several years ago entitled "The Fire on the 18th Floor." Most of these young women belonged to migrant families from Europe.

The outpouring of sorrow and anger was such that today, that massive silent parade is yearly commemorated as International Women's Day by women all over the world.

I submit that those fires that raged on the 18th and other floors of New York's Triangle Shirt Factory still rage today. The grief and mourning that enveloped that first March 8th haunt us today, 78 years later.

For so long as a woman worker suffers the double burden of home and work, tearing herself away from home for factory, field or office, tearing herself away from work for duties at home, tearing herself apart in this way, for so long will we continue to mourn.

For so long as a peasant woman tills the land that is not hers, flees from the land that is not hers when guns bark, when this peasant woman and her daughter must yield their sex in exchange for their lives, but where sex and life are taken anyway, for so long will we continue to mourn.

For so long as one in ten of Manila's working women must walk the dead end of its streets in order to live, and, most hurting of all, for so long as she is now joined by girls and boys of seven, eight, ten who should be playing games and playing house instead of fondling the genitalia and kissing the ass of some Caucasian or Filipino client, for so long as prostitution so thoroughly claims the bodies and souls of Filipino women and children, we continue to mourn.



And when competition in the flesh-trade becomes too keen?

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For so long as our pubescent girls fly in droves to Tokyo or Osaka to provide song, dance and sex in the Land of the Rising Sun, but who meet violence instead; for so long as our middle-aged *maestras* offer themselves in marriage to foreign men they have not seen, smelled or heard, much less talked with, laughed with or dreamt with, through contracts of straightforward domestic and sexual service, we continue to mourn.

If today is a day of mourning, it is also a day of remembering.

We remember the women who have come before us, women of courage, vision and power. The *babaylanes* or priestesses who not only healed the sick but also gave wise counsel in communities, the women revolutionaries who fought alongside men and even led armies, the suffragettes who strove to secure the vote, the middle class professionals who struggled for equal time and space with male counterparts, the young activists of the First Quarter Storm who marched not only to the beat of national and class liberation but also to women's emancipation, our colleagues engaged in the battle for legislative reform, women in labor organizing, peasant organizing, community organizing

All the advances of the past 100 years have been made through the struggle and sacrifice of generations of Filipinas. So today is a day of remembering, of honoring our dead and the living - 27 1/2 million of us Filipinas.

If today is a day of remembering, it is also a day of celebration. We must rejoice in the fact that we have come a long way indeed. That is because our foremothers broke ground before us: the *babaylanes*, the women of Malolos, Teodora Alonzo, Gabriela Silang, Gregoria de Jesus, Teresa Magbanua, Leona Florentino and so on.

We remain thankful for the February 1986 uprising that booted out Marcos and put Cory Aquino in place, and for government initiatives that genuinely seek the people's interest. As grieving housewife, Cory met the challenge of politics head on and that is something we cannot take for granted.

We must be thankful to continue in the trails blazed by our foremothers and for the opportunity to transcend their limits. We rejoice at this time when new heresies are being raised, when the structures that subordinate women are being challenged in the mind and at the base.

One feminist speaks of "prefigurative politics" - politics that prefigures our vision. If we are moved by the vision of a new order of joy, peace, justice, freedom and love, we must feel that joy here and now. We must pursue peace here and now. Justice and freedom must reign in our organizations and movements. Love, or at least equality, must undergird our relationships.

And so today we celebrate the worldwide movement for women's liberation which really is for men's liberation as well. In some countries women will discuss peace and the nuclear madness, in others they will protest against dictatorships and violence against women. Other women's groups will clean up slums or build shelters, still others will call the IMF-World Bank to task for bleeding their economies dry. (Last week about 300 Venezuelans died in protests against IMF-World Bank-inspired inflation.) Last year 10,000 Scandinavian women massed in Oslo's central square in a stirring display of sisterhood and solidarity.

We celebrate the fact of being alive, of having some democratic space; we celebrate our movements, our spouses, our children; we take joy in our work and our relationships.

But today is not just a day of mourning, or of remembering, or of celebration. Today is also a day of resolve. One feminist has called women's liberation the longest revolution and indeed it is. It requires not only new structures, but also a new being. And that, perhaps, is the most difficult task of all.

It requires that at some point, sooner rather than later, middle class women will have to do without househelp so that these women, our sisters, can build their own lives and contribute to the vision. It means that women must enter the public sphere of politics and industry not as tokens or ornaments but in numbers and as conscious choices. But for that to happen it also means that our husbands or partners must enter the reproductive sphere and take up their share of housework and child care.

