



# Network

The UN Women's Newsletter, Vol. 12, No. 4

## *Letter from the Focal Point for Women*

Dear Friends,

This year has witnessed continuous efforts by Secretary-General BAN Ki-Moon to strengthen the advocacy of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In particular, we are pleased to note the promulgation of the terms of reference of the focal points for women as a Secretary-General's Bulletin. This document, binding on all staff of the United Nations Secretariat, encapsulates the functions of the focal points for women in each department and office and strengthens their role, as required by the General Assembly in several resolutions. We, therefore, dedicate this issue to the focal points whose contributions often go insufficiently recognized and without whom the issue of gender parity and facilitative work environments would be far less organizationally alive.

Among other coverage we draw to your attention to highlights of the International Day of Prevention of Violence against Women, an update on anti-harassment laws in the Asian workplace, the need for gender analysis in the distribution of aid to female victims of the tsunami in Indonesia and the increase of incidents of domestic violence in Thailand. We also recommend that you read the *Global Gender Report 2008* of the World Economic Forum, UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women?* and UNFPA's *State of World Population 2008*, all of which focus on the value of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Network is our small contribution to making the work of women's equality visible—what is invisible is lost. We leave you with this thought to guide your actions in support of all that, in turn, supports women to achieve their potential, also with due recognition.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO

- **Ms. Margareta Walström of Sweden** for her appointment as Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The appointment was announced by Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon on 17 November 2008. Ms. Walström has extensive work experience in disaster management and institution-building that enhances the national capacity to prepare for disaster. She was the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Assistant-Secretary-General in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). She also served as Under-Secretary-General for Disaster Response and Operations and Deputy Operations Director of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Ms. Walström is currently a member of the Swedish Government's Commission on Climate Change and Development.
- **Ms. Theresa A. Hitchens of the United States**, who has been appointed by Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon to lead the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)**, an independent Geneva-based body. She will assume her functions in January 2009. Ms. Hitchens has several years experience in research on subjects such as international security, disarmament and non-proliferation, according to a statement made by the Secretary-General. She also has worked intensively in the area of security affairs.

## AROUND THE UN

- In line with the Secretary-General's Bulletin in 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/13) on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, a subregional workshop for inter-agency focal points was held in Johannesburg to serve as a field testing and training opportunity for focal points to coordinate various prevention and response activities on the **issues of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)**. The workshop was developed by the Executive Committees on Humanitarian Affairs and Peace and Security (ECHA/ECPS) UN NGO Task Force on

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The training was held from 29 September to 1 October 2008 with 25 participants attending the course.

- **The first International Day of Rural Women** was observed on 15 October 2008. A panel discussion was co-sponsored by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

During the new International Day of Rural Women, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon acknowledged the contributions made by rural women "who produce more than half of the world's food and provide immeasurable support to local communities".

He called for countries to give priority to the needs of those rural women who are poor and uneducated. In addition, he said that by involving rural women in the current global food crisis, a more secure future would be ensured worldwide. These women require access to education, financial resources, agricultural technology, health care, land and opportunities for employment. Moreover, rural women face other challenges like discrimination, gender violence, the current food crisis and climate change. **The International Day of Rural Women marked the international community's recognition of women's contribution to agricultural productivity in all countries.** Apart from their agricultural labour, these women also carry the burden of domestic responsibilities, including elder and childcare.

- In his presentation of the 2008 International Award for the Health and Dignity of Women given by Americans for UNFPA, Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon emphasized the necessity of pursuing the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) efforts to empower women, promote gender equality and improve maternal health in spite of the current financial crisis. The Americans for UNFPA International Award for the Health and Dignity of Women recognizes people who have made exemplary contributions to women's health and/or the promotion of women's rights. Because UNFPA works in more than 140 countries around the world, finalists work in geographically diverse settings, nominees work for a programme that is supported by UNFPA—as a volunteer or paid staff, and formal education is not a requirement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.americansforunfpa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=355>.

The 2008 recipients included four American women from the corporate world, as well as activists from Madagascar, Mexico and Nepal. The recipients are awarded for acting as partners in ways that assist other women to apply their expertise to the challenges they face. The 2008 International Award for the Health and Dignity of Women is named for Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The Secretary-General mentioned that **it is important to empower women because "When you empower a woman, you empower a family"**.

