

# 2015 Candle Lighting Ceremony

## President's Message.

Dear BPW members and friends,

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to greet you and to share with you one of our most important traditions in BPW International, our Candle Lighting Ceremony. For many years we have maintained the tradition of having this ceremony during our most important meetings, when we are gathered with friends and members, celebrating our achievements and honouring our Founder, Dr. Lena Madessin Phillips, and our federations, affiliates and members all over the world.

As the 23<sup>rd</sup> President of BPW International, I extend to all of you my personal greetings on this occasion and ask you to join together in recognition of the members in each of the 100 member countries who, with their combined efforts, are making a better world for women and society. Let us keep in mind the words of Dr. Lena Madessin Phillips who said, "Each woman, as a citizen, must bring to the national policy of her own country the contribution of forward-looking and constructive thought followed by determined action. Each woman must dedicate herself to protect and promote the interests of all other women in business and the professions."

Our visionary and determined Founder saw the need for a global organisation such as ours, and 85 years ago on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, 1930, BPW International was born in Geneva, Switzerland. Since then, much has been accomplished in all parts of the world by BPW International, thanks to the efforts of our members. We have changed laws, brought awareness to inequities, partnered in our efforts with several international and national organisations that have the same goals and objectives as we do, and empowered women to achieve their full potential.

We must be proud of our accomplishments, but our work is not yet complete. There is still much to be done. We must keep striving to erase domestic violence, human trafficking, and all forms of discrimination and abuse of women that still exist in the world. We must not rest until we achieve gender equality in the workplace and in society. We need equity in access to education, employment, remuneration, health benefits, and any other aspects of our lives that are still being denied to women.

The theme for this Triennium is, ***Making a Difference Through Leadership and Action***. With the commitment of our members, and their determination to make a difference in their societies, I am confident that we will be able to offer a better life to future generations. I call all of you to action and to join forces in our efforts to change history, and to make a better life for tomorrow.

As we celebrate our 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I encourage you to create your own anniversary celebrations around the world, and urge you to spread the word about our wonderful organisation, projects and initiatives, and our commitment -- to women everywhere and to our members in particular. We can do this in two ways: internally within our organisation, and externally by reaching out to sponsors in the community and business world.

We should focus not only on expanding our membership, but also by seeking the support of individuals wishing to make an investment in our aim to obtain gender equality, through our Friends and Fellows Programme. I invite each one of our members to bring a Friend or a Fellow to become a part of BPW International. Their sponsorship is a commitment to women's issues. Their participation, and contribution, would allow us to provide support to our affiliates as well as our members, especially Young BPW.

These and all the BPW programmes and projects around the world make BPW International the great organisation which Dr. Phillips and our founding members dreamt of and created 85 years ago.

With this Candle Lighting ceremony, we are celebrating the accomplishments of our members. By lighting each candle, we pledge our support to their advocacy and efforts for a better life not only in the more than 100 countries where we are now represented, but throughout the whole world,

On behalf of the International Executive and myself, I salute you on this occasion and offer full support for our journey. ***Together, we can make a difference.***

Dr. Yasmin Darwich

BPW International President

2014 - 2017