

Let the woman decide what she wants to be, says First Lady of Afghanistan

NEW DELHI, April 16, 2015. 'Let the woman decide what she wants to be' to bring about true empowerment of women stated **Ms. Rula Ghani, the first lady of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** here today at an interactive session organized by FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO).

While delivering a Special Address, Ms. Ghani said that she sees herself as a facilitator. She follows an open door policy and people were free to visit her office in Afghanistan with their issues. At this juncture, Ms. Ghani said that she was trying to understand the challenges that people were facing, and was looking for ways to break the stereotypes which dominated the mindset of Afghanistan's population. She urged Indian women entrepreneurs to suggest solutions to break the societal barriers that women faced not only in Afghanistan but world over.

Speaking about forging fruitful association with India, she stated that India was doing well in promoting its women entrepreneurs and skilling womenfolk. Hence, Ms. Ghani suggested that women trainers and educators from India could visit Kabul and other cities of Afghanistan for a short span of time and train women of Afghanistan and help them in developing productive skills.

Ms. Ghani firmly believes that in today's scenario for a woman to become respectable in society it was essential for her to contribute productively at work. Reminiscing about the old Kabul, she said that there was a time when women freely worked outside homes as teachers, directors of companies and were respected. But when the country came under the siege of the civil war that value system got eroded and Ms. Ghani was now trying to revive it and restore the lost culture of Afghanistan where woman enjoyed respect at work and support from her family and society.

Giving a brief snapshot of the latest developments in Afghanistan, Ms. Ghani said that after the end of the civil war, the country enjoyed a stable environment for 13 years but did not witness any substantial development. Hence, the President of Afghanistan Mr. Ashraf Ghani was now working towards laying a strong foundation for meaningful development of the country. She added that India was the fourth country to have contributed generously towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan. However, a lot still needs to be done. Hence, she called for India's continued support in future.

Ms. Archana Garodia Gupta, President, FLO, said that since long India and Afghanistan have shared strong bilateral ties. To take this partnership further in the field of women empowerment, she suggested that 'Women Entrepreneurs Exchange' program and 'Common Skill Development and Capacity Building' programs could be undertaken by the two countries.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to India; Ms. Vasvi Bharat Ram, Vice President, FLO and **Dr. Manju Kalra Prakash, Executive Director, FLO,** also spoke on the occasion.