



EVENT IN BRIEF



ETHIOPIA'S NEWLY APPOINTED WOMEN MINISTERS PLACE PEACE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THEIR DUTIES

Ethiopian President, Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie (Above-third from left) joins the newly appointed women ministers in the cake cutting ceremony to officially launch the 'Jegnit' movement (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

The nationwide Women's Peace Conference was held on 5th November 2018 in Addis Ababa at the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa with the aim of enhancing the participation of women in peace building and conflict resolution process and to lay the foundation for the establishment of the Ethiopian Women's Peace Network and a community mobilisation campaign, 'Jegnit', its literal meaning, heroine with the theme, 'she dreamt, she planned, and she succeeded'.

The UN Women's office in Ethiopia together with other agencies financially supported the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY) to organise the peace conference, which brought together about 800 participants, mainly women from federal and nine regions of the country including the newly appointed President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie. Women ministers that make up 50% of the ministers in the cabinet, regional sector bureau heads, regional cabinet members, regional presidents from selected regions, representatives of international organisations, development partners, artists and renowned women's rights advocates were among the participants.

The conference emphasized on the prominent role that women can play towards creating and sustaining the peace in the country including through promoting 'Jegnit', a community mobilisation campaign that aims to celebrate and give recognition to the achievements of women who have strived in life and succeeded including those at the grass-root level.

In her welcoming remarks, Her Excellency Yalem Tsegay, the Minister for the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth said,

"The current appointment of a female president, the 50-50 representation in the cabinet, women speaker of the house of federation and deputy speaker of the house of people's representatives, and the assignment of a woman as the president of the federal supreme court are all indications of the government's recognition of the role women have played so far and will play in the future in the development of the country. Therefore, women shall contribute to building peace and to make peace a national agenda."



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Ethiopian President, Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie, in her part applauded the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY) for undertaking the initiative for this very important conference and emphasized that to increase women's role in peace, there is a need to coordinate efforts, decrease women's vulnerability and create a common consensus on the issue,

“Training women who can be seated on peace negotiation tables as mediators can help women to play the key role of creating lasting peace. Resolution 1325 passed by the United Nations can serve as the base for our work in conflict resolution and we should take other countries' experience.”



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Her excellency called on each Ethiopian woman to strengthen women's role in peace building and to give voice to the voiceless, “especially, those women who have climbed the leadership ladder need to mentor other women who lack similar opportunity to follow their way.” Her Excellency also commended the *Jegnit* initiative aimed at mobilising the community to create awareness on the role women play and to bring change in attitude.

The newly appointed Minister of Peace, Her Excellency Muferiat Kamil, stressed on the potential of women who hold high leadership positions to ensure peace and resolve conflicts as well as on the need for everyone to stand for peace,

“The fact that women hold high leadership positions shows our ability to say, ‘we can’ even when everyone is telling as ‘you can’t’. We should take this positive energy to ensure peace and resolve conflicts. While the primary aim of the Ministry of Peace is to prevent conflicts and bring peace, it will not be able to realise these unless we all contribute to the peace of the Country.”



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UN Women's National Programme Coordinator, Mrs. Yelfigne Abegaz, in her key note address cherished MoWCY for organising this timely and extremely important conference on peace and commended His Excellency the Prime Minister of Ethiopia for showing such trust and confidence in newly appointed commendable women and expressed the need to sustain;

“Now the seed of peace has been planted in our mother land, Ethiopia and is bound to create a domino effect across borders and boundaries throughout the Africa continent and beyond as peace is the only option. In deed Ethiopian women can be instrumental in ensuring peace and security to positively impact the lives of every segment of society. We need to promote the women, peace and security agenda to keep moving from exclusionary to democratic decision-making, from gender inequality to gender justice, from conflict and violence to sustainable peace, and to building prosperous and stable nation.”



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The two main outcomes of the conference; the launch of the Ethiopian Women's Peace Network under the patronage of the Ethiopian President and the establishment of *Jegnit* initiative will have a positive impact on UN Women's work of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as it will broaden the scope of its effort to bolster capacities and resources in order to improve the lives of more women and girls and to open up spaces to work on peace as the global agenda.



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