**Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman**

**IALRW ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

Respected Ladies,

Foremost, I wish to record my heartiest thanks to you all for nominating me to be the new President of IALRW. I am indeed deeply touched by your confidence in me. I accept this nomination based on the following grounds:

1. As appreciation for your confidence in me and the trust that you have in me to lead our century old organization. With this, I hope that I will also have your kind support in my leadership and management of our affairs
2. To honour the remarkable work and contributions of those who initiated the formation of IALRW and their relentless efforts to pursue the courses that they had envisioned upon the setting up of this Association a century ago.
3. In the hope of not only continuing their great work but to further their vision into areas of contemporary concerns.

Ladies,

A century ago, when IARF, and later IALRW, were founded, it was a grim struggle for rights – rights to own faith and religion, rights to learning and knowledge, rights to be included in mainstream society – among others. For women, this struggle was even more difficult, uphill almost all the time. Women were then hardly visible and they had to fight every inch of the way to get space and places for themselves in society. They had to face not only high-handed religious authorities who preferred that all conform to their dictates, but also to confront masculine autocracy which saw women as part of the background, not at centre-stage. Thus, when IALRW was set up, it was an act of acquiring not only religious freedom but also women’s human rights. And the fight has been successful on many counts. Even so, there are still areas in the modern world today where this struggle ought to be pursued on because there are still among our sisters and daughters who have not got their due rights yet.

However, today, there are enormous challenges to women that are far more horrific and ones that need to be urgently addressed, namely, the challenges to their life, their person and their security. Today women are killed, blown to pieces, butchered, mutilated and maimed, injured and wounded in wars and conflicts that are not of their making. Although it is their masculine counterparts that are the initiators and perpetrators of these wars and conflicts, of the violence and aggression, yet almost all the time, the victims are mainly women and children. Even more dastardly, these atrocities and brutalities are explained away as “collateral damages”, therewith classifying women as mere “collaterals” in this world.

When the wars are over and the conflicts subsided, these unfortunate women and children face a very, very difficult and grim future ahead particularly if they become handicapped and incapacitated. Not only can they no longer realize their hopes and dreams, but that they will be utterly dependent upon others. To add to their miseries, their loved ones were killed in the violence, or even worse, are in similar conditions as they are, equally dependent upon others for everything too. To whom can they turn for assistance and help so that they can continue to live whatever life there still is for them? Indeed, it is indescribable how the world is so horrifically cruel to them. Who will now stand up for them and their rights?

Ladies,

Coming back to IALRW, we are proud to be part of a century old organization with a century old history and a century old continuous struggle for rights and justice, especially for women. We hope that IALRW will continue through more centuries ahead with her praiseworthy course to affect goodness in society, in the world. I am sure you agree with me that we ought not only to continue being alive but that we ought also to be actively alive, i.e., as active as our founding members were.

For this, I feel that we need to review the technicalities of our Association, to bring these inline with contemporary practices. I feel the following matters need to be looked into:

1. Organizational Structure

An international organization is a remarkable organization but it is quite difficult to run. I suggest a more de-centralized structure giving more executive powers to the Regional Committees. A more de-centralized structure will not only enable more members to be active but will also enable IALRW to duly recognize these members for their good work and praiseworthy contributions.

1. Focus and Work

The Regional Committees ought to address regional and local concerns, particularly those related to women. Indeed, each region, not to mention each locality, has its own interests and concerns which may be of no interest and concern to other people. As such, the Regional Committees need to be sensitive to the local concerns and act accordingly. In so doing, IALRW will be able to be relevant to the regional and local communities, and therewith gain their support. Hopefully with that, more ladies will want to join IALRW or at least participate in her activities. At the same time, the Regional Committees should also pursue the main, global concerns of IALRW as well.

1. Membership and Constitution

The issue of membership has been raised a number of times. A century ago, registered membership was not needed but now this is necessary. Matters related to Election, Office Bearers, fees, among others are based on membership and membership is determined by the Constitution of the Association. However, IALRW’s Constitution is not well known among members. If these matters are not resolved, things can only get more complicated along the way.

1. System of Communication

Fortunately we now have the state-of-the-art communication technology such as the internet, skype, facebook, etc. We congratulate all involved in setting up our website and we will keep on improving this. Preferably, to be more effective in our work, we can have more regular meetings in cyberspace, such as meetings of the Central Committee as well as Regional Committees, and of course through emails.

1. Activities

I think that it is necessary for us to design levels of programs and activities. We can have long term communal programs such as the Ladakh program, regional programs addressing issues related to women, programs to cater for interest of certain age groups, among others. Above all IALRW Central Committee and other relevant members ought to have a meeting to resolve the technical issues raised above; perhaps to have an IALRW Convention a year or so after AGM. Along with this Convention, an educational tourism program can perhaps be organized too. Educational tourism, I feel, will not only be attractive to members but is also in-line with IALRW’s effort to promote understanding and goodwill among various communities; and if properly organized, it can also bring in some income for IALRW.

As stated earlier, for IALRW to be a truly international body, it is only appropriate that she addresses a matter of serious global concern too. For me, IALRW’s global fight today should be to stand up against all wars and aggressions and to call upon all parties with disputes to resolve their issues though diplomatic and political ways, not through violence. Likewise, “collateral damages” is not acceptable as a defence against such brutal killings and the maiming of uninvolved persons, and that these so-claimed “collateral damages” should be classified as “manslaughter” and be brought to the appropriate world bodies for judgement. Justice is the right of everybody, including for the incapacitated women and the dead too.

So if you are with me, do please stand up now and observe one minute silence as an indication of our stand against wars and all forms of aggressions.

Thank you.

Dr. Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman

IALRW President

IALRW Annual General Meeting

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