

International Forum in China Focusses On Women, Development, Future

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Oct. 28—On Sept. 27, 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a major speech at the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Womens Empowerment at the UN in New York, commemorating both the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations as well as the 20th anniversary of the Beijing conference on women. In addition, Chinese First Lady Peng Liyuan addressed the issue of education and women in a subsequent very moving speech at the UN, where she emphasized the enormous progress which has been made in China in this respect, and of which she herself had been a beneficiary, having become a professional soprano and music professor.

The same issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women was the subject of an international conference October 14-16 in Beijing, organized by the Soong Ching Ling Foundation. This Foundation upholds the life and work of the wife of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of modern China; Soong Ching Ling herself was one of the outstanding women of the Twentieth Century and played a role in China comparable to the role Eleanor Roosevelt played for the United States. The Foundation is involved in numerous projects both in China, as well as internationally, focusing on the education and furthering the advancement of girls and women, among many other cultural activities.

The Forum brought together an impressive selection of engaged women from academia, business, social organizations, and politics, who, during the two day conference, highlighted the state of affairs and future perspectives concerning the status of women in many parts of the world. In China, where legislation guarantees women equal status, women in urban areas have reached that equality to a very high degree, while in rural areas there are still major gaps, which were mostly attributed to the need for more economic development in those regions.

The speeches reflected a broad array of topics, such as the income gap, social security, legal foundations, leadership training, scientific programmes, financial literacy, food security, the role of women in Chinese history, and many more. A European business executive recounted her experience in the world of commerce in different countries, which highlighted, that gender equal-



Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping, addresses the United Nations on Sept. 17, 2015.

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ity is still far from being a reality in the western world.

Most fascinating was the report of a male professor, who described studies about decision-making and the differences between male and female decision making. Female executives, according to this university survey, were found to be more considerate, taking into account more the interest of other people, and ably to see through ambiguities, and in general making fewer mistakes than their more pushy male counterparts. This author was one of the keynote speakers in the opening session of the conference, delivering a speech with the title: Creativity as the true identity of women.

It is very clear, that while parts of China are still in the status of a developing country, and therefore women still have all the known double burdens of child rearing and work, the fact that China has lifted 600 million of its citizens out of poverty in a very short time, has given tremendous chances for women to realize their potential. The extraordinary importance that President Xi Jinping puts on excellence in education, on scientific innovation, and on Confucian values of morality, means that the perspective of gender equality has a better prospect in China today than in most of the western world, where most women have actually internalized a role defined by men in one way or another, and leading women too often to try to prove their leadership by outdoing the men in toughness, and thus losing the grace and creativity of their gender.