

The Role of Tajikistan's Women in Society

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**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

First of all let me to congratulate all ladies participating in this conference with the great holiday – International Women Day – the day of people who are source of life, beauty and love on the Earth! It is very symbolic that our conference began on this remarkable day when the whole world celebrates the 100th Anniversary of International Women Day.

I express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of the Conference, President of the Utah Valley University Dr. Matthew Holland, professors Rusty Butler and Baktybek Abdrysaev for the opportunity to participate in the Conference.

Special congratulations for transformation of Utah Valley College to Utah Valley University.

Now, I want to inform you about the position of woman, there role and influence in the current life of Tajikistan's society.

Throughout most of history women generally have had fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions. In the 20th century, however, women in most nations won the right to vote and increased their educational and job opportunities. Perhaps most important, they fought for and to a large degree accomplished a reevaluation of traditional views of their role in society.

The Republic of Tajikistan right after its independence in 1991 had faced devastating Civil War which lasted for 5 years (1992-1997) and brought tremendous social and economic detriments to our newly established country. As a result of the Civil War many women were widowed and were obliged to work with low salaries to feed their orphans. Moreover, economic hardships derived from the transition of society to market economy even further deteriorated the situation; many of the women had lost their jobs. More than 100 000 human losses, \$7 billion US dollars of material damages and destroyed factories, facilities and refugees (around 700 thousand of people of Tajikistan found refuge in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) had created very difficult situation in the country. The Peace Accord of 1997 that was signed between the Government and opposition forces changed situation drastically; it gave national consensus and integrity to Tajikistan as well as an opportunity to focus on priority issues of the country and put it on the right truck. And improvement of the status of women in the society, family protection and maternity were among important issues addressed by the Government of Tajikistan.

One of the most important steps of the Government of Tajikistan in this direction was creation of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan with an aim to improve status of women in Tajikistan. The Committee is a central executive body which carries out the functions of the state policy to protect and ensure the rights and interests of women and families, create equal conditions for the

exercise of their rights and interests and achieving gender equality, expanding the scope of their participation and addressing the socio-economic problems in managing the affairs of state and society, as well as legal and regulatory management, delivery of public services. As a result, participation of women in political, economic, social, spiritual and cultural life of Tajikistan's society has dramatically enhanced.

The Government of Tajikistan for all the years since its independence has been putting into practice practical measures to strengthen the status and enforce human and constitutional rights of women by implementing them in accordance with the norms of democratic, legal and secular society. In order to protect constitutional rights of women and enhance their status in society, address critical issues in women's lives as well as demographic problems a number of legal acts were passed: the Decree of the President "On measures to improve women's status in society", Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On State guarantees of equality between men and women and equal opportunities for their implementation", National Plan of action to increase status and role of women as well as State programs "Main directions of State policy to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women", "Preparation, selection and placement of managerial personnel of the Republic of Tajikistan out of talented women and girls". Their realization contributes to the further improvement of life and enhances their participation in the social activities.

Nowadays, we can observe deep engagement of women in all branches of the Government: executive, legislative and judiciary making significant contributions to the development of various spheres of social life. Currently, more than fifty percent of employees in healthcare, science, education and information services are women. In addition, five women are member of Upper Chamber of our Parliament, 12 in the Lower Chamber of the Parliament, 66 were elected as people representatives in the Municipality of Dushanbe city, 4 Heads of cities and districts of Tajikistan, 67 act as deputy to the Heads of cities and districts in Tajikistan.

Annually, with the purpose of personnel training of talented girls from remote mountainous regions in accordance with the presidential quota Universities of Tajikistan accept more than 6000 of girls and some of them already received higher education and already working for the country. Along with this, the Government has created favorable conditions and necessary foundation for the activities of women's NGOs and development of entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the Law of the Government of Tajikistan, dated July 4th, 2006 # 307 "On the creation of Presidential grants for the sake of development of small and middle enterprises, to attract women and girls for apprenticeships, enhancing their awareness for their rights and creation of new jobs for years 2006-2010" put into practice.

