

Speech: Celebrating International Women's Day in Tanzania

On behalf of British High Commission (BHC), Department for International Development (DFID) and British Council, I would like to welcome you all to this event to mark the celebration of International Women's Day that is celebrated every 8 March each year.

It is a pleasure to be here this morning and I'd like to thank everyone for their contributions to making the event such a success. Particular thanks to Inspector Komba for her inspirational speech and to the wonderful MUDA Dance Group. You are a hard act to follow!

International Women's Day is an important day in my calendar.

Across the globe, women are constantly achieving new firsts: running multinational corporations, becoming heads of state, even exploring space.

And yet, although the equal rights of women are enshrined in international law, no country in the world has achieved gender equality.

This is not only morally wrong; it obstructs achievement of a more secure and prosperous world.

Addressing inequality is not a "nice to have", or an "add on" to our core work; it is firmly in all our collective interests.

Empowering women and girls improves peace and stability, good governance, economic growth and reduces poverty.

Gender equality is at the heart of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development: which is why we are seeking a Planet 50-50 by 2030.

I am really proud that the UK's Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, recently pledged to make UK foreign policy consciously and consistently deliver for women and girls.

He has also appointed our first ever Special Envoy for Gender Equality. She will help drive and install gender equality and women's issues in our foreign policy.

As you know this year's theme for IWD is Gender Equality in the Work Place. This is an issue which definitely needs attention. The World Economic Forum estimates that the gender Pay Gap won't close until 2186. This is too long wait!

With this in mind, I am proud to be the THIRD consecutive female British High Commissioner to represent the UK in Tanzania. There are now around 50 female British Ambassadors and High Commissioners around the world, 14 of us based in Africa. In Britain we have a woman Prime Minister and a female head of

state in Her Majesty the Queen.

And we have more women in work and more women-led businesses than ever before. And we've more than doubled women's representation on the boards of our biggest companies since 2011.

But there is still more to do.

Tanzania too has made good progress in addressing gender inequality. Important policy and legal reforms are helping to empower women and girls. These include the commitment to universal education and commitments to tackle violence against women and girls

But despite the achievements, the majority of women in Tanzania, just as in many countries, still face inequality. They have longer working hours, and receive less education than men. Women find it more difficult than men to access resources such as land and finance. And, unfortunately, violence against women and girls also still remains a big issue.

So, that is why I am proud that my government is putting women and girls at the centre of our development efforts both here in Tanzania and around the world.

And I also want to do my bit personally. The theme for this year's International Women's Day is Gender Equality in the Work Place. One of the challenges that women face is that they don't know where to go for advice and support about their careers. I've been fortunate to have found two excellent mentors, who have supported me to get to where I am today.

So, I'm announcing today that I am offering to mentor one young Tanzanian women (under 25 years of age) for a 6 month period, every 6 months. She will have the opportunity to shadow me for a day and have monthly meetings over the 6 month period. Details of how to apply are on the UK in Tanzania website.

The UK believes girls and women everywhere should have voice, choice and control over their own lives. And unlocking the potential of half the world's population is in everyone's interest.

So here's to a future that belongs to all of us, where gender will no longer be a barrier to success. Happy International Women's Day to you all! Let's #Be Bold for Change together.