



W INTERNATIONAL OMEN'S DAY

MARCH 8, 2024

"Let's invest in women
to build inclusive,
equitable and
sustainable cities"
in collaboration with
women's organizations



Asia
Economic
Forum

Sponsored by



**International Women's Day
March 8th, 2024**

***Invest in Women / Accelerate Progress
Keynote speaker, Honorable Minister Marci Ien***



UEF is dedicated to advancing the economic, political, and social inclusion and empowerment of women in urban areas, making gender equality a top priority at the global scale. In alignment with this commitment UEF, in collaboration with the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels (Pavilion), launched the program “Canada, Women and Urban SDGs” to build new capacities for an equitable and just society where women are equal partners in realizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On March 8, 2024, International Women's Day was celebrated at the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels in collaboration with local organizations to move forward gender equality and progress. This year's theme, “invest in women to accelerate progress” encompasses the meaningful inclusion of women's voices and perspectives as being pivotal in shaping cities that are inclusive, safe, equitable, resilient and sustainable and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goal #5 (gender equality) and #11 (sustainable cities and communities).

OUR SPONSOR – Glocal Platform for Urban Finance

We would like to thank our sponsor, the Glocal Platform for Urban Finance (GPUF) who generously sponsored our event. GPUF stands as an innovative initiative, dedicated to revolutionizing the approach cities take in accessing and utilizing financial resources for sustainable urban development. This groundbreaking platform is meticulously crafted to bridge the gap between global financial reservoirs and the specific needs of local urban environments, functioning as a catalyst for transformative change. By establishing connections between existing financial mechanisms and the real challenges faced on the ground, GPUF empowers cities to effectively tackle urgent issues such as inequality, poverty, environmental degradation, and climate change. Through the integration of inventive financial models, strategic partnerships, and technical advisory services, the GPUF plays a pivotal role in facilitating the implementation of sustainable urban projects. Its mission ensures that cities worldwide can not only adapt but also thrive in the ever-changing landscape of urban development.



UN International Women’s Day Message, Secretary-General António Guterres



“On International Women’s Day, we celebrate women and girls around the world, and we applaud all they have achieved in the fight for equality. Women and girls have made great gains – demolishing barriers, dismantling stereotypes and driving progress towards a more just and equal world. We must support women’s organisations on the front line. And we must invest in programmes to end violence against women, and to drive women’s inclusion and leadership in economies, digital technologies, peacebuilding and climate action. On International Women’s Day, we stand with women and girls fighting for their rights, and we commit to accelerating progress. “

MASTER OF CEREMONY

Ilda Cordeiro



Ilda Cordeiro, Director of Programs at the Urban Economy Forum and the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels

As the Master of Ceremonies, Ilda Cordeiro inaugurated the International Women's Day festivities with a land acknowledgment and a warm welcome. Setting the tone for the event, she invited everyone to partake in commemorating this significant occasion. Ilda emphasized the critical need for meaningful investments in women, emphasizing that such efforts are pivotal in expediting progress towards creating inclusive, fair, just, and equitable cities and communities. Her sentiments underscored the overarching goal of ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a more harmonious and egalitarian society.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Dr. Eduardo Lopez Moreno



Dr. Eduardo López Moreno, Co-Chair of the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels.

Eduardo Lopez Moreno shared insights from his work, underscoring that he recognizes "progress in society as progress for women." However, achieving gender parity remains an ongoing struggle—a silent war dedicated to solidifying women's rights and fostering a fair society. Hence, International Women's Day serves as a pivotal moment for change. It is a day to recommit ourselves to the advocacy of women's rights and the establishment of a more inclusive and just society. This involves creating an environment where women are not only valued but also respected and supported. He noted the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels serves as a space to consolidate the efforts of organizations, businesses, universities, and communities throughout Canada that are actively promoting gender equality. The Pavilion functions as a hub for knowledge and creative solutions, contributing to the expansion of opportunities for data, research, knowledge-sharing, and partnerships.

Dr. Fazileh Dadvar



Dr. Fazileh Dadvar Chief of Research at Urban Economy Forum and Head of Networking at the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels

Fazileh Dadvar addressed the vital role of women's resilience, self-worth, and cooperative spirit in shaping a more equal world, and emphasized the pressing need for empathy and collaboration. She introduced a groundbreaking initiative, "Canada, Women, and Urban SDGs & Global Secretariat on Urban SDGs and Women," focusing on the connection between SDG11 and SDG5 to address structural inequalities. The initiative aims to position Canada as a global leader in sustainability, empowering women in urban areas through gender-sensitive planning. She invited the Honorable Minister and others to join this transformative journey, creating a powerful synergy for the Secretariat's capacity in Canada and beyond. The initiative aligns with the essence of SDGs, propelling a future where women actively shape urban landscapes for a more just and equitable society. The Urban Economy Forum commits to sustaining this effort through various events throughout the year, extending an invitation to all to be part of this significant initiative.