## WOMEN IN THE NEWS

- **Ms. Charlize Theron**, a South African Oscar-award-winning actress in 2004, was designated as the **United Nations Messenger of Peace** on 17 November 2008. Messengers of Peace are outstanding individuals from the fields of art, literature, music and sports who help foster the work of the United Nations and improve the lives of people around the world. Ms. Theron joins nine other Messengers of Peace, each of whom focuses on a different area, such as peacekeeping, human rights and disarmament.

**Ms. Theron will help in the UN campaign to end violence against women.** She has been a strong advocate of women and children in South Africa, protecting them from abuse and calling for zero tolerance for rape and domestic violence.

- **Ms. Chantal Biya, the First Lady of Cameroon**, has been designated as the Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of 14 November 2008. Ms. Biya has provided long-standing support for education for girls, women and orphans, as well as HIV/AIDS research, treatment and prevention.
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appointed **Ms. Billie Jean King on 6 November 2008 as UNESCO's gender equality mentor in the field of sports.** The Billie Jean King Leadership Internship programme will be established to extend opportunities for young women in the sports industry through internships at the Women's Sports Foundation. Subsequently, they will be given job placement opportunities in the field of sports. Billie Jean has been an

inspiration for many women because of her strong advocacy against sexism in sports and her outstanding career as a tennis champion.

- **President-elect Barack Obama has chosen his foreign policy adviser, Susan Elizabeth Rice, as ambassador to the United Nations.** Rice, who is 44, would be the second youngest ambassador to the United Nations. She earned her undergraduate degree from Stanford, and received her Master's and a Doctorate in International Relations at Oxford University. Ms. Rice worked for eight years at the White House and the State Department during the Clinton administration. She was a member of the National Security Council staff, special assistant to the president and senior director for African Affairs.


## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Several activities and events commemorated the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women—25 November 2008. Some of these include:

- A report by **Ms. Nicole Kidman, UN Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Fund for Women**, on her campaign to fight violence against women. She emphasized that it was essential for the world collectively to prioritize this campaign. She presented the Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon a **list of approximately 5,066,549 signatures of people<sup>2</sup> who have committed themselves to this cause.** The Secretary-General called for more efforts to protect women through the enforcement of laws to prosecute perpetrators (who often go unpunished), and to fight attitudes that tolerate violence against women.



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thestar.com>.

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- A play entitled “Mika” was performed by the theatre ensemble Tiyatroglobal at the Trusteeship Council. Organized by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWAGE), the play was inspired by the Secretary-General’s call to Unite to End Violence against Women. “Mika” revolves around the kidnapping of Mika’s mother, Marita, who is then sold into the sex trade. It also features a mother who is physically abused by her husband, a policeman who hurts his wife and a Minister of Justice who searches for Marita. **The play demonstrates different scenarios of violence against women, encouraging the audience to consider how the situation of abused women can be redressed.** The play was repeated on 1 December 2008 at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, and was hosted by Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and IANWAGE.

#### **Participants at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)-backed conference to condemn violence against women**

- The Sixth African Development Forum (ADF VI), a three-day conference, was attended by 700 delegates from Africa and various international organizations from 19-21 November at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa. The meeting was organized by the ECA, the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Addis Ababa **to condemn violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa.**

Violence against women is a major impediment to the achievement of the MDGs. This is an area that requires urgent efforts, as women and children across Africa are particularly vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual abuse, domestic violence, crimes and abuses committed by armed forces and police, harmful and exploitative labour and trafficking, harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation and other horrors.<sup>3</sup>

#### **The conference’s consensus Statement and Action Plan focused on three main items:**

- Ending violence against women;
- Financing for equality; and
- Empowering women and gathering data on gender equality.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.uneca.org/adfvi/PressRelease3008.asp>.

#### **The conference resolutions highlighted:**

- Respect of women and girl child;
- An extensive African plan of action to eliminate violence against women and girls; and
- Development and implementation of budget policies to finance gender-related projects.

During the closing ceremony, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECA, Mrs. Lalla Ban Barka, noted, “African women possess formidable strength and power that should be harnessed to accelerate progress on development and achievement of the MDGs”.

Likewise, Ms. Bience Gawanas, Commissioner of Social Affairs of the African Union, stressed, “I want each of you to leave here with a mission to reclaim humanity and become active members who say ‘no’ to any form of violence”.

