

EURASIAN WOMEN'S FORUM DRIVES THE GLOBAL WOMEN'S AGENDA

14 October 2021

President of Russia **Vladimir Putin** delivered his welcoming speech during the opening ceremony of the Third Eurasian Women's Forum.

Held in St Petersburg's Tauride Palace, the Third Eurasian Women's Forum started with an opening ceremony.

It included an address by President of the Russian Federation **Vladimir Putin**, who said that the Eurasian Women's Forum gained a place among reputable international platforms. "The Forum's cooperation and interaction with such associations as BRICS, APEC, UNIDO, and W20 is growing," he pointed out.

Vladimir Putin went on to say that the modern dynamically changing world sets new goals for society and states. "Women are playing an increasingly significant role in addressing them. These include sustainable economic development, the global climate agenda, ecology and environment protection, as well as new approaches to education as a lifelong process, and the ambition to create a social safety net based on fairer and well-balanced principles."

Speaker of the Federation Council and Chair of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States **Valentina Matvienko** opened the plenary session titled "Women: A global mission in a new reality."

She said that during the days of the forum, St Petersburg became a true capital of the international community of women. “Guests from more than 100 countries of the world, 23 international organisations, and all Russian regions have gathered at this forum. The entire world is represented here in this hall. Millions of internet users from across all continents have joined us online,” the Federation Council Speaker noted.

Ms Matvienko pointed out that the Forum brought together government officials, politicians, heads of intergovernmental organisations, women who achieved outstanding results in business, research and culture, recognised opinion leaders and representatives of international organisations.

She continued by saying that the world is rapidly changing with the emergence of new digital technology that penetrates our everyday lives, influencing the way people think, their social interactions and habits. Environmental protection is becoming an increasingly pressing issue. “More and more frequently, international law is being replaced with some ‘rules,’ along with persisting double standards and attempts to impose on sovereign states development models that are alien to them. In addition to all this, there is a practice of imposing economic blockades, sanctions and restrictions even on imports of essential goods and technologies, including vaccines.”

According to **Ms Matvienko**, the pandemic has made these problems even more apparent, showing that our world needs a positive agenda, while rejecting national self-interest and the politics of ultimatums. “In this challenging context, women must become proactive in addressing global issues. Together, we must define women’s global mission in a new reality. This is the central goal of the Third Eurasian Women’s Forum, this is what it is all about,” she said.

Further in her remarks, **Ms Matvienko** said that far from just causing a global disruption, the coronavirus pandemic led to a “reset” of economic and social development processes and helped reconsider the involvement of women in resolving the most urgent problems. She said that women who risked their lives and spared no efforts, showed resilience and courage in fighting this disease every day and saving human lives deserved our sincere gratitude. Moreover, it is mostly women who work in the sectors that were worst affected by the pandemic, including retail trade, the services sector, the travel, tourism and hospitality industries, **Ms Matvienko** added.

“Health features prominently on the forum’s agenda. We must call on the international community to combine its efforts for the sake of human health and ensure equal access to vaccines and medicines, mutual recognition of vaccine certificates, and renounce discriminatory practices in healthcare. We will continue supporting women’s initiatives to build a healthier society,” she said.

Ms Matvienko suggested instituting a public recognition diploma “In the name of life” as part of the Forum and to award it to women for their significant contribution to health promotion projects.

The Federation Council Speaker went on to emphasise the increasing urgency of economic and social inequality issues. Experts believe that the global poverty level may rise by another half a billion people due to the pandemic consequences. “Overcoming this negative trend would be impossible without better equipping women with the skills and knowledge they need. It is for this reason that the Forum has always championed accessible education for women, as well as the empowerment of women in manufacturing, management and innovation, and promoting creative industries.”

The Council of the Eurasian Women's Forum has been keeping up its unrelenting and systemic efforts to empower women in high-technology sectors.

Ms Matvienko also talked about Women Leaders educational programme that has benefited hundreds of Russian women as an effective social mobility tool.

In this context, she proposed using the Forum as a platform for compiling a single international database of successful women. "It is gratifying that the broad and full affirmation of genuine equality has become a dominant global trend in today's world, which is a historical milestone," she pointed out, adding that the fact that there were still places on earth where women faced oppression, were defenceless and deprived of fundamental human rights was outrageous. Only together can we succeed in overcoming these challenges, the Federation Council Speaker said.

