

Submission to Codesa Gender Advisory Committee

by Natal And Transvaal Indian Congresses.

Gender consciousness:

Having studied the many submissions to Codesa urging for the representation of women in Codesa, we were moved into accepting that the Gender Advisory Committee is a victory for all those people who waged the struggle for equality.

Many of the submissions are from Women's Organisations, who are still not represented here, but some are also from men who are concerned about gender issues.

This caused us to think of two questions viz.

How can these people be represented here? and
Why is it essential for women to be represented in CODESA.

We looked at the second question first. We looked at women's position in the home, in society, in the work situation, etc. It became clear that what has happened is that we have created roles, and consciously or unconsciously we all adhere to these roles. Women and men alike entrench these roles and it is these roles that prevent women from participating in activities outside the home.

Women have taken on the role of caretakers. We take care of children, we take care of husbands, we take care of parents and we take care of our home. We tie ourselves to these responsibilities because who else will do it if we do not do it? Most women are therefore unable to participate in activities away from home.

But also because of our role we have acquired interests which preclude political and economical considerations. We do not see ourselves as being responsible for these aspects of society.

Gender consciousness therefore means that we need to actively dispel these notions. Gender consciousness is not only changing male attitudes to women but also changing our own attitudes and beginning to accept responsibility for our lives as a whole. We also need to share responsibility on a basis of equality.

We have considered this as an important aspect of our role in this committee, as we feel that our role extends beyond the consideration of what is being discussed here, to a level of consciousness of our own roles and responsibilities.

We have to ensure that we set into motion a process of education which will help create a new society where people are people and not males or females, black or white, rich or poor.

How can the various organisations seeking representation be accommodated?

We could relate to these organisations, or we could ask for their direct representation, or we could work towards a goal whereby they would be adequately represented in a new dispensation, but whatever the means, the important issue is the creation of a new consciousness among all of us, so that we can see issues with a common vision.

We therefore suggest that in deliberating on the issues at hand we constantly check ourselves and our own consciousness on gender issues.