



ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN TOWN PLANNERS IN NIGERIA (AWTPN)



NITP/ NAT-AWTPN/ 2023/IWD/002

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SPEECH BY TPL. (MRS) BELLO, RISIKAT BUKOLA FNITP, MNIM, MRTPI, NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN TOWN PLANNERS IN NIGERIA (AWTPN) TO COMMEMORATE THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8TH MARCH 2023....

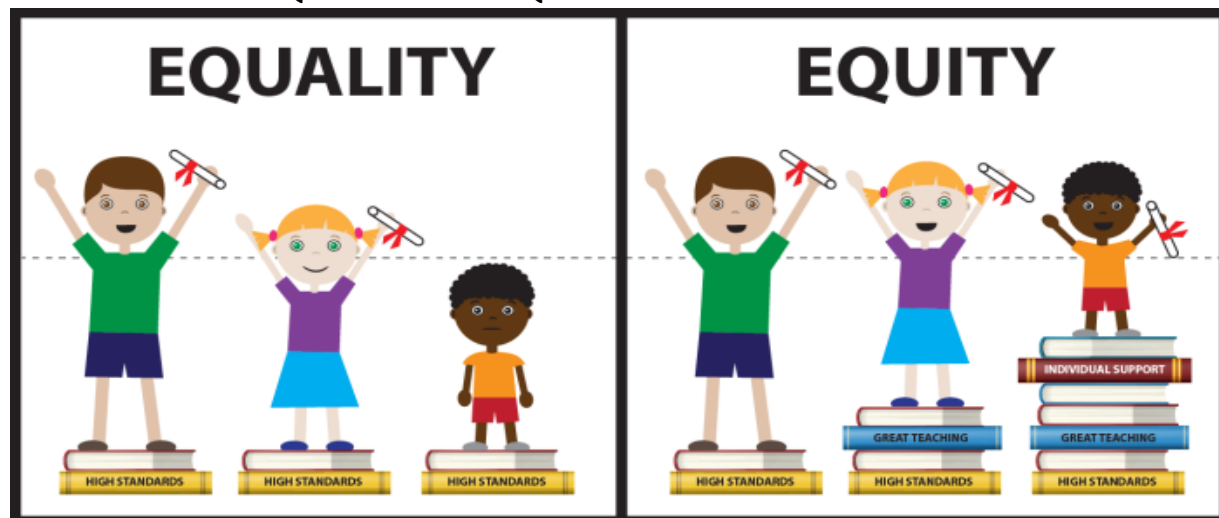
Fellow Colleagues, Let's celebrate this Year's International Women's Day with a mind free of bias, stereotypes, diversity and discrimination!! We should embrace mind full of equity, unity and inclusiveness as we celebrate the Year **2023** International Women's Day (**IWD**).

Year 2023 IWD Theme is tagged "**#EmbraceEquity**". This indicates that this world should be where equality is much valued and celebrated. **G.D Anderson once said "Feminise isn't about making women strong, Women are already strong, it's about changing the way the world perceives their strength and providing things they deserve"**.

In view of this, the Executive and the entire Members of the Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria (AWTPN) join women all over the world to commemorate the Year 2023 International Women's Day, which is celebrated on 8th March of every year.

The Women Wing of the Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP) also recognizes this, as a special day to be observed by the Women Town Planners and other Women Professionals. This year International Women's Day presents an opportunity to celebrate, discuss and embrace Equity: "*equal opportunities are no longer enough but Equity should be the order of the day.*"

ILLUSTRATION OF EQUALITY VERSE EQUITY



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I would like to define each word as follows: “*Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities” while “*Equity* recognizes that each person has different circumstances or challenges and the need to allocate exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome must be a prioritized”.

