



Statement by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic at the opening of the conference "Women's leadership and sustainable development – truly equal":

"Mr. Chairman,
Dear lady Ministers,
Esteemed men and women organizers,
Dear participants,

It gives me great honour and pleasure to address you today at the opening of the international conference "Women's leadership and sustainable development – truly equal". It should be noted that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessity if we are to create a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Equal access to education, health care, dignity in the workplace and representation in political and economic decision-making processes are preconditions for the creation of a more favourable environment where the entire population can achieve full personal and professional capacity.

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The Government of the Republic of Serbia is committed to the fulfilment of gender equality, as confirmed by the fact that participation of women in public political life is increasing year on year. Out of 250 MPs in our Parliament, 38 per cent are women, while the Government of the Republic of Serbia has four women Ministers. The Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia are also women.

Moreover, women hold managerial positions in many businesses. However, I would also like to recall certain challenges encountered by some women in our country who live and work more or less away from the hustle and bustle of a city but who are nevertheless leaders in their communities.

According to the data of the Republican Institute of Statistics, the number of men and women living in rural areas is more or less equal but women are very devoted to jobs in rural households even though compared to men, only every fifth of them own agricultural holdings and are often the sole successors of the estates. That is why it should be our joint task to raise

awareness of their needs and increase their visibility in our society since they deserve equal attention, support and chances.

The work done to achieve gender equality and empower women has been recognized by the Government of the Republic of Serbia as a precondition for success in the overall development of our country. Unless we ensure that girls and women enjoy equal rights and equitable conditions to accomplish their personal and professional ambitions like men do, we cannot expect full development potential to be tapped by any community or environment.

The need for access to quality education for all is recognized as Agenda 2030 Goal 4, reminding us of the necessity of achieving equality between boys and girls, not only in primary education but also at higher levels of education. According to the official statistics, advanced schools and universities in our country are more frequently enrolled on and graduated from by women. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women with doctoral degrees, and figures show that women mostly account for internet users as well.

Because of the specific nature of the topic we are discussing today, I will single out Agenda Goal 5 indicating the need for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls with a view to ending any discrimination and eliminating violence, whether in private or public life.

The world we live in is rapidly changing and contemporary society guided by principles of sustainable development requires higher levels of democracy, care and concern for the environment, gender equality and equal rights of the sexes. In particular, it is important that in the world of present-day achievements we work to create an environment which is supportive of woman, her person, authenticity and needs.

Women empowerment is woven into the 2030 Agenda as its indispensable part. The part of global efforts aimed at achieving a sustainable society of equals in which no one is left behind also encompasses women living in rural areas, in urban areas, refugees, women who have experienced some form of discrimination: Roma women, elderly women, women with disabilities or women who have not complied with gender norms.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me recall that there were brave women in Serbia in times when it was not so easy to be brave. Such times produced Milunka Savic, a Serbian heroine. History also recorded Jelisaveta Nacic, the first woman graduate architect, the first Serbian painter Katarina Ivanovic, the first woman with a PhD Ksenija Atanasijevic. Today, in each of you lives a part of them. In your contributions, innovative efforts and achievements, in all the true values that you carry within you!

I am convinced that we will succeed in taking advantage of the unique opportunity we are given to be the most determined generation that will eradicate inequalities and achieve gender equality, and all this for the sake of creating a more prosperous and successful society for all.

Thank you and long live Serbia!"

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