Reza Pourvaziry



Reza Pourvaziry, Chair of the Urban Economy Forum

In his address, Reza Pourvaziry welcomed Hon. Minister Marci Ien, recognizing the significance of International Women's Day. He highlighted the Pavilion's journey since its inception and its role as a global hub for urban innovation. Emphasizing the urgent need for transformative change in the face of global challenges, Reza reported on the Pavilion's initiatives, including ministerial roundtables and academic meetings. Expressing concern over the slow progress in achieving SDGs, particularly Goal 11 and Goal 5, he urged Canada to lead as a frontrunner for urban SDGs. Reza proposed the establishment of a Global Secretariat, connecting Goals 5, 11, and 17, and called for a ministerial roundtable to prepare the Toronto Declaration. He emphasized the role of women's leadership in achieving gender equality and sustainable urban development, envisioning a collective effort to bring about global change.

The Honourable Marci Ien



The Honourable Marci Ien, Canada's Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, and the Member of Parliament for Toronto Centre.

The Honourable Minister is focused on improving the lives of women, girls, youth, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities across Canada.

The Minister started her remarks with a quote from African scholar and Ghana's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah "When you educate a man, you educate an individual; when you educate a woman, you educate a nation." She added, women often prioritize caring for others over themselves, and this is a global scenario. Honourable Marci Ien expressed awe at the pavilion, noting its remarkable energy upon entering. She emphasized the palpable sense of impactful work being carried out within its walls and the knowledge being shared. Marci highlighted the community benefiting from this work and stressed the transformative nature of the efforts being made, deeming it life-changing. She extended gratitude to Reza and the team, emphasizing the significance of bringing global issues to the local community, especially given Regent Park's history. Marci concluded with a heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to the Pavilion and its dedicated team for their ongoing contributions.

OUR COLLABORATORS - A strong presence of Women at the Pavilion

The BlackNorth Initiative



Dahabo Ahmed-Omer, CEO of The BlackNorth Initiative, is a strong advocator for equity and diversity. She has garnered recognition for her exceptional leadership in addressing racism and barriers to equality. BlackNorth is a Canadian-led initiative aimed at addressing systemic racism and barriers faced by Black individuals and communities in Canada, particularly in the corporate sector.

Dahabo commenced the celebration of International Women's Day with a poem that beautifully encapsulated the worldwide struggle, resilience, and accomplishments of women. She issued a rallying call to advocate for equality, dismantle barriers, and confront the longstanding status quo that has disproportionately marginalized women, particularly those of color.

*In the heart of night, under the gaze of stars so bright,
There whispers a tale of resilience, a never-ending fight.
Black women, guardians of strength, bearers of light,
With roots deep as the earth, spirits taking flight.*

Multicultural Action Group for Orphans (MAGO)



Dr. Zahra Hojati, an interdisciplinary scholar, explores the intricacies of gender, race, and class, with a specific emphasis on the challenges faced by women of Middle Eastern descent in global contexts. **Roya Sharifzad**, the Founder of the Multicultural Action Group for Orphans (MAGOO), is dedicated to transforming the lives of orphaned children and underserved communities for positive change. MAGO, established in 2017, actively works to deliver essential services to children residing in impoverished regions worldwide.

During this session, the speakers shed light on the challenges faced by racialized women in Sistan and Baloochestan, Iran. These women, subjected to a deprivation of their human rights, endure the suppression of their voices due to cultural norms and values that perpetuate gender inequality. The discussion also emphasized the plight of orphaned children in the region and highlighted MAGO's significant contributions towards building wells for clean water, providing shelter, and offering aid to enhance the overall well-being of children in this part of the world.

Mothers to Daughters



Kim Singh, CEO and Founder at SCABA and Management+Inc. She advocates for mentorship programs, anti-bullying initiatives, and women's empowerment, embodying a legacy of transformative leadership and inclusive excellence. Mothers to Daughters contributes to narrowing the gap in lived experiences between women and future generations by creating a secure, intimate, and inclusive space for engagement, education, and empowerment.

Kim, representing Mothers to Daughters, shared her individual experience in asserting her rights as a woman in her career journey and spoke of her initiatives to promote women's equality and empowerment to expedite progress towards a world that is fair and just. Specifically, she is proud of her efforts to empower the next generation of women leaders by championing mentorship programs and encouraging self-education.