It's important to mention the assistance of international donors through OSCE and UNDP offices in Tajikistan in this matter. In order to incorporate a gender perspective into governmental institutions, the Offices assists in developing civil servants' understanding of gender issues and their skills in implementing relevant policy. Since 2005, OSCE Office has helped to train more than 350 civil servants throughout the country. In 2009, a total of 60 civil servants, from the Ministries of Economics, Education and Health, respectively, completed a five-day course on gender aspects within the state service. Topics included: gender issues in Tajikistan and their

meaning; national legislation and international laws guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities in Tajikistan for males and females; gender budgeting; and gender aspects of monitoring and evaluation.

Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology are among the priorities of the government policy of Tajikistan. Much has been accomplished in the field of education. In particular, the reforms are aimed at increased integration into the world education system; the patterns of financing are being changed; on the basis of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs there has been set up a system of training of emerging leaders among women involved in the system of government management; the mandatory subject entitled "Basics of demography and gender policy" has been included into the curriculum of the higher educational establishments; there has been created and continues to operate the mechanism of "The Presidential quota" for girls from remote regions, which enables them to receive higher education; the NGO's dealing with educational issues, are increasingly enhancing their activities, in particular with regard to education of women; the year 2010 was proclaimed in Tajikistan as the Year of education and technological knowledge.

Article 41 of the Constitution of Tajikistan declares the rights of each citizen for education. In compliance with this legal norm, in 2004 the Law on Education was adopted in Tajikistan, in which legal, organizational, and socio-economic fundamental bases for development of education in the country, and mandatory general basic education and general access to secondary education were identified as the main principles of the state policy of the Republic of Tajikistan in education.

The new draft law of the Republic of Tajikistan on education, which addresses the issues of access to education on a broader basis, has been developed, with due consideration to the current challenges. Also, starting 2014 the national educational system will be transformed into a 12-year system, which will allow dramatically reduce in the country the number of girls without general secondary education. With the view to ensure that the quality of education meets the international standards, the new National Education Strategy till 2020 has been developed by the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the World Bank experts and been adopted by the State Government.

Thus, during the years of its independence Tajikistan has substantially reconsidered its state policy with regard to equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The state program, which ensures basis for equal opportunities for women and men in politics, economics, science and technology, is being implemented. However, specific and practical measures and instruments are required to ensure the implementation of the commitments of the Government. To achieve the real equality between men and women it is necessary to overcome a number of economic, political, cultural and other obstacles.

In May 2010 National Strategy on activeness of women of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period of 2011-2020 has been adopted. The main goal of the Strategy is to establish prerequisites and necessary conditions for the full realization of their natural abilities in all spheres of social life, with the aim of providing sustainable development of the society.

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan "on enhancing the role of women in the society", the Government, state authorities are ordered to appoint women, based on their professional and working abilities to the leadership positions of ministries, state committees, state enterprises, prosecutors offices and courts, universities and other educational institutions.

Women exercise their socio-political activities also through Non Governmental Organizations, where they individually gain the experiences for establishing and development of organizations, work, communication and they learn how to compete not only with women groups, but also with men. The number of women NGO in the republic has reached 1500.

The periodical publications of "Bonuvon", "Firuza", "Zarrintoj", "Ravzana", "Nayson" magazines and "Oila", "Woman and man" newspapers, significantly contribute to inform population on position of women.

It should be noted that to improve the role of women in our society number of concrete steps have been taken by my government such as; establishment of coordination council among the representatives of the ministries of justice, labor and social protection, health, internal affairs, Committee on women affairs and family under the Government of Tajikistan, state prosecutors' office and NGO's for prevention of violence against women. In the ministries and agencies related to social sector issues, the divisions have been created for resolving the family, women and children's issues.

Tajikistan has passed the stage of formation of gender policy. Basic conceptual approaches and legal basis for improvement of gender equality have been established. Tajikistan reached the responsible stage - the stage of implementation of adopted strategies, legal basis and programs that requires the selection of effective mechanisms for their realizations and necessity of differentiation of approaches with consideration of variety of spheres.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Republic of Tajikistan to a full and effective implementation of the international standards on the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women.

I hope the ideas and topics discussed in the conference will help create strong cooperation between mountain countries and find new approaches and solutions to obviate obstacles on the way of gender equality and improvement of women's status in the society.

Thank you!