



## Centres of Excellence in Gender and Governance

Rwanda has an urgent need for a centre of excellence in gender and governance, according to Justine Mbabazi Esq, Co-Coordinator of the International Federation of University Women's Working Group on Girls, speaking at an IFUW Seminar at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in New York.

"Rwanda is doing so well with the best political will on gender in the world, so it is important to use that platform to create a centre to promote research which will contribute to building sustainability, that will not only benefit Rwanda but also the East Africa region", Ms Mbabazi said "Rwanda has shown international legislative leadership in gender equality, reflected in our policies and activities, however we lack research to sustain our knowledge and capacity and build up the expertise of our young researchers", she said.

Ms Mbabazi said that Rwanda's respect for international, regional and national goals has given us a strategic spot as a world leader in gender reform. Her comments were supported by Dr Shirley Randell, Vice President of IFUW, who chaired the seminar. "The progress in Rwanda on gender equality and women's empowerment has been highlighted in almost every CSW plenary, seminar and workshop I have attended this week, with over 3000 women and men celebrating this model of best practice", Dr Randell said.

"People from all over the world are seeking to visit Rwanda to study our gender policies in poverty reduction, economic empowerment, health and education and zero tolerance of corruption, and to learn how this has been achieved," she said.

Ms Mbabazi and Dr Randell are the Conveners of the Scholarship Committee and International Relations respectively of the Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW), another international exemplar with an enrolment of nearly 500 members in less than three years.

The first President of RAUW, Ambassador Joy Mukanyange, who is now working as gender adviser with the UN desk on Africa, also attended the seminar and supported these comments, saying that Rwanda needed to nurture indigenous knowledge on the ground that would benefit other countries in Africa.

The second speaker at the workshop was Professor Dr Nazmunessa Mahtab, from the Women Studies Centre at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh and a member of the Bangladesh Association of University Women.

Professor Mahtab spoke about the current women's studies courses in universities across Bangladesh and advocated for a permanent centre that could support gender and governance studies both within Bangladesh, still a patriarchal society, and for the benefit of the Asian region. Ms Niusila Faamanatu-Eteuati, Lecturer in Education at the University of Samoa who is also Secretary of the Samoan Association of Women Graduates, and Dr Susana Famu, President of the Federación Argentina Mujeres Universitarias, affirmed the importance of gender studies for the Pacific and in Argentina.

Members of IFUW from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Rwanda, Samoa and the United States of America attended the seminar

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Shirley Randell, IFUW Vice President, was the Chairperson of the Seminar



Participants



Professor Nazmunessa Mahtab from Bangladesh and Dr Shirley Randell and Ms Justine Mbabazi from Rwanda