Centre of Learning and Development (Regent Park)

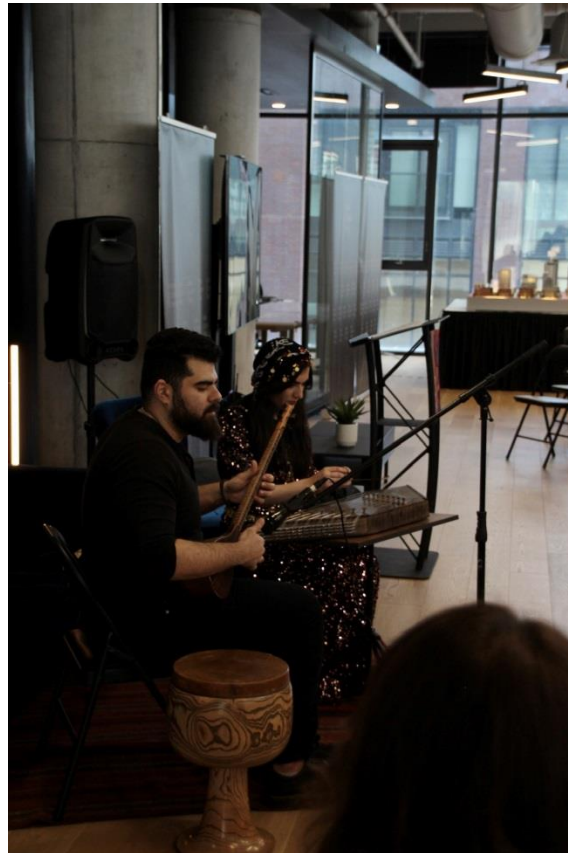


Mahilikah Outten, Nimo Mahomaoud, Nora Barhout and Rafia Taqui

Mahlikay Outten, a multifaceted leader and acclaimed Canadian Spoken Word artist, blends activism with social change. She utilizes various mediums to foster resistance and community engagement, while holding key roles in education, activism, and cultural preservation within Toronto. **Nimo Mohamound**, a Moss Park resident for 16 years, reignited her passion for community service in 2020, co-chairing Mothers of Peace and spearheading vital initiatives, all while finding strength and support through her faith and the Toronto Centre of Learning & Development. Her unwavering commitment reflects a deep dedication to uplifting and empowering her community. **Nora Barhout**, an accomplished Employment Consultant from The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO) and proud IWIP graduate, is passionate about guiding individuals to fulfilling careers, utilizing her expertise and dedication to empower clients through personalized support and meaningful connections. **Rafia Taqi**, a skilled Quran, computer, and sewing teacher, channels her passion for sewing into empowering others at the Centre of Learning and Development, where she serves as a Leader of Trainers at DesignWith, embodying a commitment to skill development and community empowerment. The Center of Learning and development equips individuals with tools for individual growth and promotes positive change in the Regent Park community.

The panel underscored the transformative impact of community engagement when women come together in meaningful conversations to drive positive change. Within the Regent Park community, the women took the opportunity to share their individual stories to shed light on their experiences in community engagement initiatives. These stories illuminated the efforts undertaken to enhance the capabilities of immigrant and newcomer women, to foster empowerment and resilience within the community.

Live Entertainment – Band: SARANG



Musicians, **Matin Kakavand** and **Shahriar Siavash**, from the band **Sarang** played Persian traditional music during lunch and enchanted participants with a delightful live musical performance.

WeirFoulds LLP



Janet Bobechko, Certified Specialist in Environmental Law and Partner at WeirFoulds LLP, has over 30 years of experience in environmental law, advising clients on a wide range of issues including climate change, brownfield development, and environmental social governance. She is recognized internationally for her leadership and commitment to environmental governance. **Ramani Nadarajah**, Counsel at the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) and Certified Specialist in Environmental Law, brings extensive experience in environmental advocacy, policy development, and legal expertise. With a background in both government and public interest law, Ramani has played integral roles in landmark environmental cases and policy initiatives. WeirFoulds LLP is a prominent Canadian law firm based in Toronto, Ontario. Founded in 1860, the firm provides a comprehensive range of legal services to clients across various industries, including corporate and commercial law, litigation, employment law, real estate, and municipal law, among others.

Janet and Ramni both shared their personal journeys to becoming leading senior lawyers in their industries and how they navigated the challenges in the legal profession as young women. They recognized today's challenges entering the legal profession for young women and highly emphasised the key role that mentorship plays in navigating the legal sphere to now giving back to the legal community by mentoring young women who want to enter the field.

