



TÜRK SANAYİCİLERİ VE İŞADamlARI DERNEĞİ

THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY
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“BEYOND THE GLASS CEILING: WOMEN
ACADEMICS IN ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND
LIFE SCIENCES ACROSS EUROPE”

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Distinguished participants and guests,

First of all I would like to thank you for inviting me to the “Beyond the glass ceiling conference”. As TÜSİAD President, I would like to express my gratitude for giving me the opportunity and honor to address you.

As TÜSİAD, we strongly believe that, for a progress in society it is important to strengthen political, social and economic positions of women in the society. In this context, in the year 2000, TUSIAD had published a report named “Towards Gender Equality” where obstacles that women face in the fields of education, working life and politics were defined and policies were proposed.

Following the publication of this report, a gender equality working group was formed under our Social Affairs Committee in 2001. Gender equality working group follows up the latest developments and implementations in these fields, organizes seminars and meetings to raise awareness about women issues and visits ministries and parliamentarians as a pressure group. As a continuation of the TÜSİAD 2000 report, we published another report this year, entitled “Gender Inequality in Turkey: Challenges, Priorities and Suggestions”, written by Prof. Mine Tan, Prof. Yıldız Ecevit, Prof. Serpil Üşür and Dr. Selma Acuner. It was conducted with a view to update the TÜSİAD 2000 report. I would like to touch upon some of the findings of this report during my speech.

Turkey has made considerable progress in women's rights and gender equality legally, showing the good will of the state as well as determination of the academic and civil society. As the last EU Progress Report states, overall the legal framework guaranteeing women's rights and gender equality is broadly in place in Turkey. However, further significant efforts are needed to reduce the gap between men and women in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment and political empowerment.

When we look at the situation from the point of women's participation in labor force, unfortunately the current picture lags much behind the desired level. Furthermore it follows a decreasing trend. One of the main reasons behind this scene is the migration from rural to urban areas. This rapid urbanization without the proper educational and social infrastructure has a special negative effect on the female population. Besides, attitudes formed by traditional gender roles are also making women's integration into the working life difficult.

Education is an indispensable process in the socio-cultural and economic life that determines the future by directly influencing the country's improvement and development. Education is the most essential prior condition to empower women. Although there is a considerable progress in closing the gap between educational attainment levels of women and men, equal access is still to be reached. Unless the necessary measures be taken in terms of education both for men and women, women will not be able to have equal opportunities to access

qualified, formal sector jobs, taking advanced steps in their careers and gain political influence to take their well deserved part in decision making.

This argument is well supported by the fact that women's participation in labor force increases as their educational level rises in Turkey. This argument is also supported by the paradox in employment relations that although women's employment rates are one of the lowest in Europe, there are notable examples of high-level presence of women in Turkish society in business and academia.

As all you know, women consisted of around 40 % of the academicians working in Turkish universities. In comparison with the other countries, the number of women academics in the Turkish universities especially in tenured positions appears remarkably high and has been above the world standards for a considerable time period. 28% of professors, 32% of associate professors and 33% of assistant professors are female in Turkey which indicate that Turkey has a more desirable position compared to European counterparts in terms of vertical segregation. However, despite the relatively high percentage of female academicians, women also seem to rarely occupy administrative positions in Turkish universities. The positions for Higher Educational Council members, deans of the faculties and the rectors of the universities are predominantly occupied by men. This picture resembles women in business life where women's shares in certain professions are considerably high but their presence in management levels are not sufficient.

Women in Turkey are taking more and more important roles in the economic and social life which is very positive for social and economic welfare to be sustainable. On the other hand, despite these developments, women in general are still restrained in exercising their rights fully or are unaware of the scope of their rights. Therefore, it is important to increase awareness and emphasize the need to empower women through increasing their social, economic and political status.

Regarding employment of women, unless we have a National Women Employment Strategy which takes into account Turkey's demographic and social conditions, economic growth by itself does not accelerate the position of women in labor force. Such a strategy must include policies and measures for increasing girls' enrolment rates in schools, supporting women entrepreneurship, providing balance between work and private life -including part-time work, facilities for child care- and making life long learning wide-spread.

Participation of women to the political and institutional decision-making mechanisms is one of the crucial elements not only for democracy and development but also having an impact on all the decisions at all levels; from the family, to the nation, to the international community. There is an ultimate need for increasing women role models in positions of power and decision-making.

Finally, I would like to note that the aim of Turkey to take her deserved place among the developed countries can not be reached without involvement of women in every phase of the process successfully.

I thank you for listening to me and conclude by emphasizing my belief that, an environment with equal opportunities in all areas for both sexes of the society, not only will open new windows for Turkish women as social partners, as work force and as mothers to be for the future generations, it will also provide the conditions for social and economic welfare to be sustainable.