No more late nights out in beer gardens. No more endless hours of overtime in pursuit of wages, a career or the revolution. Child care requires time in quality and quantity. Our men may complain that giving up the "happy hour" is too high a price to pay for social change. I ask them: what price did we women have to pay, and continue to pay, for keeping house and raising children? The price was ourselves: when marriage obliterated our names, it obliterated ourselves.

So today, finally, is a day of resolve. So much has been done but there is a whole new world to build.

For so long as a woman has to give up schooling for a brother, or a wife give up work, career or the union for a husband, for so long as economic development policies consign us to being a nation of whores, waiters and scavengers, for so long as foreign economic interests hold sway over the country, for so long as Congress closes its doors on a woman representative truly mandated by women, for so long as the double standard of morality blocks women and men from freer and more creative relationships, for so long as violence remains a universal weapon employed by men to brutalize women, for so long as the double burden will pit women against men in a gender war where



there are no winners - for so long must we stoke the fires on the 18th floor, for so long must we nurse the rage in our hearts and in those of our sisters, for so long must we keep alive the pain of that first March 8th, 78 years ago.

Only then can we truly honor the 175 women who died in new York, only then can we honor the millions of women worldwide who have struggled in history and society for women's liberation and social transformation, and, in so honoring them, only then can we truly honor ourselves.



# The Challenges We Face in the ASEAN Women's Programme

(Welcome address given by Dr. Patricia B. Licuanan, Chairperson of the Ninth Meeting of the ASEAN Women's Programme at the Manila Peninsula Hotel on January 24, 1990).

On behalf of the ASEAN Women's Programme, I welcome you to the Opening Ceremonies of the Ninth Meeting of the AWP. I also join the Philippine delegation in extending a wholehearted welcome to Manila to our sisters from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

As in past AWP meetings, the ninth meeting will assess the progress in the advancement of women in the ASEAN region and identify what the AWP can do towards this end. Today we will have an open plenary during which country papers will be presented in the following important areas: Women in Law and Policy, the Educational Status of Women and Violence Against Women. You are all invited to participate in the discussion of the papers. Tomorrow and the day after, we will discuss in closed session, ongoing and proposed projects and, as a body, determine the future directions of AWP.

An assessment of past actions and future directions seems particularly significant today as we step into the decade of the 1990's and as we stand on the threshold of a new century. At the last AWP meeting I reported that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women has observed that the advancement of women has slowed down and in some instances even stopped in the 1980's. Reports before the Commission suggest that after some initial victories, the advancement toward equality particularly in the economic and political areas is now confronting more entrenched obstacles. The old resistance of policy-makers to seeing the advancement of women from a perspective broader than a narrow social welfare mode, is still there and the urge to move on to more glamorous - and perhaps less threatening - issues is beginning to erode our base of support. The point was very strongly made at the last meeting of the UNCSW that if the goal of equality of opportunity by the year 2000 is to be reached, "something dramatic" must be done now to revive the pace of progress.

I repeat these observations today because in ASEAN too, we must take dramatic steps to go beyond the *de jure* improvements in the status of women to changes in the *de facto* situation of ASEAN Women.

The AWP can take credit for a number of substantial projects carried out under its aegis of cooperation such as the establishment of women's machineries and the creation of a network of clearinghouses on women in develop-



ment. Projects on vocational training, women's studies, legal aid and legal literacy among others, have been started.

But at the risk of being terribly repetitious (I tend to bring this up at every opportunity I have to address an ASEAN Women's Forum) I would like to recall that the AWP pushed, very strongly for and succeeded in getting officially proclaimed, the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region signed in July, 1988, in Bangkok, Thailand by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN.

As representatives of the Women's machineries in our countries, it is important that we constantly remind ourselves and our governments what we are officially committed to in ASEAN. Allow me to read from the declaration:

"In the context of strengthening regional cooperation, collaboration and coordination for the purpose of advancing the role and contribution of women in the progress of the region, each MEMBER COUNTRY either individually or collectively in ASEAN, shall endeavor:

1. To promote and implement the equitable and effective participation of women whenever possible in all fields and at various levels of the political, economic, social and cultural life of society at the national, regional and international levels.

2. To enable women in the region to undertake their important role as active agents and beneficiaries of national and regional development, particularly in promoting regional understanding and cooperation and in building more just and peaceful societies.

3. To integrate in national plans the specific concerns of women and their roles as active agents in and beneficiaries of development, specifically considering their roles as a productive force to attain the full development of the human personality.