## AROUND THE WORLD

### UPDATE ON ASIA

#### INDIA

**Manish Jha’s** film “**Matrubhoomi—A Nation Without Women**” opens with a woman going through labour pains. Helped by two village women, she goes through the process of giving birth while her husband and male relatives wait outside. The men are tense but not out of concern for the welfare of the woman or the baby, but rather they want to know whether the baby is a girl or a boy. The baby is a girl, and the men consider it bad news. The next scene shows the father drowning the crying baby in a pot of milk. Shocking, yes. But for many villagers in India, it is an all too familiar scene. Female infanticide has led to an alarming fall in the ratio of men to women. The film explores what would happen if women were to disappear from India completely.<sup>4</sup> Anjalee Lewis, who wrote an article in Mercatornet, stated that India, in the future, could be a “nation without women”. The country might face a somber future because of the nation’s practice of preferring sons over daughters. For many Indian women, especially the poor, a daughter is considered disadvantageous because it means incurring huge expenses for dowry. Further, Indian men carry the family name, run the business and usually inherit the property, fueling the

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/Matrubhoomi-ANationWithoutWomen/>.

perception that daughters are less valuable. Smaller families are now more common in the country. Couples opt to have one child, and feel pressured to ensure the child is male. Consequently, they abort female fetuses, discovered by ultrasound. While strong legislation bans this practice, its implementation remains a serious challenge.

**Female illiteracy, social practices regarding early marriage, the dowry tradition and a often present sense of defenseless against the patriarchal traditions of the country, all constitute factors which impede the development of women as well as the overall progress of the country.** The article stated, “There needs to be a serious step-change in attitudes. India might be developing economically, but in terms of our attitude to women, we’re not moving forward at all”.<sup>5</sup>

## INDONESIA

The Combine Resource Institution in Indonesia aims to network knowledge and information to empower poor and marginalized communities in Indonesia. This network opens the possibility of distributing and sharing information both among community members and between communities and external parties (i.e. governments).<sup>6</sup> It also reflects on the new awareness among Indonesians regarding the Asian tsunami.

In the article, “Living the lessons after the tsunami for Indonesian women” (<http://www.isis.org>), Ade Tanesia from the Combine Resource Institution noted that **gender analysis is vital to the distribution of aid**, especially since most victims are women, elderly people and children. The effects of a catastrophe are different for men and women. Women’s priorities lie, inter alia, also on the survival needs of their children. Indonesian women suffered particularly after the 2004 tsunami due to a variety of causes such as delivery of formula milk past its expiration date, donation of unclean clothes and sexual abuse for lack of separate quarters or toilets for women and men. Women also lacked privacy to change their clothes or breastfeed their babies. Widows organized a group called Pekka, which spearheaded activities such as rehabilitation, setting up of shelters and kitchens and controlling distribution of relief goods to ensure that the needs of women were met. Another group called the Kinasih Women Solidarity formed a savings and credit organization to assist women in the creation of businesses and home-based industries.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/viewa\\_nation\\_without\\_women](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/viewa_nation_without_women).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hivos.nl/dut/community/partner/50008127>.

## MALAYSIA

An article from Isis International Manila ([isiswomen.org](http://isiswomen.org)) reported that Malaysian women intensified the campaign for adequate and effective sexual harassment laws. The Ministry of Human Resources proposed that anti-sexual-harassment provisions be included in the Employment Act of 1955. However, the Ministry lacks the power to ensure that employers act on complaints of sexual grievance.

The Malaysia Employers Federation (MEF), the country’s largest coalition of private businesses, is strongly opposed to the Ministry’s proposal, on the grounds that such provisions will not encourage foreign direct investments.

Coalition groups of Malaysian women have been campaigning for a **special law on sexual harassment** which would include **“the creation of in-house mechanisms and designation of personnel for sexual harassment and other similar cases; redefinition of work relationships—taking into account the sub-contractual and voluntary natures of employment; and establishment of a tribunal”**. The women’s groups are fighting what they regard as the country’s unwillingness to protect women against sexual harassment for the sake of the State’s business investments.

## PAKISTAN

Pakistani women commonly face harassment at the workplace and even in public places, finding it difficult, therefore, to contribute to the formal economy.

