

## **Draft Speech of Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS (HRD) at The Sammelan Of Mahila Samakhya, January, 20, 2008**

Hon'ble Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Mr Gordon Brown , H.E the High Commissioner of UK in India, distinguished dignitaries and delegates from Mahila Samakhya.

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all to this gathering of Mahila Samakhya which is a unique programme being run by our government.

As you may be aware, Sir that the Mahila Samakhya Scheme was started in 1989 to translate the goals enshrined in the National Policy on Education 1986, into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas particularly those from socially and economically marginalized sectors. The Scheme recognizes the centrality of education in empowering women to achieve equality.

Initially funded by the Government of Netherlands up to 31-12-2005 the Scheme is now funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom (UK) which has agreed to provide assistance to the programme on the basis of a 90:10 fund sharing pattern between DFID and GOI, for a period of seven years starting 2007-08. We are really happy for this kind gesture on the part of the British Government as this will help us to intensify and strengthen our efforts in the achievement of goals of "Education for All". Mr. Prime Minister it is really heartening that you could personally come over to this country and participate in Sammelan.

This will enable you to have a direct interaction with the Sangha women, regarding the working of this scheme, and in the process give you an opportunity to reach out to the poor and marginalized section of our women for whom we are trying to create a space for their constructive engagement in the developmental process.

With these words, I once again welcome you to this Sammelan and thank you for your personal presence amongst us.

Jai Hind