Women's Healthy Environments Network



Honor Stahl, Executive Director of the Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN) and Sustainability Scholar. Honor Stahl specializes in environmental ethics, plastic pollution and women's health. She advocates for vulnerable populations through education and creative projects. With a decade of experience, she has contributed to environmental law reform and served as an expert panelist at esteemed universities, most notable University of Toronto and Toronto Metropolitan University. The Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN) is a Canadian organization dedicated to raising awareness about environmental health issues affecting women and children. They advocate for policies and practices that promote a healthier environment for all, with a focus on addressing environmental hazards and their impact on women's health.

In a compelling presentation, Honour shed light on the critical intersection of women's health and the environment. The session aimed to raise awareness about the environment's profound impact on health, emphasizing the disproportionate vulnerability of women and other marginalized populations to harmful toxic substances. The panelists elucidated the intricate links between environmental factors and health outcomes, urging a collective commitment to address these disparities. The WHEN presentation served as a powerful call to action, advocating for heightened awareness, policy initiatives, and community-driven efforts to ensure a healthier and more equitable environment for all.

Silm Centre for Mental Health



Dr. Taslim Alani-Verjee, Fiana Andrews, Karthiga Mahendran, and Yalda Omai

Dr. Taslim Alani-Verjee, Clinical Psychologist and Founder of Silm Centre for Mental Health. Dr. Verjee specializes in cognitive-behaviour therapy for adolescents and adults. Her expertise is in intimate partner violence, stigma, and cultural identity. **Fiana Andrews**, licensed psychologist with the College of Psychologists of Ontario, specializes in psychological assessments and CBT-focused counselling for clients of all ages. **Karthiga Mahendran**, Clinical Associate at Silm Centre for Mental Health, provides psychotherapy to adolescents and adults using evidence-based treatments. **Yalda Omai**, Clinical Associate and registered psychotherapist at Silms Centre for Mental Health, provides therapy to adolescents and adults using evidence-based treatments. The Silm Centre for Mental Health is a comprehensive mental health treatment facility located in Toronto. By addressing both personal and societal factors contributing to distress, they aim to create a space where each person is heard, understood, and supported in their unique journey towards mental health and well-being.

In a transformative session at the International Women's Day event, the Silm Centre for Mental Health presented a compelling talk on "Radical Self-Care: Caring for Ourselves while Caring for Others." Led by a distinguished panel including Dr. Taslim Alani-Verjee, Psychologist, and speakers Fiana Andrews, Karthiga Mahendran, Yalda Omari, and Monica Aguilar, all Clinical Associates and Registered Psychotherapists, the session aimed to enhance mental health and well-being by introducing the concept of radical self-care. The speakers shared valuable insights and practical strategies, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing self-care, especially for those engaged in caring roles. The session provided a holistic perspective on mental health, offering tools and approaches to empower individuals in fostering their own well-being while navigating the responsibilities of caregiving.

Group Conversation



Fazileh Dadvar, Rabeaa Alwrfle and Mitra Kamali

During the dynamic group discussion session at the International Women's Day event, participants passionately exchanged ideas on innovative approaches to implement the UN theme of "Invest in Women, Accelerate the Process." Notable panelists Rabeaa Alwrfle and Mitra Kamali shared their impactful experiences, shedding light on the critical importance of safety for women, particularly in war and conflict zones. So, safety can be the first and fundamental stage in women's empowerment. The discussion emphasized the urgent need to integrate gender equality and women's issues into educational curricula, recognizing education as a powerful tool to expedite progress. The panelists underscored the significance of investing in women's and girls' education globally, particularly in resource-limited countries. The focus was on facilitating access to

education for women and girls, ensuring inclusivity and empowerment in regions facing challenges. The group's insights highlighted the multifaceted strategies needed to accelerate positive change for women on a global scale.

CONCLUSION

The launch of "Canada, Women, and Urban SDGs & Global Secretariat on Urban SDGs and Women" at the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park – Powered by Daniels on March 8th, in commemoration of International Women's Day, concluded with resounding success and a passionate commitment to advancing gender equality. Notable speakers, including Minister Marci Ien, shared compelling insights on the imperative to invest in women and expedite progress. Dynamic discussions delved into various perspectives, underscoring the significance of safety in conflict zones and the integration of gender equality into education. The unveiling of this groundbreaking initiative signifies a crucial stride toward realizing sustainable urban development. The event ignited a collective dedication to catalyzing positive change and empowering women (and girls) on a global scale.

