CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

# Speech by Glorene A Das, Executive Director, Tenaganita Women’s Force

Cairo, Egypt, 25 March 2017

Women designate the very existence of human life, and today we celebrate one of them for her courage, strength and above all her determination to build a community of youth through education and vigorously fight for women’s rights and equality.

Dear Excellencies, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I bring greetings from Malaysia, in the region of South East Asia.

I bring warm wishes from thousands of migrant workers, refugees, women and children who are victims and survivors of human trafficking and forced labour, who stand with me today in congratulating the inspiring Mozn Hassan, for her work with Nazra for Feminist Studies , that is truly worthy of the prestigious Right Livelihood Award.

It is an honour to be involved with the Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award today and to celebrate such a brave woman as Mozn Hassan.

I too, had the privilege of working with a brave woman, we called her the Iron Lady - The Late Dr Irene Fernandez (the recipient of 2005 RL Award) for 14 years at Tenaganita, she was my mentor, my teacher and my friend. As her legacy lives on, it is truly motivating to have our work at Tenaganita and our continuous struggle with women, children, migrants and refugees recognised and acknowledged not only on a regional level but also internationally within the family of the Right Livelihood Foundation and the laureates.

Within Malaysia our work with the migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking is frequently condemned, criticised and suppressed by officials and governing parties, which is why everyone from Tenaganita and the communities of migrants, refugees, women and children vow to stand in solidarity with others who face crises in their movements to achieve equality and a better standard of life for vulnerable groups of people.

When I heard of the sanctions against Mozn for her great work it deeply troubled me to know that people of the 21st century continue to be persecuted for the advocacy of gender equality which should have existed since the dawn of time. We are living in an era of female empowerment, I refuse to accept this discrimination and instead celebrate the gallant actions of women like Mozn. It is about time they acknowledge our strength, our resilience and most importantly our rights. Women are the drivers of society, the beholders of tradition and culture. We should be admired, not repressed.

While I respect the Egyptian judiciary , Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states ‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression without interference’. Meanwhile, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which Egypt is a State party to, guarantees the freedom of association.

The empowerment of women movement is vital in furthering the development of any nation state and Mozn has proven herself to be the voice of women in the region through her engagement with the Egyptian and regional feminist movement in the Middle-East and North Africa.

Mozn’s work with Nazra furthers Goal 5 from the Sustainable Development Goals to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women and girls, specifically by ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private sphere and ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. As Egypt is in full support of the Sustainable Development Goals including Goal 5, their stance against Nazra can be seen as contradictory.

The Egyptian Government should be working with Mozn to allow for progression of the state and in complying with international goals and obligations. Collaboration is key for any form of changes and advancement. As such, the Egyptian Government must know that Mozn Hassan and Nazra For Feminist Studies continue a long tradition of the country’s feminist movement. They do Egypt proud.

As I stand here, I also acknowledge the different leaders of civil society, parliamentarians and feminists in this room for your tremendous contribution in advancing women’s rights.

Mozn and Nazra’s achievements would not have been possible without the strong collaboration of fellow feminists, like the “Women in Constitution” civil society group that successfully lobbied for the inclusion of women’s rights in the 2014 Constitution. Such collaboration has changed the lives of women.

I would also like to thank members of Egyptian’s civil society for coming to the ceremony and standing with Mozn and Nazra at these difficult times. I sincerely have the faith that the Egyptian civil society would be able to continue to make the dreams of the 2011 revolution a reality, and I promise you on behalf of the millions of migrants, refugees, women and children of South East Asia, along with the international community, we will proudly stand with each one of you in this endeavor.

Dr Irene Fernandez always told me “If you wanna be somebody, if you want to go somewhere, you better wake up and pay attention” because when you pay attention, you bring about actions and with actions you change lives of the millions.

Once again, congratulations to our dearest Mozn Hassan and Nazra For Feminist Studies.

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