

I join all women all over the world in commemorating the International Women's Day, today. As my kid, Enzo puts it, there was neither a party nor a celebration, but series of mass actions initiated by women workers in New York in 1908 as they took to the streets to assert their economic and political rights. These and the unfortunate but predictable deaths of women workers in a fire resulting from unsafe working conditions in New York predicated International Women's Day.

Today and after over 100 years, International Women's Day remains significant and becomes doubly relevant with the pandemic not only multiplying the challenges that our women face but unfortunately reliving the cries of our women for better pay, safe work environments and increased political participation that resounded in the streets of New York. UN Women reports that while "women are also at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19, as front-line and health sector workers, as scientists, doctors and caregivers, xxx they get paid 11 percent less globally than their male counterparts. An Analysis of COVID-19 task teams from 87 Countries found only 3.5 percent of them had gender parity. Not to mention that with almost 70% of medical professionals and 80% of the nurses being women, the scents of personal security and safety and at times, death wafting through the air are almost akin to the Triangle Fire of 1911 that killed more than 100 women factory workers.

True, we have gone a long way from demanding for voting rights and now fighting for the most strategic positions in politics and business. In fact, for this year's celebration, we seek to recognize and highlight women leaders showcasing innovative and multi-level approaches against Covid-1. And yet, the call for political participation in the 1900s then continues to echo and has never been as urgent as now as "women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making, as revealed in the UN Secretary-General's recent report. Women are Heads of State or Government in 22 countries, and only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women. At the current rate of progress, gender equality among Heads of Government will take another 130 years." This gender disparity in the public sphere is reflective of the real status of women's participation and involvement in decision making and implementation. It actually diminishes the valiant efforts of strong women leaders all over the world to bring about change in their communities and in the world. More importantly, it delays our journey towards gender equality and women empowerment.

And so while I salute the exceptional Juanas on the occasion of the International Woman's day, today's and every commemoration is not only personal, it is definitely political.