

MESSAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today as we celebrate, the International Women's Day it gives us, as the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of the National Assembly, the golden opportunity to once again celebrate the achievements, and recognise the contribution of all women to society and to the Nation at large.

Celebrating this year event under the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality", provides an opportunity to also highlight what women and girls have achieved in the domain of technology, and digital education in the ICT world.

However, albeit all efforts to end inequalities, the fact still remains that women and girls remain underrepresented across the continent, when it comes to technology, and this remains a major barrier to their participation in technological design and governance.

History has proven that from the beginnings, most technology were conceived with men in mind; hence men have always been in the forefront of both technological developments and also of their use. So, it is not surprising that over the years men have been inclined to also inundate this work market and to control this space leading to gender inequalities with the gap widening by a lack of education and training in the field for girls and women.

No surprise therefore that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has confirmed this gap by indicating that women professional software developers are below 10% worldwide.

While we can argue that we have taken very big steps to mitigate this gap in Seychelles, we have still not closed it enough to say that girls and women are now at par with their counterparts and we, as women, should be at the forefront in the promotion of a gender-responsive approach to digital

technology that goes beyond what the eyes perceive to raise awareness and close those gaps.

In the region, and indeed on the continent, the state of affairs is different from our own local context being that the disparity is larger with the technology domain remaining predominantly ruled by men. But why does it remain so? The answer lies in the predominance of men in general and the culture of inferiority that prevails in most African countries resulting in girls and women being discriminated against and robbed of the rights that should be accorded to them too.

It is vital to focus on awareness and capacity building, hence the importance to adopt more gender-responsive and comprehensive methods to educate young girls on ICT, to encourage them to take up related careers so they can become ICT professional women.

Access to technological devices, services and other resources should also be made available for their use which will result in less hassles and may also relieve work burdens.

In conclusion I would state that even though the margin of inequality will undoubtedly remain large for yet a few more years, we as women, we should take a stance now to ensure that our girls of today receive the appropriate education and access to ICT to ensure future generations of women excelling in ICT uses and taking up careers in this field.

And for girls and women of Seychelles, I would like to personally, and on behalf of the Women Parliamentary Caucus, to encourage you to take up ICT as part of your studies, by dreaming big and dare to become ICT professionals as we pledge to make space to ensure that our Seychellois women and girls are not left behind.

Wishing you all a happy Women's day