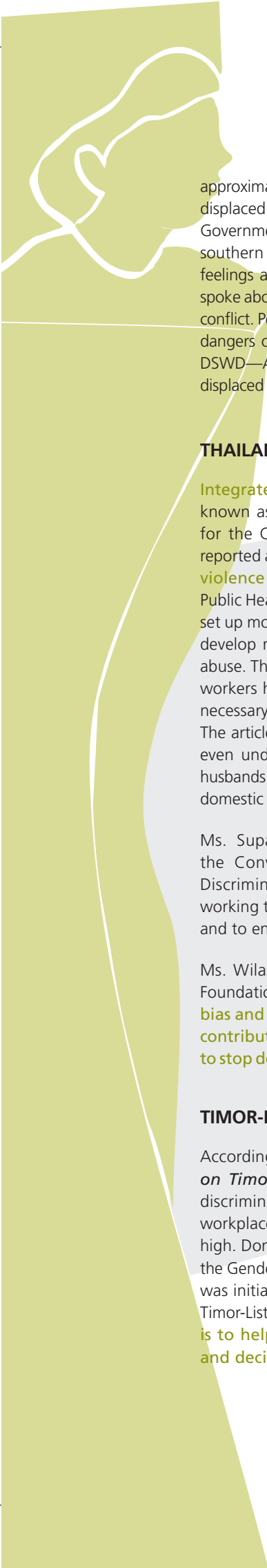
The Federal Minister for Women’s Development in Pakistan, Ms. Sherry Rehman, reported that a **legislative** bill on sexual harassment called The Protection from Harassment Act would **defend women against sexual harassment in the workplace. It has been drafted by** the Pakistan’s Women Development Industry and AASHA (AASHA means “hope”—a hope to root out harassment, especially of women from the society),<sup>7</sup> which is a network of civil organizations in the society. The bill incorporates a Code of Conduct for implementation at the workplace, legal protections from harassment and a guideline for the behaviour of employees in the workplace. Approximately 300 corporations in the country have adopted the Code of Conduct, thus far, even though it has not yet been formally adopted by the State.

## PHILIPPINES

The Department of Social Welfare and Development—Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DSWD—ARMM) of the Philippines held a stress debriefing session for

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.aasha.org.pk/about\\_aasha.html](http://www.aasha.org.pk/about_aasha.html).





approximately 1,000 women and children who have been displaced by the current conflict between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the southern part of the country. The children shared their feelings about their sufferings through drawings. Women spoke about their experiences as evacuees and victims of the conflict. People living in conflict-stricken areas suffer from the dangers of physical injuries and psychological anxiety, and DSWD—ARMM is extending efforts to help the internally displaced persons in the evacuation centres.

## THAILAND

**Integrated Regional Information Networks** (commonly known as **IRIN**), a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), reported a **significant increase in incidents of domestic violence against women** and children in Thailand. The Public Health Ministry plans to coordinate with hospitals to set up more One Stop Crisis Centers (OSCC), which would develop more networks to assist those who suffer from abuse. The OSCC was established in 2001, but many of its workers have not received the gender sensitivity training necessary to be able to respond effectively to the victims. The article further stated that “Some police officers don’t even understand the new law, which no longer allows husbands to rape their wives”. They believe that problems of domestic violence should be settled between the spouses.

Ms. Supatra Putananusorn, National Coordinator of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), has been working to ensure equal rights between men and women and to end domestic violence in the country.

Ms. Wilasinee Phiphitkul of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation noted that **“We have to eradicate gender bias and build a whole new gender perception which contributes to equality between sexes... That’s the way to stop domestic violence against women in Thailand”**.

## TIMOR-LESTE

According to the 2006 *Human Development Report on Timor-Leste*, women from the region suffer from discrimination in the household, the society and the workplace. Fertility and maternal mortality rates are very high. Domestic violence is prevalent. A new project called the Gender Resource Centre, launched on 7 October 2008, was initiated by the Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus of Timor-Leste. Supported by UNDP and UNIFEM, its **objective is to help increase women’s participation in politics and decision-making**. The Gender Resource Centre has

sent four female and male parliamentarians to attend the Third Global Congress of Women in Politics (Gender and Climate Change) in the Philippines in October 2008. Ms. Idelta Maria Rodrigues, the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, stated that, “Achieving gender equality in Timor-Leste has to be part of a holistic effort that focuses not only on involving more women in politics, but also on practical actions aimed at improving the lot of women in the country, especially the rural poor”.

