

**Opening Remarks of the Minister for Education, Mrs. Macsuzy Mondon,  
at the International Women's Day Conference, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013,  
International Conference Centre**

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*Ministers*

*Excellencies*

*Principal Secretaries*

*Distinguished Guests*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

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I would like to begin my remarks by quoting something very interesting by Confucius: ***“Our greatest glory is not in falling, but in rising every time we fall”***.

When I scan the concept paper that was sent to me I read that ***“International Women's Day is celebrated every year on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, focusing on the social awareness of the struggles of women around the world, as well as honouring and showing appreciation for the economic, social and political achievements of women in various different fashions.”***

Today's conference is aimed at mainstreaming the gender agenda in the Social Renaissance Programme and should serve as a unique opportunity to further promote the advancement of women in Seychelles.

I am pleased to note that in contrast to many countries, gender equality is not an abstract concept in Seychelles. It is a living testimony to the values and beliefs that we hold dear as a people. Values that are enshrined in our Constitution and laws. As a society, we are at a critical juncture of our development because whilst we have addressed our economic difficulties and are seeing progress, we need to give the same attention and commitment to ensure that persisting social ills do not affect our economic gains.

Today, I would like to salute each woman personally because I believe that we are, each and every one of us, special, bursting with positive energy and having the resilience that has been imbibed in us by our mothers before us. Each one

of us has contributed, and continues to touch many lives as we go through our normal business of living.

The reason why I quoted Confucius in the first place is that I believe that too often we dwell on the negative of a certain aspect of our lives; we seem to preoccupy ourselves with the act of falling rather than the act of picking ourselves up, brushing our proverbial skirts and getting on with it in the knowledge that the experience of the fall will help us not to repeat it.

This being women's special day I would like to especially address my daughters, sisters and mothers in Seychelles. There is no doubt that we are the driving forces in our homes, in our workplaces and in our communities. I believe that all of us have a genuine desire to be a positive force in our communities and by extension, our country.

This world was created for men and women to co-exist and to complement each other in all possible ways. We were not given a perfect world and neither were we ever promised one. Each generation will have its problems, its challenges and its travails. But we have only one world. Surely this in itself is an indication that the intention was not that men and women should spend their whole lives wallowing in trouble and strife. As we celebrate our day we also give thanks for all the men in our lives, our spouse, sons and male colleagues. Thank you for the complementary role that you play in helping to make the world a better place.

Together we are expected to make the journey through life using our core elements of values, needs, desires and passions. In doing so let us not lose sight of our real purpose.

A great deal is made about relationships, how to enrich ourselves and others by communicating better, spending quality time with our nearest and dearest – but none of these things mean anything unless there is a solid foundation of authenticity – of knowing who and what we are.

Let us today not dwell on our challenges because they will always be there. Rather, let us celebrate ourselves, our strengths, the external, and particularly our inner beauty as women, our successes and express our hopes for the future. Let us take the opportunity that has been given to us on our special day to grandstand our possibilities against our improbabilities.

We need therefore to look inwards and see that particular power, that particular magic that you as an individual can exude; *that thing that makes you unique as*

*a woman. I am talking about that extra thing that is good, that is strong, that special quality that adds spice to those around you.*

As a woman who has celebrated many Women's Day, I realise that every dream is achieved through the little steps we take towards it and with every step, we need to acknowledge ourselves and celebrate the small successes. When we celebrate the positive steps we take, we encourage ourselves and others to keep going.

Let us be inspired by people who are driven by the difference they can make – especially those people who are prepared to even pay a price for their principles rather than flow with the tide.

Our country has embarked on a path of “social renaissance” and I believe that the women and men of this country – as the co-nurturers – must continue to uphold this banner. This renewal must be a personal one because as you know a whole is the sum of the parts. In renewing our social mores we should perhaps start seeing opportunities instead of challenges. In the stead of failure let us perceive learning and building. Start living our “*real life*” and let the spiritual govern the material. Let us embrace the universal truth which transcends rationale, space, time and the physical. Decide where you want to go and plan on how to get there. Live from the inside out; listen to what you tell yourself and examine what you believe about the situations in which you find yourself.

**In fact, what I am trying to say is that “Renesans Sosyal” begins with the individual.** If you are living your true self and you get up every morning feeling happy and good about your life and you pass this feeling on, then you are already playing a role in this national process. Once you begin to appreciate your values and make life choices that are congruent with these values, this will give you a sense of renewal and positivity. When you start counting your blessings and being grateful for who you are and what you have, you will then be able to see everyone around you and not only yourself. This in itself will open the opportunities for a more fulfilled life. Make gratitude a great attitude!

I am truly grateful to the organisers of this conference for this initiative and wish all the participants fruitful deliberations.

I call on all women  
Face your past without regret.  
Handle your present with confidence.  
Prepare for the future without fear.  
Celebrate the woman that you are.

I wish you all a happy women's day.

Thank you for your attention.