



# Christian Conference of Asia

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## CCA General Secretary's Statement on International Women's Day 2020

### *Towards Upholding Rights and Dignity of Women in an 'Equal and Enabled World'*

International Women's Day (IWD) is an occasion to celebrate collective acts of courage and perseverance of women in their determination to achieve equality and transform society.

Ending prejudice against women is a prerequisite for securing their fundamental rights. This year's IWD theme, *An Equal World is an Enabled World: Each for Equal*, and the UN Women's theme, *I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights*, bring back the focus on the shared responsibility that all have in forging empowerment and equality.

The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which was passed at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The focus of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal #5, 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', has indeed gained momentum in the gender-specific contextualisation of the work in non-governmental and faith-based organisations among others.

The economic transformation in several countries from subsistence-based agricultural economies to knowledge-based economies has aided in recognising the value of the potential and contribution of women in manifold areas. However, there persists a latent reluctance in recognising the capability of women as forces in decisively influencing the development and direction of future generations. Encouragingly, the past years have seen Asian women taking the lead in intergenerational campaigns against hegemony, discrimination, and unjust and oppressive regimes, for socio-economic, political, religious, and cultural equality through their engagement in activism at all levels for a better future for the entire creation.

The theme of the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) organised and facilitated by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in 2019 appropriately captured this global mood, sensitising and motivating Asian women to 'Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew, and Restore the Creation'. In several Asian countries, the Church has also prophetically stood alongside women in their quest for equality. However, a recent worrying trend is the rise of religious fundamentalism, which impedes the progress of women by snatching away their rights and dignity in many parts of Asia. While acknowledging the robust legal mechanisms and policies in several countries, what must be recognised is that weak enforcement mechanisms fuel impunity and erode the gains earned in the path of upholding the dignity and rights of women.

Asian women have always been motivated to work for renewal and restoration within the ambit of 'Generation Equality'. As the world observes International Women's Day, the CCA joins many like-minded groups and people's movements around the world, and renews its commitment to uphold the rights and dignity of women. CCA exhorts its member churches and councils to continue to acknowledge and accept the value and ethos of equality in the leadership of both women and men at all levels. The CCA reiterates the gospel message of equality and renews the vision of Jesus in every aspect of its working.

Mathews George Chunakara  
General Secretary, CCA

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