

## President's Candle Lighting Ceremony Message 2021



### President's Message for Candle Lighting Ceremony 2021

By  
**Dr. Amany Asfour**  
BPW International President 2017-2020

### **The Culture of Peace and Unity during Crisis**

**Continue your path to light and don't stop to fight.**

My very dear sisters of BPW International,

As we are lighting our candles this year we remember this unprecedented time of COVID that paralyzed the world. And remember that even with the most sophisticated technology a small virus could stop the whole world. What are the lessons learned during COVID? How are we managing this crisis? How can each one of us learn from the wisdom of crisis? Some of us lost precious lives, some families lost their means of earning when they lost their jobs, economies are affected, and healthcare systems are heavily impacted. How did we perceive all this?

### **The Culture of Peace**

The visionary quote of our Founder Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips ***"You are now pioneers in the dream of peace and social justice, of International understanding and goodwill."***

Peace is not a word to utter, or a slogan to raise. It is a culture to be embedded in our souls and spirits. It is a way of understanding and respecting the other with no discrimination. It is the peace from inside. But we also see the wisdom of mentioning peace with social justice. Justice and fairness are pillars to achieve peace. Power, hatred, jealousy and injustice are the fuel for wars and fights.

When you light your candle remember that to realize peace you need to start from your inner self and abandon all negativity and hatred messages that ignites conflicts. Remember that there are other women in different parts of the world that are lighting the candle for you and put trust in your actions and confidence in how you are assisting.

## **My dear sisters of BPW International**

### ***Women Empowering Women***

When we are lighting our candles we remember that we are not alone in this world. Our responsibility is to feel the hunger when we hear the scream of a baby who is starving because his mother is not able to feed him because of poverty. To feel the agony of a young girl that was deprived of her childhood when she is forced into child marriage. We sense the pain of a family that lost the mother when giving birth because of no access to health care facilities. We listen to the echo of the screams of women that has been subjected to violence. We remember the girl child that was deprived of her education and was prevented to go to school. We witness those who are suffering from wars and conflicts, from earthquakes and natural disasters and lost their houses and their loved ones. We remember the injustice in the world when women are having less pay than their colleagues' men, when a woman is discriminated against to be at the top leadership level because of her female gender. We remember that she lost her job because of inequality.

And then we look highly on the great work we are doing at BPW International. About the projects that contribute to the great building of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of our aspirations of No Poverty, No Hunger, and Access to education and health, Gender Equality, Economic growth, reduced Inequalities, Peace and Justice. Be proud of all the work you are doing. A training that you organized to empower young girls. A shelter that you contributed to save survivors of violence. An advocacy platform that you created to raise the voice for all our advocacy pillars: Equal pay, financial inclusion and Public procurement, Women Empowerment Principles, women and Trade. A project that you did for promoting entrepreneurship and young women career development. A fund that was raised to support those who were affected in disasters. And many other projects that you have been doing and assisting to empower women and girls at all levels

Take pride of contributing to this global developmental agenda. Let the challenges we face inspire us to build our inner strength. When you are confronted with dark time, whether it is bullying, jealousy, pandemic or negativity, don't lose hope, never give up and stand powerful. When people try to pull you down, demotivate you to loose confidence in yourself. Remember that only the trees with fruits that people are throwing stones at it.

**So trust in yourself that you are right. Continue your path to light and don't stop to fight.**

Imagine yourself spreading your wings of love. Fly over the stormy cloud. Get the bird eyes' view the hidden opportunities that can lead you to happiness and prosperity.

### **Unity during crisis and Resilience**

BPW is a real life school of leadership. Most leaders face crisis, in some way or another. Blaming others and spreading environment of hostility are not the path to manage crisis. The management of a crisis is to unite and think positively, to empower each other and create new constructive solutions. Handling crisis properly with wisdom and unity is our way to pass from dark to light and from a blurred vision to be bright.

We are not living forever, but we need to leave a legacy for those who come after us and receive the torch from us. In wars all parties lose. There is no victory in war. There are always victims. Let's show by example that we unite together to save our organizations at the dark times. Let the real leadership emerge from the crisis.

Once difficult times pass, let us have a story to tell how BPW united during crisis and set a role model for the generations to come. And celebrated the 90 years of BPW International with love, passion, kindness, fairness and wisdom for our BPW sustainability.

**The culture of peace starts from ourselves and in our attitudes. And our way to face challenges is through unity and resilience .**

It has been both a privilege and a challenge to serve as BPW International President in the past three years. The work for improving status of women and women empowerment is a never-ending task, but as BPW members, we should be determined to continue this work together for several decades more to come In Shaa Allah. And deliberate on the great work done before us to leave our legacy.

I love you all my very dear BPW sisters across the world.

**Dr. Amany Asfour  
International President  
BPW International**