4. To design and promote programs involving the participation of the community and non-governmental women organizations towards strengthening the national and regional resilience.

5. To strengthen solidarity in the regional and international women forum by promoting harmonization of views, and of positions."

Despite this impressive declaration, if we take a hard look at progress in the improvement of the situation of Women in ASEAN, I am afraid that we have to admit that as a community our actions fall short of our inspiring words. Here in ASEAN there remain some countries without national machineries for women. There is need for special efforts to remove remaining traditional barriers and to set up the mechanism to implement and monitor legislation in support of women. Steps have to be taken to strengthen social support structures including a greater sharing of domestic and family responsibility by

men and women, improved education and training, better attention to health and family planning. Necessary measures should be taken to improve the position of women in parliament, in political parties and political life in general.

When we were drafting the Declaration on the Advancement of Women, there was much discussion and debate over one significant line:

"To promote and implement the equitable and effective participation of women **whenever possible** in all fields and at various levels of the political, economic, social and cultural life of society at the national, regional and international levels."

The bone of contention then were the two words "whenever possible". Some insisted that these words be added to make the document more acceptable to policy makers while others among us felt it would water down or weaken the Declaration. That debate is long over and was obviously resolved by including the controversial phrase. However, I do hope that the phrase "whenever possible" is not used as a convenient rationalization to stifle action or to attempt only safe and possibly token moves. There is a lot more possible in ASEAN as we enter a new decade, we at the AWP have to strengthen our commitment to obtain for ASEAN Women whatever advancement is possible. In fact, today as we begin this ninth AWP meeting, let us pledge ourselves to make possible the attainment of even the impossible Dream of true equality.





# Equality, Development and Women in ASEAN

*(Speech delivered by Senator Santanina T. Rasual during the opening ceremonies of the Ninth Meeting of the ASEAN Women's Programme at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in January 24, 1990).*

Delegates and participants of the Ninth Meeting of the ASEAN Women's Programme, distinguished guests, dear friends:

I would like to thank you all for the singular honor and privilege of allowing me to address you this morning as your keynote speaker. It is truly auspicious that you should be meeting at the beginning of a decade that is ushering in a brave new world; a world quite different from that we have lived in for most of our lives and to whose uncertainties we have ironically become certain of and grown accustomed to.

Today, we are witnessing the dramatic eclipse of the old world order and the equally captivating birth of the new.

The Iron Curtain in Europe has been torn down, and superpower rivalry has been replaced by cautious cooperation between East and West. Indeed, at no time in contemporary history has the possibility of thermonuclear annihilation become more remote than today.

Sweeping, monumental, and revolutionary changes around the globe evince an inexorable trend toward greater democracy in governance and a pronounced tilt toward market-oriented economies. More and more, economics is being transformed as the main arena in world politics.

Here in Asia, sustained and high economic growth rates of newly industrializing countries, the economic predominance of Japan and the enormous potential of China make futurists and planners speak of a Pacific Century. By all indications, it would seem that an industrialized Asia is not as far-fetched a prospect as a united Germany.

In this environment of dizzying flux, the countries comprising ASEAN have risen to the challenge of industrializing their economies with the full knowledge that the prospect of a Pacific Century is not self-fulfilling, and that to lag behind may forebode a more perilous economic future than that so brightly envisioned. The countries of ASEAN have, therefore, sought to utilize and mobilize all their respective societies' resources and efforts in the attainment of economic prosperity.

It is therefore not surprising that particular attention has been given on how women may contribute more to their country's development. And precisely because females comprise about a half of the ASEAN countries' population, their pivotal part in the development process has been given due notice.

It was hence not coincidental that the "Declaration on the Advancement of Women" signed by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July, 1988, which has since been adopted by the AWP as its new terms of reference, should endeavor "to enable women in the region to undertake their important role as active agents and beneficiaries of national and regional development".

That the AWP itself considers as its main objective the enhancement of active participation and integration of women in national and regional development would show also that women have recognized their crucial role in development and have organized themselves to contribute to this transcendental goal.

But the point I would like to stress to you today is that all our hopes and dreams to achieve a stage of development similar to the countries of the West could be best realized if equality between the sexes in the workplace, in politics, and the family is pursued with the same determination as any integral program in development planning. I am of the opinion that the integration of women in the development process would necessarily entail as its concomitant - gender equality, not only in law but in everyday life as well.

After all, development connotes not only the economic; it has a social aspect as well. And certainly social progress in a modernizing society as far as women are concerned should mean the enlightened attitude of the whole of society to accommodate women in all those activities where they may prove themselves productive.