Attributes of gender equity addresses the following in a society:

- i. Promotes fairness and social justice ;
- ii. Ensures access of women and girls to education;
- iii. Ensures access of women to economics;
- iv. Eliminates all forms of discrimination and violence against women;
- v. Equitable participation in relation to household, community, Institution and political arenas,

Way Forward to promoting gender equity in Nigeria

- i. Educational empowerment of women to and encouragement of equal access to knowledge in all fields;
- ii. Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and support women's human rights;
- iii. Encouragement of women's full citizenship and equal participation in policy-making, the elimination of stereotyped roles and expectations;
- iv. **Encourage women's creativity and freedom of expression by supporting their cultural activities, research, training, capacity-building, networking, exchange of information and women's NGOs;**
- v. Building a culture of peace in the minds of women and men by recognising women's capacity for leadership and non-violent conflict resolution;
- vi. Encouraging Women's contribution to the management of natural resources and environmental protection.

Reasons for gender equality and equity in Nigeria:

- i. The persistent increase of women poverty level in Nigeria is over 60% going by the IMF statistics 2022;
- ii. Inequalities and inadequate access to education and training
- iii. Inequalities and inadequate access to health care and related services;
- iv. Violence against women;
- v. Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources;
- vi. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
- vii. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- viii. Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment;
- ix. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl-child.

Let me note that, the former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said: “When we empower women, we empower communities, nations and entire human family.” Therefore, it can be asserted that women are not only loaded with valuable potentials, but also have the legal right to contribute to the development of their societies. Every Government and Institutions must adequately position more women in their administration and amend policies that have placed women at the losing end. It is important to note that, Policies that benefit white women, may not benefit black women, for this there need to shift from gender *equality* to the process of gender *equity* to achieve a meaningful progress.

At this juncture, I would like to commend the efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria for the formulation of 35% Affirmation Action for Gender Inclusion in Governance resulting in the engagement of female Ministers, Hon Commissioners, Special Advisers, Permanent Secretaries and in all of Governance in Nigeria.

It is worth noting at this point that, some State Governments have adopted the policy and they have implemented the "Affirmation Action of 35% Gender Inclusion in Governance, States like: **Lagos (South-West)- Lagos State under the Governorship of Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-olu**, has twenty-five (25) members with 8 female members (31.2%) and Kaduna State under the leadership of El-Rufia has Seventeen (17) Commissioners, with (9) nine Female members which make it 53 % of the cabinet which close and above 35% affirmation Action for Gender Inclusion respectively. While the level of compliance in some other States are relevantly low, States like: **Akwa Ibom (South-South)- 10.5%, Imo State (South-East)- 8.5%, Borno State (North-East)- 11%, Benue State (North-Central) 7.5%**. This shows there is need to step up to 35% affirmation level across the State Capital.

At this point, I would like to appeal to all State Governments and Institutions to engage more women in Governance and administrations as well as to empower and invest in girl-child with a view to achieving equality and equity in all directions for a better society. This is why Organizations like Ours; the Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria is involved in the campaign of catching the girl-child young, through frequent sensitization programs in Secondary Schools using peculiarity of needed lectures for the sensitization programmes. I would like to commend and encourage us all, most especially the female wing of professional bodies to continue in the upliftment of the girl's child in the society.

In addition to the above, we need to embrace digital transformation as an open's avenue for women's economic and social empowerment and this will boost gender equality if we are strategic about it. We should pursue education in STEM-fields, and support informal businesses to be inclusive, improve in transformative technology and digital education to sustain future growth and development of Girl's Child.

Lastly, without being biased I will like to note that **"Achieving gender equality and Equity requires Government and Institutions involvement at all levels as well as the activeness and Proper representation of women in strategic decision making, Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. It is everyone's collective responsibility."**

On behalf of the National Executives of Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria (AWTPN) I wish to rejuvenate the willingness and Preparedness to promote Town Planning Profession, so as to have sustainable human settlements.

We wish all Women a good celebration of International Women's Day 2022.

Thank you and God bless you all.

The Great Women Town Planners!!!, Professionalism and Inclusiveness!!!

Signed

The National Chairman (AWTPN)