

Highly esteemed guests,

Dear sisters,

SALAMU ALEIKUM

It's my honor and my privilege to address you today in my personal name and in the name of my colleagues in EWFN, who sent to all of you their warmest greetings and wishes of success to this magnificent event. Jacky was very inspired when she represented our network as a flower, each of our regional networks is one petal, so welcome to the NA petal!! I am sure that it will add flavor, energy and beauty to our network.

When we launched the GWFN in 2001, we have chosen as Title, "A woman's place" religious women as public actors, the title of a book edited by Azza Karam, our program director. we wanted women to be present and be recognized as leaders of religious communities, as actors of social, cultural and political life and as partners in decision-making circles; let me quote the introduction of this book "*religious women, whether as members of institutions or as individuals, are not subjugated, oppressed, blinded or brainwashed. They're capable, articulate, active, aware and totally committed*". What we lack was "*publicity and recognition and support*". (introduction p 10-11)

This analysis religious women situation was an accurate one. Since then, and due to the creation and development of our Network worldwide, we have gained in visibility and in credit as "religious leaders and public actors" but the path is still long! I just want to give the example of women in RfP: progress of number of Women in World council since 2006 assembly, 18 members between co-presidents, Honorary presidents. Besides, women of faith are more visible within their community (Mrs Rouge and African sisters) . I am delighted today to see North American women joining us as a network, I am more confident IN

THE FUTURE with you as added human asset to GWFN, We will go very far and make more achievements!

I had the honor and the pleasure to be with our African sisters in Lybia / Young and enthusiastic young women : not at all afraid of the huge task they have to tackle.

South American women are pioneers in creating their network and in advancing women cause and I admire the work they've done in GBV education and

Asian women re-elected their coordinating committee in October 2008, enlarged their network and enhanced their achievements

Women in Europe launched their network in November 2008 and since that date national network are being launched , Italian, Scottish, French, Belgian and finnish in the coming days

We have fixed as goals building our network by 2011, we have almost reached this goal, but the path is still long, we have to launch local and national network and on regional level, we have a challenge : work together and with our sisters in MENA to launch the middle east network. Today in launching NAWFN, we're making a step forward on this path. Indeed, through the title “ restore dignity”, we understand that north american women have not only found their place but also play a role, an important, an elementary an essential role , that of defending and serving the weakest members of our societies, the women victims of violence : this concern of the other the suffering members of the society emerged as one of the main concern of FWFN

As women of faith, we know that we shall be at the front of those who fight these common enemies, poverty, diseases, violence, injustice which cause ravages in different parts of the world and especially among female populations!

Sisters your commitment to fight violence in all its forms is needed by those who suffer from this plight all over the world. And I shall say that even in our

cities and their suburbs violence is marginalizing and damaging more and more individuals, especially young girls.

Through your commitments, sisters and your common action, you' **contribute to change the image of women of faith.** Indeed women from different faith traditions from regions of the world, involved in our network, acquire through your commitment **“a strong voice” to defend their common goals.**

I am delighted to see you launching our network from this prestigious place, symbol of the solidarity of peoples, and I perceive in such an initiative many signs :

- First , a change the way religious people communicate with politicians and decision-makers on different levels to contribute to change their attitude towards religions and religious people: You prove that the purpose the inter religious dialogue is not to convert the other, nor to prove that one religion is false. It is not even a question of preference or of free choice. And that Interfaith co-operation is not religions uniting against others but religions uniting for Humankind's benefit. Interfaith co-operation is not only a matter of mutual understanding, respect and recognition **but a matter of common projects for human survival and public welfare, strugglers against drought hunger, disease, ignorance, illiteracy and under-development.** These are essential concepts for inter-religious dialogue, and efficient and productive, away from brotherly mutual embraces and diplomatic exchanges. This corresponds to the content of “shared security” Religions for Peace developed with its partners: we have to share peace and security in the same way our faith traditions enjoins us to share Bread and Water. Peace starts by an economic peace. Here allow me please to quote the prophet of Islam who said *“Cannot be a good believer, he or she who sleeps well fed while knowing that his/her neighbour is sleeping hungry”* I am sure that say echoes similar messages existing in your own faith, whether it is Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikh faith, Hinduism, Bahai faith, Zoroastrian, Brahma Khumari, and all

the different creed present in this room. I am sure that it also echoes the humanist concern of many of us who are NOT specifically belonging to a faith tradition but simply to human family.

I pray God to bless our assembly and renew my thanks to Mrs ----- for welcoming us in E p and my congratulations to my colleagues Judith, Salima, Raj, for their endeavour and creativity in leading the NAWFN and to each of you sisters who enrich our network with your presence and your contribution? And a special thank to a man whose help was really decisive in building our network, Dr VENDLEY

Samalu Aleikoum

Merhézia LABIDI-MAIZA