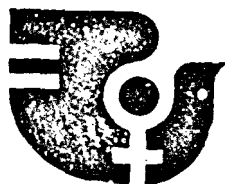




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**WORLD CONFERENCE
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR**
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Message from Her Excellency Mrs. María Estela Martínez de Perón,
President of Argentina

A thinker once said, "Perfect is the humility of him who never forgets that the light comes from above and not from himself, and that it comes not only for him but for all shadow and all sorrow".

With this profound Christian thought I greet the women delegates of all the countries represented at the Conference of the International Women's Year, a splendid initiative which will make it possible through personal contact - than which there is no better means of communication - to maintain cordial and continuing relations among the women of the world in an atmosphere of sisterly friendship.

The fact that women exist as a part of the life of humanity is certainly not a discovery of our times. The fundamental difference is that the concept of human life which is now coming vigorously to the fore enables women to take their rightful place, as rational and free human beings in the fullest sense and as thinking and creative individuals. Women are the companions of men as men are the companions of women. The time for polemics on the subject of men as men or women as women has passed; what is called for today is the dispassionate understanding of the functions of both in satisfying the enormous demands of a humanity which is experiencing one of the most critical phases in its entire history.

It is said that when Byzantium was about to fall into the hands of the barbarians, a number of wise men were passionately discussing philosophical subtleties in a palace of the besieged city. Today, our brothers, the children of our common Father who live in this world, are suffering the misery of hunger, the horror of war or the frightful effects of forces unleashed by nature. In the midst of such urgent pressures, the men and women of the world cannot continue to point out to each other what are their differences, similarities or complementary aspects in a dialectical exercise which only diverts our attention from our true objectives. We are all simply fellow creatures, human beings involved in the same struggles and equally responsible in the face of the difficult challenges of our times and the lessons of the past.

The names of the women who, throughout the centuries, have gained renown for their exceptional qualities are well known. I am thinking of women who at various times have held important positions in society as officials of the State, artists, writers, and companions in glory or misfortune. I think of them with veneration, for they were our predecessors in our unrelenting task, in a sisterhood which unites us through the ages.

It will no longer be possible to repeat what a well-known philosopher said when he affirmed that men live in the spirit and in history while women live in nature. We too are creating history and are becoming the masters of destiny.

The incorporation of women into the creative life of today's societies is of a more markedly collective and therefore more anonymous nature than in the past.

We must not forget, however, that one collective and anonymous contribution of women provided primitive communities and family groups with a basic element of human progress. I am referring to agriculture and the custom of sowing the land and harvesting crops for food that women began to practise to ensure the sustenance of their children while men were engaged in long hunting or war-making expeditions.

Even in those remote times women gave evidence of their deep ties with that other mother, Mother Earth, and their essential attachment to the sedentary life as opposed to the nomadic instinct of the hunter which was characteristic of their male companions. How many times in the daily life of peoples in any era has it not happened that a woman's word has ensured the stability of a household or the regrouping of a family under the protection she has offered!

This is probably one of the reasons why women are traditionally associated with peace, not only with the peace of the home among the members of the family but also with peace as the definite absence of war. It was a woman who wrote the unforgettable book, "Down with Arms" an early anti-war manifesto that shows us how any deliberate act of depriving others of their lives is a form of fratricide and crime. As we advance in our century this idea is being strengthened in both men and women. But the cause of peace and the instinctive horror of destruction seem to have found their most powerful fortress in the heart of woman.

Through their delegates, practically all the peoples of the world are represented here, each people or group of peoples with its needs, its hopes and its traditions. The Argentine Republic is fully aware that it belongs to the third world, a world whose problems it shares because they are its own. For this reason it devotes its major foreign policy efforts to Latin American integration as a necessary preliminary step toward growing world integration. Women, who for biological, ancestral and historic reasons are a unifying force, are a part of this impetus.

I must frankly tell the distinguished women delegates attending this world assembly of women that I feel very proud of an event of far-reaching importance that occurred in my country in 1947 when the then President, General Perón, incorporated Argentine women into the great mass of voters in national elections. In the theory and practice of the movement headed by General Perón, Justicialismo, the presence of women has been, and continues to be, of profound importance. In addition, the Justicialismo movement was privileged in having the participation of an extraordinary woman admired within and outside the country, Mrs. Eva Perón, an untiring fighter for the poor, for children and for the elderly; a woman who with Christian zeal devoted her life to the happiness of her people. God has willed it that an Argentine woman should today occupy the post of Chief Executive of her country as the result of democratic elections. I feel the great burden of this responsibility as a mission, and I have placed my life and my entire self at its service.

Many women in my country occupy important positions in national and provincial administrations. As legislators, teachers, artists, scholars, civil servants, advisers, diplomats and technicians, in all aspects of the life of society, there are Argentine women with a vocation for service and, if necessary, for sacrifice.

We are on the threshold of a new era of fraternal encounters and new values. We must not remain on the side lines in this era, which is ours. Social and moral claims are part of the historic circumstances which have given rise to them. Let us not separate ourselves from those circumstances. Let us live the present not only as the present but also as the beginning of the future. Let us seek ways of giving concrete expression to the response to the plebiscite, dictated by the realities of our existence, in which we are asking all humanity to take part: recognition of the fraternal similarity (equality) of men and women in their essential dignity as human beings.

Lastly, I wish to transmit the warm greetings of the Argentine people to the distinguished delegates to the World Conference of the International Women's Year as well as my fraternal expression of solidarity with its work. I hope that through the Argentine delegation you will all be made aware of the affection of the people and Government of my country. It is my fervent wish that the valuable work of this Conference will prove to be a concrete and genuinely substantive contribution toward the solution of the problems of women throughout the world. All years and all days are women's years and days just as they are the years and days of their companions and friends, men, for the participation, the joys and the sorrows of women belong to the living experience of humanity forever.