

IORA Workshop for Women's Entrepreneurship and Skill Development

27 September 2017, New Delhi: Women's economic empowerment needs to be addressed holistically to ensure that they have equitable access to assets, technology, infrastructure, tailor-made training and constant back up support, said **Mrs. Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawo, Minister for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mauritius)**, while addressing the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) workshop on 'Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship'. The workshop was organized by **FICCI** in association with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and IORA Secretariat. FICCI is the Business Secretariat of IORA in India.

The Indian Ocean Rim Initiative came into force in March 1995, and the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (then known as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation) two years later, in March 1997. Today, IORA is a dynamic organisation of 21 Member States and 7 Dialogue Partners*.



Mrs. Jeewa-Daureeawo said that there is “no size fits all” formula for entrepreneurship development. If the ultimate vision is to put in place policies and programmes that are responsive to women's strategic needs, it is essential that a wide array of services be made available for women's entrepreneurship development.

Ms. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (India), said that to equip the representatives from IORA nations to be successful entrepreneurs the focus of the workshop would be on education & training; gender equality laws and initiatives; and social security and financial inclusion. While women make important contributions to a range of supply chains across Indian Ocean Rim economies, significant efforts are still needed to better integrate them into these chains and move them into higher value-added production and decision-making positions, she added.

Ambassador K. V. Bhagirath, Secretary General, IORA, said that there was a need to make data available readily on the status of women to study the issues that stand in the way of women entrepreneurs. Identifying the gaps would enable formulation of sustainable development strategies and goals for women empowerment. He added that women entrepreneurs already face challenges in terms of accessing finance for their start-ups.

Dr Jyotsna Suri, Past President, FICCI; Chairperson and Managing Director of Bharat Hotels (India), said that the private sector needed to come forward and play a vital role in women empowerment. She recommended that a women entrepreneurs' network should be created for IORA nations, to enable women entrepreneurs to reach out to gain access to business opportunities and exchange ideas. Besides, women's empowerment principles must be visited to empower women in the workplace. Education was the key for bringing about gender equality and it was essential to inculcate the ethos of gender equality in children during primary schooling, she pointed out.

Ms. Vasvi Bharat Ram, President, FLO and Joint Vice Chairperson, Sri Ram School, said that denying women full participation in the global economy is costly. Full gender equality would add 26 per cent, or \$28 trillion, to global gross domestic product in 2025, according to a report by McKinsey & Co. The workshop, she added, was an excellent initiative to bring together the women entrepreneurs from India and other countries of the Indian Ocean Rim Association to have a dialogue on new generation issues like, start-ups, women entrepreneurship, equality at work place, skilling and other similar issues of our linked yet distinct blue economies.

Ms. Ambika Sharma, Director General, FICCI - Perspective from IORA Business Secretariat (India), said that FICCI as the Business Secretariat of IORA in India had organized the workshop for bringing women entrepreneurs from IORA together and creating a sustainable ecosystem for developing women's entrepreneurship in the region.

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