

Statement by the Christian Conference of Asia on International Women's Day 2017

Towards a Better Life for Women amidst a Changing World

Today, International Women's Day 2017 is being commemorated and focused on the theme, "Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030". The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) joins with all those who are working towards the dignity and equality of women in all walks of the contemporary world.

Despite the fact that the world is changing with significant progress and advancements in socio-economic and technological fields, a vast majority of women in the world continue to be denied opportunities to lead a better life, especially in terms of reaching the goal of income equality, gender justice, dignity and rights.

An overwhelming majority of women are denied their legitimate right to work in a decent atmosphere. Women are forced to live and work in deplorable conditions in many parts of the world. Asia is not an exemption to this reality, most working women in Asia are working in sectors of the informal economy as domestic workers, agricultural labourers, street vendors; working for low wages in garment factories, small scale industries, construction sites as unskilled workers, and in other lowly paid occupations, often without any safety or protection.

A large number of Asian women are migrant workers beyond the borders of their home countries and face persecution and violence in manifold forms in their daily lives. In many places in Asia, women experience daily threats to their dignity and rights as they are trafficked, physically, sexually and mentally abused, victimised in conflicts and face the primitive practice and culture of "honour killings".

Gender equality in women's workplaces is not recognised as an imperative for their well-being and dignity in most Asian contexts. In the midst of these realities, the observance of International Women's Day gives the world an opportunity to remind ourselves of the need for upholding the dignity and rights of women at all times. The CCA supports the United Nations' call for all actors to stress on gender equality towards a Planet 50-50 by 2030 by ensuring that the world works together for all women. The CCA believes that it is now more than ever that the ecumenical movement and churches in Asia need to reflect on the inspiring stories of the Gospel that reflect and encourage the empowerment of women.

Many churches in Asia are still slow to acknowledge gender concerns as a critical issue within the Church where the contributions of women to the Church and society are not duly recognised or encouraged.

Enhancing women's leadership and influence is vital to the achievement of democracy, good governance, economic development, environmental sustainability and peace building in every society and community.

The CCA affirms the full realisation of women's dignity and rights and urges its member churches and councils to seek new paradigms of recognising the ability of women and empowering them to contribute to the creation of a better and peaceful world.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA