

Address of the Ambassador Mr. Haris Dafaranos

Dear Chair Lady,
Minister, Professors, Dr. Nikou, Your honour Justice Kyrou,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I am honoured to attend this Forum on the occasion of the International Woman's Day. It was a real dilemma for me to choose a subject of interest for my short address.

Finally, I thought that I made a good choice. I will touch quickly on two subjects and I feel that this contribution is my way as a male to celebrate this very important milestone dedicated to women.

So, the first subject is the extent of the impact of the Greek economic crisis on women. You are aware that during the last six years Greece is undergoing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, which inevitably has had a dire impact on the labour force of the country.

Unemployment in normal times was always high in Greece, around 10%. With the economic crisis which spread in Europe in 2009 it has reached 28%, that is around one out of three Greeks unemployed and regarding the youth it reached an unprecedented proportion of 62%, that is two out of three young Greeks unemployed. Now, let's see what was the impact on women.

The increasing number of women being laid off return to reinforced gender roles. Men are seen as primary earners and with almost one million and a half unemployed, men and women included, the priority becomes for each family to have at least one bread winner. So, the man needs to find a job. The woman will need to find a part-time job because, as a result of the crisis, expenses such as a domestic at home or a kindergarten have become luxuries. So, increasing unemployment, as a result of the crisis, has created a crisis of care. And more women than men will have to give up their careers in order to take care of their children.

As a conclusion, the economic crisis in Greece reversed previous trends of decreasing inequality and, due to existing structures of gender roles and care work, created a situation that has definitely decreased women's participation to the labour force. It is evident that this trend had an impact on women's ability to earn a disposable income and their chances of getting out of poverty. So, the crisis had a negative effect on gender inequality in Greece.

Gender roles have been reinforced. Men's position as bread winners and women's position as caretakers.

According to official statistics, women were more prone to poverty than men since the beginning of the crisis. The public cuts in care services had also an impact on women employees.

Current statistics give a 27,6% unemployment rate for men and 32% for women. Youth unemployment of 64% affects equally both sexes.

Entire families are unemployed and rely on their father's and mother's reduced pensions.

It is encouraging that the new Greek government has the resolve to tackle as a priority the humanitarian dimension of the crisis.

Now, let me now touch on the second subject.

Modern Greek men. I was very happy to read a recent interview by the new Greek Finance Minister Yannis Varoufakis, who spoke very warmly about his Australian experience and the impact it had on him as a person and as an academic.

Varoufakis said in one sentence; "Australian influence is all over me." Australia has left an indelible mark on him and we are very proud today seeing a man of his stature referring so sentimentally to the Australian legacy. In the way in which he dismisses nonsense without caring too much about decorum, in his strong humanist conviction and in his deep democratic ethos.

Together with the new Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, both men incarnate strong personalities caring for the less fortunate of their society and dare to become iconoclasts were necessary in order to bring a new narrative, a fresh and progressive new mentality not only in Greece but also making a strong impact internationally across Europe.

I thank you all

Congratulations to the Food for Thought Network.

Canberra, 8 March 2015