## IN YOUR INTEREST

### Women in security: increasing leadership opportunities at the UN

*Jenny Ringarp, OFPW Intern*

On 27 October 2008, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Women in International Security (WIIS) and Global Action to Prevent War organized an interactive workshop to build on the findings of the report, “Women in United Nations peace operations: increasing leadership opportunities”.

Held during the anniversary week of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the workshop focused on the situation of women who hold mid-senior positions in the UN. The workshop provided an opportunity for members of UN entities, Member States and civil societies to discuss the situation of women in UN peace operations. Through an open discussion on the challenges these women face, the organizers were looking for actionable outcomes based on several key themes and planning to assign key tasks with concrete timetables to appropriate stakeholders.

Despite increasing attention to the lack of women in senior leadership positions in the UN, there still exist significant barriers to women in “feeder” positions for these senior positions. The workshop drew on several findings from the WIIS report on the situation of women in mid-senior level positions in UN peace operations. **Challenges faced by these women include a lack of support structure for women; women’s high attrition rate between entry-level and senior-level positions in the UN; and the disconnection between gender equality in job descriptions and actual recruitment**. Examples of topics raised include: the value of informal mentoring and personal support; the question of burnout and stress; and the need for public speaking training.

**The Women in Peace Operations Project** was created in 2006 to improve the capacity of international and regional organizations to engage in peace operations by expanding the opportunities available to women worldwide.

**Women in International Security (WIIS)** is a global membership organization dedicated to advancing the leadership of women in international peace and security fields.

### **Summary and findings of the WIIS report “Women in United Nations peace operations: increasing leadership opportunities”:**

Since the historic adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000, the recognition of the vital and beneficial role that women play in building sustainable peace has steadily increased. Civil society arguments for women’s inclusion in the formal processes of peacemaking and peace-building are supported by growing evidence of women’s impact on the ground in unstable and conflict-affected countries. Numerous policymakers and practitioners within the UN and other multilateral organizations publicly acknowledge the importance and value of women in leadership roles.

Yet the lack of women in senior positions in the UN, particularly in peacekeeping missions, reflects the reality that significant cultural and institutional impediments remain that impede women’s entry and advancement within the UN. There are few mechanisms in place to facilitate regular information sharing between the UN and civil society on this issue. Civil society organizations lack understanding about the skills and requirements for high-level positions, the process for selecting candidates and the best means to nominate qualified experts. Within the UN, there are traditionally few resources and little attention devoted to outreach and communication with organizations that access qualified female candidates, or to marketing these positions in a way that will attract the best talent.

In 60 years of UN peacekeeping—from 1948 to 2008—only seven women have ever held the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Why is it so difficult to identify and appoint women to leadership positions in peace operations? This report reveals multiple factors that impede the selection of women at the highest levels of leadership.

First, a non-transparent process and the political considerations inherent in the recruitment of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretaries-General result in the appointment of candidates who tend to be well-known in the UN system, such as ambassadors and permanent representatives. Women, who are underrepresented in these circles, have a distinct disadvantage when inner-circle, high-level diplomats compose the primary selection pool.

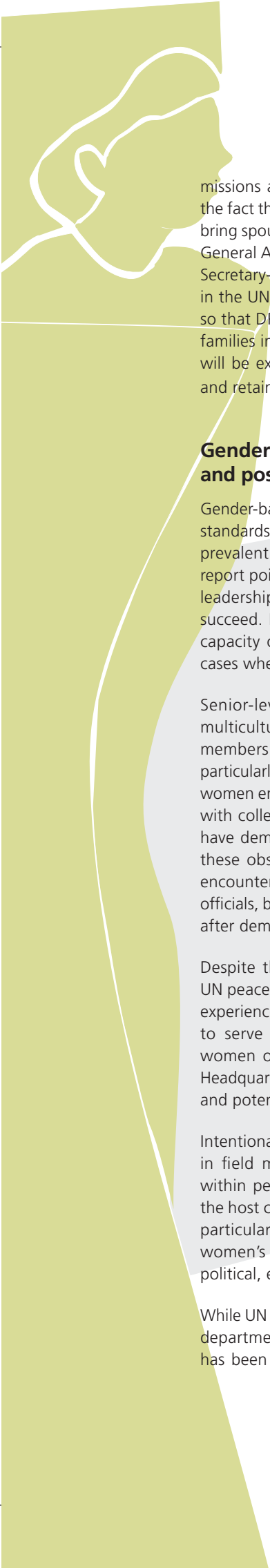
Second, bias against candidates from the “outside” may impact the interview process for recruiting candidates to peace operations posts. This may have particular implications for women and especially for women from under-represented regions of the world, who may approach and describe peace and security issues differently. The way the questions are asked, the way the process is conducted and the way that female candidates answer the questions may perpetuate this “insider” bias.

