

# ALL INDIA BANK OFFICERS' CONFEDERATION

(Registered under the Trade Unions Act 1926, Registration No.3427/Delhi)

6<sup>th</sup> Floor, E-Block, Samriddhi Bhavan, 1, Strand Road, Kolkata -700 001

c/o State Bank of India Officers' Association (Bengal Circle)

Phone: 2210-1234, Fax: (033) 2210-2210



e-mail: [aiboc.sectt@gmail.com](mailto:aiboc.sectt@gmail.com)  
[soumyadatta.aiboc@gmail.com](mailto:soumyadatta.aiboc@gmail.com)  
website: [www.aiboc.org](http://www.aiboc.org)  
[@aiboc\\_in](https://twitter.com/aiboc_in)



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## To All Affiliates (Please Circulate)

Dear Comrades,

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY – 8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

#### #BreakTheBias

Greetings on the auspicious occasion of International Women's Day – 2022.

Each year on March 8, International Women's Day is observed in order to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The women's day has been celebrated for well over a century, with the first one in 1911.

The day commemorates women, who despite various challenges posed by society have proven their mettle in every sphere across the world. The day marks a call to a gender equal world - free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination and one that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive while differences are valued and celebrated.

The fight for equality has been a long one. It is a battle not yet won. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which deals with right to life has been expanded to include the right to Life with Dignity. This provision has been invoked to safeguard the rights of women such as right to divorce, to live a life free from violence and above all, free of fear, coercion and discrimination.

The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2022 is #BreakTheBias. Whether deliberate or unconscious, bias makes it difficult for women to move ahead. Knowing that bias exists is not enough. The United Nation's theme for this year's observance is "*Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*" in recognition and celebration of the women and girls leading the charge on climate change adaptation and response and to honour their leadership and contribution towards a sustainable future. The vital link between gender, social equity and climate change, and recognise that without gender equality today, a sustainable future, an equal future remains out of reach.

You are aware that International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century across North America and Europe. "The first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on February 28, 1909, which the Socialist Party of America dedicated in honour of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York, where women protested against harsh working conditions. In 1917, women in Russia chose to protest and strike under the slogan "Bread and Peace" on the last Sunday in February (which fell on 8 March on the Gregorian calendar). Their movement ultimately led to the enactment of women's suffrage in Russia."

According to World Bank estimates, India has one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world. Less than a third of women – defined in the report as 15 or older – are working or actively looking for a job. Also, 41% of women aged 15-49 have never been to school compared to 18% of men

(Dasra). The 'field' already begins on an unequal terrain for girls and women, who spend much of their life catching up, to reach the elusive level playing field. The challenges faced by women leads to a serious lack of representation of women, especially at the senior leadership level positions. There are many complex factors that come in the path of a woman's work life, denying her opportunities as well as posing challenges that deny her the right to have an equitable journey. Many factors, both personal and professional, are at play here.

Our Confederation is committed to the spirit of 'Gender- Sensitivity' in our workplace and has identified important issues that are fundamental to women who are trying to progress in the workplace across the country.

We encourage more and more women to actively participate in the trade union activities for a better tomorrow. With significant spurt in the number of women in the Banking Industry with every passing year, we are elated to witness the emergence of women leaders in various affiliates though the number is too few compared to the number of women officers in the industry. However, all our affiliates are consciously involving and inducting more and more women in various tiers and we are confident that our women comrades will come forward in greater numbers and hold the mantle and lead from the front.

We are sensitive and alive to the challenges our women face in their work places. In this backdrop, we have been endeavouring relentlessly to ensure fair, balanced and much required service conditions with a friendly and familial working atmosphere.

Our organisation has always been proactive in this evolving situation and taken many initiatives for betterment of the plights of our female colleagues. In this day, we pledge again to have a broader outlook while dealing with gender issues, remain vigilant in spotting our biases and create an environment where voices from our female colleagues can be heard clearly and remedial actions for their discomfort can be incorporated both at a personal and institutional level.

We urge upon all our Affiliates/State Units to organise symposiums, conventions throughout the year involving our lady members as we need to remind ourselves that the spirit of Women's Day is not merely confined to one particular day. On the contrary, we have to strive throughout the year to create awareness for ensuring equal rights and equal opportunity for them, in the society.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



**(Soumya Datta)**  
**General Secretary**