

Talking points by H.E. Minister Zaruhi Batoyan, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

- What does Generation Equality mean to you, especially in the context of this being a quarter of a century since Beijing? If you could tell young feminists - or your younger selves - anything, what would it be?

- The Gender Equality campaign is a unique agenda, the fulfillment of the objectives of which depends on each one of us, regardless of our location and role in society. The leaders of all countries leastwise have ever heard a very memorable phrase that impressed me after first hearing it: "Women's rights are human rights, human rights are women's rights."

Efforts to promote equal rights for women and girls in twelve critical areas adopted in the past century are still relevant. Poverty among women and girls, inequality in education, violence and less economic opportunities are issues that affect the quality of life of each individual.

In some places slowly, in some places - much more rapidly, gender equality is becoming a public demand.

As at all times, so it today, personal example, our success story play an important role in the struggle for women's rights and equality. And the more successful the women are, the more loudly they talk about legal equality, the more external pressures and negative influences can intensify. It is natural, but not desirable.

As a woman with a disability, I have always talked loudly about the rights of women and girls and used all modern tools for advocacy.

The 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia took place with a wide participation of women and girls. And today, as the only female member of the Government, it is a double-binding fact for me. When I put the existing stereotypes and pressures of society on the same scale with this commitment, I become even more confident about women's rights.

I can confidently state that our Government has achieved many new accomplishments in advancing women's rights. We are more than ever engaged in an active fight against gender-based violence, including domestic violence.

Since the Revolution, unprecedented rise in women's participation in decision-making processes has also been recorded. Today, a greater number of women run for municipal elections and conduct election observation missions.

However, I would like to frankly point out that our main difficulty lies in the political environment that still does not promote equal participation of women. Women and men for the same activities are treated very unequally by society and different political groups. Men are allowed to make mistakes in politics, women - are not.

By entering politics, women put at risk their personal lives, keeping in mind that for any, even for the most correct decision they can be attacked, including subjected to cyberbullying, and their professional skills and human qualities can be called into question.

But can the above-mentioned difficulties prevent us from fighting for the rights and freedoms of women and girls, or make us going to concessions against human rights principles, or hinder us to undertake every effort possible?

Our Constitution states that the human being is the highest value and I unequivocally believe it.

Women should support each other in overcoming difficulties. Reciprocal assistance between women is a very important tradition rooted in Armenian families. Older women, for example, like to gather around a table and talk about their problems. With their wisdom and experience they support younger ones. Young people, in their turn, expand their networks through modern technologies and use them to protect their rights. I think that young feminists need to remember that everything starts with small changes which have a domino effect. For example, changing the approaches of a decision maker can lead to a change in the system. And if we don't believe in evolutionary transformation, I think the Armenian Revolution is a good example here. They should at first be participatory, not ignore anyone, and be decentralized, enabling everyone to be that one leader who has an important commitment.

Thank you.