Ms Matvienko believes that it was not a coincidence that the Eurasian Women's Forum took place in Russia for the third time and established itself as a driver of the global women's agenda. There were quite a few outstanding women leaders in Russian history, she noted, including teachers, researchers and cultural figures. "Today, the Russian state continues to defend the interests of women, and has a strategy of action for women, as well as the Ten Years of Childhood programme. We are ready to use this Forum as a platform for sharing our experience," she said. The Federation Council Speaker said that the Eurasian Women's Forum has long transcended Eurasia to become a universal platform. "Since its founding, we came up with a 'formula of women's success.' Today, the Forum nurtures new associations, including the International Club of Winners and Participants of APEC's International Competition for Women's Projects, the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, and others," she said.

“It is by cooperating in multiple formats and frameworks that women from across the world can become closer to achieving ambitious, bold objectives,” **Ms Matvienko** pointed out.

UN Secretary General **Antonio Guterres** sent a video message to the participants in the forum, saying that our world has changed immeasurably since the Forum last convened in 2018 because of the pandemic and the climate emergency. “The new reality demands a fundamental transformation. Women’s participation and leadership bring more enduring peace agreements, better social protection programmes and stronger climate policies,” he said.

In her remarks, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation **Tatyana Golikova** said that women have been playing an increasingly important social role amid growing technological, economic and demographic challenges.

“Most countries are drafting and implementing strategic documents on women’s empowerment. Russia is not an exception. Our state has been engaged in a system-wide effort to support women, and empower them to participate in political, economic, social and cultural life fully and equally. This is a state policy priority for our country,” she said.

Ms Golikova also emphasised that more than half of people in Russia – over 78 million – are women. “They make an invaluable contribution to social development in all its forms,” she pointed out.

The session included a video link-up with the International Space Station, from where film and theatre actress, Merited Actress of the Russian Federation, **Yulia Peresild**, delivered a video address.

BRICS International Forum President **Purnima Anand** (India) spoke out for empowering women across the world. “The pandemic brought serious losses, including in terms of human capital. We need to use tools that help us fight poverty and promote sustainable development. The Forum will facilitate a historical transition in the way power is distributed,” she pointed out.

Women20 Sherpa as part of Italy’s G20 Presidency in 2021, **Martina Rogato**, said that women of the G20 countries are working as a single team on the key issues that matter for the community of women. These include the empowerment of women, enabling them to be more proactive in entrepreneurship, promoting sustainable development, effectively fighting domestic violence, etc. According to **Martina Rogato**, women must be proactive in fighting stereotypes to fulfil their potential.

President of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) **Fanny Carolina Salinas Fernandez** talked about the role of women in shaping a new agenda for peace and prosperity. She reminded the audience that in September 2019 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2021 the Year of Peace and Sustainable Development. “More and more civil societies around the world promote an agenda of peace and sustainable development. Women must contribute to achieving these goals,” **Ms Salinas Fernandez** emphasised.

Speaker of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus **Natalia Kochanova** said that the Forum has once again gathered proactive and ambitious participants who are sincerely committed to the wellbeing of the present and future generations.

“We live in challenging times that test the world’s resilience. This is not just about the pandemic. Confrontation between cultures and civilisations is gaining momentum, rhetoric in international relations is becoming increasingly assertive, and there is more aggression in the information space,” Ms Kochanova said, adding with confidence that the global mission of women is to prevent conflicts, promote reconciliation between countries and people, and put them on the path to development and progress. “United, women of good will can achieve a great deal,” she pointed out.

Speaker of the South African National Assembly **Nosiviwe Noluthando Mapisa-Nqakula** devoted her remarks to joint efforts within the international community to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Managing Director at the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) **Fatou Haidara** talked about the organisation’s work to enhance the role of women in the economy and to promote women’s leadership.

Chairwoman of National Commission for Women’s Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan **Lazzat Ramazanova** emphasised the importance of the Forum as a platform for discussing female initiatives in their diversity.

The session also included presentations by Head of the Permanent Committee of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce on women’s empowerment, jury member representing Indonesia at the prestigious APEC Best Awards in 2017–2019, member of G20 Empower **Rinawati Prihatiningsih**, Chair of the International Women’s Forum Council in Turkey **Gülden Türktan**, student of the Russian University of People’s Friendship **Tabassum Muhammad Kazim** (Afghanistan), Director

of the Russian Foreign Ministry Information and Press Department **Maria Zakharova**, and Russian journalist **Zhanna Agalakova**.

President of the All-China Women's Federation, Vice Chairwoman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee **Shen Yueyue**, and Member of the Indian parliament's Lok Sabha, President of the Indian National Congress parliamentary party **Sonia Gandhi** sent their video messages to the forum.

Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council **Galina Karelova**, senators of the Russian Federation, representatives of the Russian regions and international guests also took part in the event.

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