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12 February 2013 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today drew attention to the role of faith leaders in promoting female empowerment, noting that they can help address gender prejudices and support women's participation in society at all levels.

"People place extraordinary trust in their faith leaders, who have a far-reaching ability to help achieve lasting peace and promote the status of women," Mr. Ban said in his message to a symposium held in New York.

"As long as entrenched hatreds and gender bias remain, conflicts will simmer and women will suffer. Only when we achieve a fundamental change in mindsets can we realize true progress," he added in the message, which was delivered by the Assistant Secretary-General for Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Lakshmi Puri.

Mr. Ban stressed that women are often central to the life of faith-based organizations and possess enormous potential to promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution. However, men

dominate faith-based organizations, which underscores the need to ensure women's presence in positions of authority within these organizations.

"This will enable women to discuss and determine their religious and cultural values and to promote practices that respect human dignity," he said.

Mr. Ban underlined that the UN is working with inter-faith groups to advance democracy, human rights and sustainable development through programmes on the ground, partnerships and initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations .

"Peace, dignity and respect for others are core values common to all of the world's great religions," he said. "We welcome all people of faith in this affirmation of our common humanity."

The symposium was organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Peace Islands Institute
to commemorate
World Interfaith Harmony Week
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Source