Third, key qualifications for SRSG and DSRSG positions, such as military experience, may eliminate many female candidates. Some policymakers and practitioners reportedly continue to believe that women may not have the necessary political skills and diplomatic gravitas to head large-scale civil military missions. While a commitment to the principles of gender equality was recently added to UN vacancy announcements, a military emphasis persists in the qualifications for peacekeeping posts.

Another challenge to women’s leadership in peace operations is self-elimination. Beginning with the application process, some women are reluctant to accept positions unless they are extremely confident that their qualifications and experience exactly match the needs of the position. Furthermore, the actual vacancy announcements may be biased. The way the position is described and marketed can determine whether or not a woman even applies.

Once women enter the UN system, they do not stay long. Women’s numbers drop dramatically between entry-level and mid- and senior-management. While women make up nearly 30 per cent of international staff in peacekeeping operations, they are highly concentrated in the most junior positions. The UN experiences faster turnover of women than men, and it is reportedly difficult to keep even female managers in field positions for more than one year.

Another major factor that negatively influences retention and morale are the relatively low compensation packages in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) compared to those in other UN agencies. Perhaps even more importantly for female staff, the vast majority of DPKO



missions are designed as non-family duty posts, despite the fact that staff from other UN agencies are permitted to bring spouses and children to the very same locations. The General Assembly is considering recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to human resources reform in the UN, including harmonization of service conditions so that DPKO staff will be treated equally with regard to families in the field. The approval of this reform package will be extremely important for future efforts to recruit and retain qualified personnel for these missions.

### **Gender influences the system—negatively and positively**

Gender-based discrimination and biases, including double standards applied to women in senior-level positions, are prevalent in the UN system. Many interviewees in the report point to the fact that the few women who occupy leadership positions are under tremendous pressure to succeed. Failure can be perceived as a reflection on the capacity of all women to do these jobs, even in those cases where the failures were not their own.

Senior-level women with years of experience in multicultural environments report that many UN staff members remain entrenched in outdated mentalities, particularly with regard to gender and women. In missions, women encounter gender biases in their daily interactions with colleagues and national officials. However, women have demonstrated an ability to work creatively around these obstacles. Some cited the initial difficulties they encountered when dealing with military and intelligence officials, but acknowledged they could quickly win respect after demonstrating their expertise.

Despite these challenges, women who have served in UN peace operations were extremely positive about their experiences in the field and have expressed a willingness to serve in the field again. In field missions, where women often assume a higher-grade position than at Headquarters, they feel they have more flexibility, freedom and potential to make an impact.

Intentionally or otherwise, women in leadership positions in field missions are seen as role models for women within peace operations—both within the mission and the host country. When women are visible in the mission, particularly in senior positions, an example is set for women's post-war participation in the host country in political, economic and even military roles.

While UN peacekeeping clearly remains a male-dominated department, particularly at the leadership levels, there has been significant forward movement in recent years

at UN Headquarters and in the field as a result of the ever-growing and dire need for talented peacekeeping officials.

A number of reforms have increased women's representation in senior peacekeeping positions. In 2007 alone, the number of women in senior posts increased by 37 per cent. Several new components within DPKO—namely the Senior Appointments Section and the Department of Field Support's (DFS) Recruitment and Outreach Unit—are incorporating gender sensitivity and prioritizing the identification of qualified women.

Some senior managers at Headquarters and in the field—both men and women—have demonstrated a personal commitment to increasing women's participation. In just the past two years, women have come to occupy key senior-level human resource and outreach positions in DFS. All have made vocal, public commitments to fulfilling the mandates of Security Council Resolution 1325 and are working on a daily basis to make these mandates a practical reality.

What remains to be seen is whether the UN will implement the long-term and difficult institutional, procedural and cultural changes necessary to create more opportunities for qualified female leaders in UN peace operations. If recent reforms and efforts are to succeed, the UN will need to devote much more attention and resources to solving the persistent impediments to attracting, grooming and promoting the best talent for leadership positions in peacekeeping.

