

PRESS RELEASE:

International Women's Day Conference

Encouraging more women to take up decision-making positions in the labour market and in politics as well as the effects of the media on gender stereotypes were discussed during a Conference organized by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) to mark International Women's Day.

This is a day when women are recognised for their social, economic, cultural and political achievements throughout the years. In fact, the theme chosen for this Conference – *Fejn qegħdin? Fejn irridu nkunu?* (Gender Equality: Where do we stand? Are we there yet?) - demonstrates that this is a time to reflect on progress made and to call for change to progress towards equality between women and men in society.

NCPE's Commissioner, Renee Laiviera, introducing the Conference referred to the theme - BE BOLD FOR CHANGE - chosen by the United Nations for this year's International Women's Day. Ms Laiviera explained that this poses a call on societies and on all of us to help forge a more gender inclusive world. The aim of today's Conference, said NCPE's Commissioner, is to shed more light on the current situation in Malta in terms of the representation of women and men in decision-making in the labour market and in politics, as well as on the role of the media on gender stereotypes. An overview of the progress and challenges towards equality will also steer discussions on what needs to be achieved and where society needs to be in the years to come in relation to these two pertinent areas.

Opening the conference, Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, Helena Dalli, emphasised the importance of such conference that is addressing participation at decision-making level as well as the effect of the media on stereotypes. Highlighting the Government's commitment to foster equal opportunities, Minister Dalli referred to the encouraging supportive measures and practices that are available, and outlined the free childcare services, the Breakfast Club and the Klabb 3-16 as well as the maternity leave fund. The longer women stay in the labour market the higher the opportunities for their career advancement. With reference to gender stereotypes in the media, Minister Dalli explained that stereotypes are one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life, influencing people's choices in both professional and private life. The elimination of negative gender stereotypes is essential to achieving gender equality and the media are central to pushing forward this change.

An outline of the current situation of women in decision-making positions in the labour market and in politics was presented by Dr JosAnn Cutajar (Director, Cottonera Resource Centre and Senior Lecturer, Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Wellbeing, University of Malta), highlighting the need for a constant commitment to encourage more women taking up such positions. The effects of the media on gender stereotypes were addressed by Dr Brenda Murphy (Acting Head of Department & Senior Lecturer, Gender Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta), emphasising that the way women and men are



portrayed in the media can be a key factor in promoting and strengthening gender equality, but also in preventing and eradicating gender discrimination.

Two panels made up of stakeholders, MEPs, academics, and media professionals, among others, discussed ways on how to encourage more women in taking up high positions were discussed, including measures that are required in this regard. The online Directory of Professional Women developed by NCPE will surely support such initiatives. Interesting points were also raised by different stakeholders on the negative impacts of gender stereotypes and on the importance of further awareness on how to combat negative gender stereotypes portrayed in the media.

The Conference held to commemorate International Women's Day offered an opportunity to assess and reflect on the progress made and where further work needs to be carried out in order to foster equality between women and men in society.

For further information contact NCPE on 25903850 or equality@gov.mt

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