

## **WOMEN, PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**(An Address by Hon. Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro (MP.)  
Minister for Community Development, Gender and  
Children TANZANIA)**

Hon. Chairperson,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I wish to take this opportunity to thank you Mr. Louis D'Amore, founder and President of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism, for inviting me to participate in this very important conference to share my views on Women, Peace and sustainable Community Development.

I understand that this conference aims at deliberating on peace through tourism with a specific theme on community tourism as a gateway to poverty reduction. This goal comes at a time when our country specifically enjoins participation of communities in various development activities as a means to achieving sustainable development. It is our hope that at the end of this conference, we will come out with strategies and action initiatives that would contribute to sustainable community development, peace and poverty reduction.

I am led to understand that this is the second African conference on peace through tourism, following the first one that was held at Mpumalanga, South Africa in 2001. The major objective of that conference was to foster African awareness and commitment to the cultural, environmental and economic benefits of tourism, and the role it can play in facilitating reconciliation and peace on the continent. It is our expectation that this conference will build on the outcome of the Mpumalanga conference and carry its objectives even further.

**Distinguished participants,**

Tourism in Tanzania is one of the key sectors that contribute immensely to the economic growth and development of our country. The sector accounts for about 16% of the GDP and nearly 25% of the total earnings. Tourism also supports directly an estimated number of 156,000 jobs. It is thus a sector that has a direct link with the development of communities and the nation in general.

Despite this fact, it is a well-known phenomenon that no country can boast of development, be it social or economic, where there is no peace. Peace and development are interlinked, there will be no sustainable peace without just and equitable development and there can not be any development without peace. For, in conflict situations human beings who are the focus and key actors of development efforts, not only get killed and maimed, but their

natural resources also get plundered. Examples abound in this, our very region, eastern, southern and central Africa. Tourism stands to be affected adversely both during and after conflict situations. For even where peace is attained, whatever tourist attractions that might have existed will have been destroyed and if not, the very infrastructure that services tourism will have been affected.

Nonetheless the impact of war and conflicts is not only confined to the countries where instability sets in. It spreads to neighbouring and other countries as well, even beyond the immediate geographical reach of the conflict-ridden areas. Peace should therefore be a question for global concern and especially as it relates to the tourism industry.

**Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When we talk of peace, we have in mind its contradictory counterpart of civil conflicts, war and similar hostilities normally referred to as **"Loud emergencies"**. However, talking of communities as key development actors, we have to bear in mind always that peace may be affected by other **"silent vices"** as well. These could be caused by poor economy, social injustice, especially at the family level, and violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Conflicts whether within families, communities, nations or between nations arise out of injustices as aforementioned, and competition for power and control over resources. As a woman cabinet minister

responsible for community development, gender and children I can not but take the family as a starting point. From whatever perspective justice and peace should start at home, within the family. It is at the level of the family that good values are inculcated. These in turn form basis for a culture of justice, equity and peace at a community and later on national level.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

If the family is to be taken as the starting point, one can not avoid the very burning issue of gender inequality. Gender inequality can be and in many situations is, a breeding ground for injustice, instability and breach of peace in families and in communities. Although gender as a concept embodies more than just women's rights, it is common knowledge that the female gender suffers more where there is gender inequality and gender inequity. One of the aspects of gender inequality that affects not only women as women but the entire development process is their non-participation. Yet we all know that **'participation'** is an imperative to development. Therefore, if any section of the population is left out in the entire development process there can not be any meaningful development. But as peace is an imperative to development so is it absolutely necessary to ensure that women, participate directly in peace initiatives and peace building. On the one hand it is unfortunate that by and large women have to **'justify'** their relevance to peace building. On the

other hand it simply demonstrates the stark but pleasant reality that women are not '**war mongers**'. The irony is, however, that women and children bear the sharpest brunt of the impact of war and instability.

**Distinguished participants,**

Against this backdrop, one can not overemphasize the role women can and have to play in peace building as an important aspect of sustainable community development. As tourism is an important sector in the economic and social development of our country, then community participation and particularly women's participation becomes absolutely necessary.

It is heartening to note that Tanzania is one of those countries that espouse the participatory approach to development. The Ministry of Tourism and Natural Resources has since 1988 established a community-based conservation programme. Through this program communities not only participate in conservation activities as part of a government undertaking, but also appreciate conservation as part of their own survival and that of their future generations.

**Distinguished participates,**

This program has led to the promotion of other socially and economically relevant programmes of a tourist nature to the communities. So we have witnessed in

recent days plans to have community-organized visits to the tourist sites in their neighbourhood, concessionary rates and special facilities for them. In this way, local communities get an opportunity to enjoy the sites as local tourists as well as to engage in activities that service the non-local tourists.

Women's groups are notably present around tourist sites where they prepare local foods, sell fruit and vegetables, handicrafts and other items of touristic attraction. On the other hand, societies at large have benefited from certain amounts of income from tourist activities that is ploughed back into neighbouring communities. Schools, health facilities, water works, cattle dips, road construction are some of the social services obtained in the context of **'participatory conservation and tourist programmes'**.

However, all this would not have been attained if there was no peace and stability in the country and our tourist destinations in particular.

### **Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Women form the majority in our country and in other parts of the world. They also form majority of the poorest of the poor. Poverty breeds conflict and instability. If we agree that women have a role to play in peace building and in sustainable community

development, then we have no option but to undertake the noble task of building gender equity and equality in our societies. If we consider community tourism to be a gateway to poverty reduction then we must ensure women's participation on the basis of equity and equality. Ladies and gentlemen the challenge is ours to rise to.

I thank you for your attention.