On the question of equality shall depend the success or failure of any meaningful and significant attempt to involve women in a country or region's development efforts. It is, I submit, the heart and soul of women's participation in economic progress. For how can we expect women to realize their fullest potentials as human beings and contribute much-needed talents to society if structural barriers effectively make this impossible? It would be a tragic waste indeed if a particular society would refuse to harness the entire pool of human resources available to it and essential for it to perform the multifarious activities required by development merely because of sexual discrimination and bigotry.

A deliberate and systematic undertaking must therefore be carried out by ASEAN women to integrate the issue of equality in their respective agenda. While the pursuit of sexual equality may be implicit in women's development programmes, still it is not spelled out clearly in some. The result of this omission is that not a few projects being planned and implemented become purely developmental thereby losing any gender content other than the fact that women participate in them. Thus, a nutrition project may be classified as a



developmental project by women. But if similarly planned and implemented by the local Rotary Club, it ceases to be gender-associated.

Of course, activities of these kind cannot per se be disparaged, especially in their beneficiaries are women themselves. But the point not to be missed is that if women's participation is to be significant, women must first be empowered to participate in a significant way. And this can only be made possible if sustained and determined efforts are exerted so that women may eventually be deemed as equal partners in society.

Thus, development planning necessarily must involve women's programs that will deal squarely and directly with gender equality - or the lack of it - in all social spheres. Otherwise, we will be planning in the main innocuous projects that have intrinsically nothing to do with profoundly expanding and making worthwhile women's role in social and economic development.

In a word, while activities devoid of gender content or which are not gender-qualified should not be cavalierly eschewed, developmental efforts by women at this point in time must concentrate, on the main, on female empowerment, which is a condition *sine qua non* to any significantly fruitful role in nation-building.

Be that as it may, it is heartening to note that the issue of empowerment finds its way ineluctably in the long-range development plans for women in specific ASEAN countries. In the Philippine case, the five-year plan for women tackles the structural and historical determinants of the modern Filipina's status. This framework, in turn, allows for strategies that would deal with the problem of inequality in a fundamental way.

But one danger we have to watch out for in development plans is that we may plan so many activities that may eventually diffuse the central thrust or concern which I have previously adverted to. Depending, of course, on the specific conditions obtaining in our respective countries, planning will have to take into account all issues involving women. But ultimately, priorities will have to be made.

While it is true that women have come a long way, it is also true that we still have a long way to go. All the more, there is a great need for all sisters in ASEAN to work resolutely and in concert to achieve our sector's goals. Government, non-governmental organizations, and individual women must all contribute in bringing down sexual barriers even as we all help in facilitating the development process.

The Philippine Senate Committee on Women and Family Relations has strived for the past two years to bring women's issues to the fore. As Chairperson of the Committee, I was privileged to introduce legislation that would eliminate gender discrimination in the Philippine Penal Code. One proposed measure I likewise sponsored aims to assure women equality of

opportunity in all spheres of economic activity involving services rendered for compensation. Bills were also introduced to integrate women as full and equal partners in development efforts and, more concretely, to establish women's support centers in all communities. The aforementioned measure seeks to help Filipino women to cope with the double burden of tending for their children while holding jobs outside the home as well.

It has been observed that the advancement of women has slowed down in the 1980's and that "something dramatic" must be done to revive the pace of progress. I believe that nothing more dramatic than continuing our relentless efforts in raising the consciousness of our societies on women issues and chipping off the structural bottlenecks toward equality is needed. Perhaps, when we look at the basics, there can be no better place to educate people than in our own families. Teaching our children what fairness to the female gender means will no doubt spawn future generations more sensitive and considerate of women's concerns.

The struggle for equality like any struggle for emancipation shall be ultimately resolved in the realm of the consciousness. I am quite optimistic, despite the statistics, that our efforts to win the hearts and minds of our people shall come to fruition in a dramatic fashion as well. We can only recall how as early back as three years ago nobody could imagine the generally peaceful dismantling of the Stalinist dictatorships in Eastern Europe. But because the courageous persisted in their struggle, the little cracks they created eventually subverted the very foundation of despotism itself.

I am happy that the ASEAN WOMEN'S PROGRAMME has participated in no small way toward clarifying women's experiences, problems and issues in a regional context. I have no doubt that, in time, your persistence in advancing the woman's point of view will mean a world of greater opportunity and freedom for our sisters in ASEAN.

May your Ninth Annual Meeting be marked with success!



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN**

1145 J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila  
Tel. Nos.: 741-50-93; 741-50-28