

A Platform for Mutual Communication and Solidarity, Women's Int'l Network Forum

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I am very honored to be here today to deliver a greeting message on behalf of the president of the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family, Sook Jin Lee.

President of Metropolis Women International Network, Governor of Abidjan hosting the third forum, representatives of cities joining us today, NGOs, scholars and panels, it is my great pleasure to greet you all for the third World Forum of the Metropolis Women International Network.

Sook Jin Lee, the president of the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family, unfortunately, cannot be here with you although she has been waited for this moment more than anything else to meet you all in person at the Abidjan Forum

It's been nearly four years since the 2nd Metropolis women network forum was held in Seoul in 2009. Now, I am really pleased to see our long waited 3rd forum held at this beautiful and dynamic city, Abidjan.

As you are already well aware of, the Metropolis women international network forum, Dynamic Cities Need Women, has begun at Brussels in 2007 emphasizing on women's equal role in creating a society where all citizens could be better-off.

Then in 2009, the 2nd forum was held at Seoul and announced the Seoul Declaration for Women Friendly City to build a gender-equal city. The Seoul Metropolitan government proposed the Women Friendly City Project to promote gender mainstreaming in urban policies and civil affairs and to empower women in the economic sector as well as to establish a city where women feel safe, and diversity and women's creativity is widespread.

To share the Seoul Declaration with all other cities, Seoul distributed it in nine different languages. It was translated first into Korean, English, French, and Spanish, and later in 2011 into Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Malay, and Indian. In 2011, the Asian Dialogue was opened to seek for a gender-sensitive way to cope with Asian economic crisis and natural disaster.

We met various women leaders from different regions in Asia with the belief that we are equal and homogeneous. However, when I met them personally, I realized that there are many differences among nations and cities even within Asia. There are huge gaps in economic development with substantial differences in social and political systems. We use different languages with different culture and religions. Still, our belief is that mutual dialogue could lead to a change and development when having a shared goal, hope, and will, and further helping and communicating each other.

This third forum is held in Abidjan in the theme of 'Women and Armed conflict'. Violence against women is a very serious and critical issue and rape, sexual slavery, enforced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and women-killing problem have been repeatedly witnessed everywhere.

We will find at this forum that, though women are major victims of armed conflict and economic crisis, women also could be a key agent in giving a life to women themselves and their family as well as community they belong to. We should give a helping hand to women refugees and at the same time encourage more women to take part in reconstructing post-conflict situations.

I assume that the Metropolis Women International Network Forum is a place to exchange various experiences that women encounter in various regions. Today's theme might not be a common issue to every woman living in a different city. It might be handled in a different way. But I still believe that this event is to share stories of women in different countries from Asia, Africa, South America, and Europe. When women, living in different conditions and environments, gather together to talk to each other, women could play a leading role in bringing in a change and development to our society.

In this sense, I strongly believe this 3rd Abidjan forum will be a very meaningful and important opportunity to all of us.

Thank you once again to the Metropolis Women International Network and Abidjan City for providing us with this great opportunity.

Thank you.