



NED-Women Conference Declaration 2019

Assalam -o- Alaikum

Academics, professionals, experts, and all relevant individuals men and women felt the need to acknowledge the different perspectives on women's development and place it in the context of a changing global scenario. It is only through a conscious result-oriented approach that we could realize the objectives of Women's Empowerment. This realization led to the NED Women Conference: Perspectives on Women Development and for the first conference under this brand was consciously chosen as “ Perceiving Women Empowerment in the Changing Global Scenario” The two–day conference was held on 20-21 December 2019 brought eminent women representing different demographic groups, professions, careers, sectors to critically reflect on the conference theme from as many different aspects, issues, and experiences as possible. The intent behind this was to synthesize perspectives for a more holistic understanding of women's empowerment as a first step in mobilizing stakeholders and influencing policies.

Through the conference, we tried to interpret not only Feminism in its historical context but also revisited the approaches to women's issues locally and globally. Our world has changed a lot since the movement for women's rights started in Vienna, Austria 1946. We have seen the framing of a UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW-1979, the Beijing Declaration under UN auspices in 1995). In our country, Pakistan pro-women legislation has taken place as latest as 2018. All this is evidence of the fact that we at large as a community and society are alive to women's issues and eager to promote an engaging discourse accommodating different perceptions of Women's Empowerment. As our note speaker Dr. Masuma Hasan in her address at the inaugural session pointed out the situation in Pakistan has changed positively for women, particularly as a result of urbanization, however, many concerns regarding women's development need attention. Barrister Shahida Jamil recommended well-thought-out legislation for securing women's rights. As stressed by the Chief



Guest Justice Nasira Iqbal (R) Judge Lahore court, the Conference reaffirmed that women need to be more conscious about their issues.

Inaugural to concluding sessions that carried extensive thematic and panel discussions, paper presentations, and workshops, the academics, the professionals, and the experts in a variety of fields shared their ideas which are so pertinent for women's Development and Empowerment. The Conference participants in their respective capacities built up a consensus that women's issues do need to be addressed within a proper framework and require effective implementation through a concrete plan of action. In this regard public and private ownership is significant and all the stakeholders do need to bring their efforts together.

The First NED Women Conference Declaration seeks to emphasize the following points and considers that these be made an operative part of the Document through a concrete Plan of Action.

The points enshrined in the Declaration are not only an expression of our commitment to women's development but also an authentic source of guidance for the academics, professionals experts, and people involved in management and policy-making about women's issues. This Declaration serves as a framework for planning projects, developing initiatives, and designing strategies for women's development.

The Declaration reflected upon the trends prevalent in the society and suggested means to overcome the negative perceptions

It addressed the concerns of women arguing that:

- 1) A reactionary mindset and a bigotry approach towards women have often placed them in miserable conditions. It has resulted in the denial of their basic civil rights like the right to life, liberty, and security. It has been a cause of violence against women, a source of discrimination in health, education, and employment opportunities, creating gender disparity and socio-economic inequality. We through this conference determined to define women's empowerment as a route to compassion and humanity and change the reactionary mindset to a responsible and sustainable outlook.



- 2) A deliberate attempt was made to keep this conference multi-focused to appreciate, acknowledge, and honor not only the efforts of empowered women but also create space for the marginalized women and ensure that we the fortunate ones do speak and stand for the marginalized ones, become their voice and create space for them. It is also]]
- 3) It is not just only that people working on women's issues are supposed to highlight concerns of women or that the debate should remain confined to people from women studies, we all as academics from social sciences as well as science and technology fields ought to be a part of this discussion. We need to create coordination among different disciplines and adopt a multi-disciplinary approach as we have initiated this women's conference at NED University of Science and Technology.
- 4) A reflection was made that we need to reframe our cultural discourse where women should be portrayed as sensible and mature human beings capable of making wise decisions in their personal and professional lives. It was also established that Gender Consciousness must be used for the betterment of women folk not as a tool or mechanism to spread myopic approaches against women and their struggle for empowerment.
- 5) We reconsidered the notions of Equality and Equity and came to the conclusion that a woman's worth needs to be decoupled from economic gains and it is the only way to set women free from economic exploitation and social degradation.
- 6) The conference also ensured that adapting to changing roles and functions in the context of women's empowerment meant that we bridged the gap by creating an understanding of collaboration and harmony, adopting a result-driven approach, influencing the thought process within the family and outside, and defeating a patriarchal mindset.
- 7) A commitment was also made to ensure that women's empowerment requires providing women a dignified existence so they could be proud of their gender, taking women out of poverty, giving them access to health facilities, educating them, creating socio-economic opportunities, making their voices to be heard



and their presence is noted as contributing to the family and society's development.

- 8) The Conference also made sure that in this struggle for a better future for women, the initiative should come not only from women but men also must take responsibility for supporting women's causes and credit here goes to NED University for organizing a conference on women empowerment where its top leadership comprising very able and learned men took the lead for putting this act together.

As Convener of the Conference, I declare the First NED Women Conference closed with the pledge to continue our efforts for women's empowerment in the future.

Professor Dr. Sajida Zaki
Convener of the First NED Conference on Women
Dated: 21 December 2019



NED Women's Conference Declaration

- 1) We the organizers, distinguished women, academics, professionals, activists, and women working in different fields both in the public and private sector participating in the Conference
- 2) Gathered in Karachi at the First NED Women Conference in December 2019 to address the issues relating to Women's Empowerment in a Changing Global Scenario.
- 3) Determined to create an understanding and promote collaboration between men and women for peace and harmony in society.
- 4) A major aim remains to create a platform to formally present issues, achievements, and ideas that influence discussion, awareness, consensus, advocacy, and future efforts and policies. The event brings together women and men to understand the constraints, and struggles of women and the way addressing them will impact communities, society, and country.