WIIS plans to conduct future studies on women in civilian, senior-level positions in regional organizations' peace operations, including the European Union and NATO. WIIS is also launching an inaugural project on the status of women in decision-making positions in the U.S. national security community. The purpose of these efforts is to gain a deeper understanding of the status of women in international peace and security careers, and to provide recommendations to all relevant actors to support more effectively women's opportunities to enter, advance and lead in peace and security.



## ARE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FAIR TO WOMEN?

United Nations University Midday Forum,  
16 October 2008

by Jenny Ringarp, OFPW Intern

At a UNU Midday Forum on 16 October 2008, **UN Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of UNDP Ad Melkert** delivered a speech on the impact of the Millennium Development Goals for women.

Ad Melkert has a longstanding involvement in issues of international and development cooperation. He was previously a member of Parliament and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in the Netherlands, gaining vast experience in issues related to gender equality. He led the Dutch delegations to the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Ad Melkert defined the issue of gender inequality as a “silent crisis” of girls and women, silent especially in comparison to the recent financial crisis which has gained a great deal of attention.

While I fully appreciate the anxieties and anger about what is happening in the capital and credit markets, I believe that now, more than ever, it is important to get the perspective right. We should not only be focusing on what is a matter of gain and loss, but a matter of life and death: the plight of girls and women in poverty and rejection.

Mr. Melkert added that “opening our eyes and acting vigorously in favour of the lives and future of the poorest women is probably the single most important key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015”. In the midst of the financial crisis, Mr. Melkert admitted that this might be an improbable time to advocate for bringing back a spirit of “can do” optimism, but he also effectively claimed that the facts about the suffering of these poor girls and women do not leave us any other choice



Some of the facts presented by Ad Melkert during the Forum included:

**Education:** Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary school enrolment by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015.

**Maternal mortality:** In 2005, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy, childbirth or in the six weeks after delivery. In sub-Saharan Africa a woman's risk of dying from treatable or preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth over the course of her lifetime is 1 in 22 compared to 1 in 7,300 in the developed regions (UN MDG report 2008).

**Employment:** 8 out of 10 women workers are in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (UNIFEM report, *Progress of the World's Women, 2008/2009*). Child labour disproportionately affects girls, often in the invisible domestic positions that serve the middle class.

**Access to land and property:** Women own only 10 per cent of the world's property.

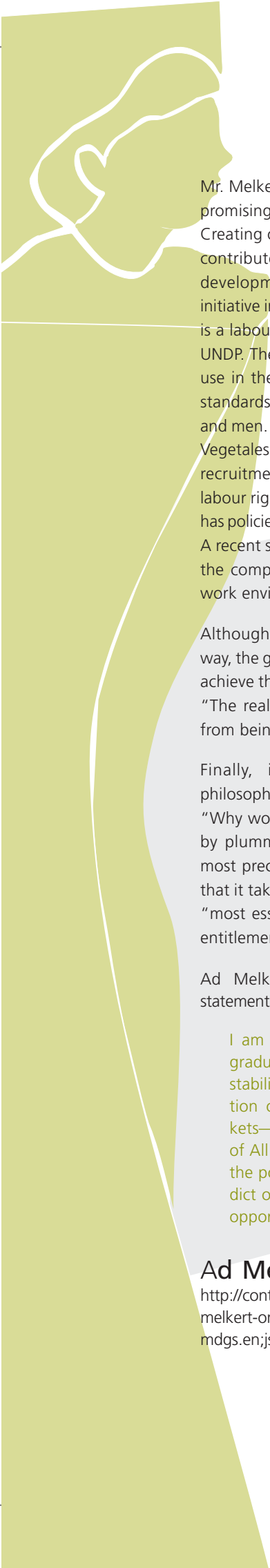
**Public decision-making:** In January 2008, only 16 per cent of the world's ministerial positions were held by women.

After presenting dramatic facts about the situation of women and girls around the globe, Melkert raised the question of what we can do to recognize the seriousness of the reality and turn the MDGs into an eventual success.

One important step would be to dedicate the next major review of the MDGs in 2010 to the progress, the gaps and the call for necessary action to improve the situation of girls and women. “It would be great if 15 years after the groundbreaking Conference on Women in Beijing, