



# **Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN) Est. 2002**

## **Mission**

To promote networking, support and self reliance among Nepali women through advocacy and education.

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DATE: September 7, 2020

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN), is deeply disappointed with organizers of NRNA-ICC Regional Meeting & 2<sup>nd</sup> Knowledge Conference Americas, for failing to recognize expert and professional women, particularly in the field of engineering, literature, medicine, academics, and leadership. As a women advocacy group, NWGN strongly voiced their opinion against NRNA-ICC's all-male panels "Manels" (flyers attached) and called for gender-balanced panels. NRNA-ICC's planning and organizing committee overlooked the competence and intellect of women by excluding accomplished women in all panel discussions and marginalizing women's participation exclusively to Women's Forum, Young Professionals, and Cultural panels.

Men and women in the Nepali diaspora echoed similar sentiments on social media, demanding inclusivity and recognizing the importance of meaningful representation of women in discussion platforms. Invited women experts and speakers supported this call for equal and meaningful representation, by boycotting the event. Some organizers who saw the lack of representation sought help from NWGN leadership, to include qualified women experts in the discussion, while others chose to add women as mere moderators. Upon request, NWGN provided constructive suggestions, and names of qualified women experts within a couple of hours. Thanks to the men and women who joined NWGN in the fight for equal and meaningful representation. Some panel members realized and rectified their mistakes to include women experts, while others continued to be publicly shamed on social media for their inability to admit and address the issue of equal representation.

Despite strong condemnation and protest against NRNA-ICC for their misogynist attitude, and after the "Women Forum" of Knowledge Conference was cancelled, the coordination committee hastily organized a new "Women Forum" in Canada, without adequate notice to forum participants. Addressing the forum, the event coordinator blatantly called out women who raised their voices, as being divisive and politically motivated. We strongly condemn these charges against women seeking equal representation in our society. In our view, the charges against us are malicious and without merit.

NWGN

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The charges were also aimed at silencing the most eloquent, dedicated and uncompromising voices of Nepali women, speaking in defense of women's human rights, and against patriarchy. We strongly urge NRNA-ICC to re-consider its action in pursuing what is being perceived as blatantly repressive behavior. We stress that misogynistic behavior has no place in our society.

Through this letter, NWGN would like to recognize those session moderators who accommodated women experts, one day before the conference. In addition, we thank those women experts who came forward and participated at such short notice. On the contrary, we strongly condemn the event coordinator for branding women's freedom of speech and demand for equal representation, as a "political agenda". We truly appreciate the men and women who supported this cause.

We urge NRNA-ICC to publicly apologize for justifying Manels. We call on NRNA leadership to demonstrate to the non-resident Nepali community that you are serious about ending gender-biased programs and public harassment and attacks against women's human right defenders, by acknowledging mistakes and promising to rectify future actions by encouraging meaningful participation of women.

Sincerely Yours,

Avima Upreti, Esq.  
President  
Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN)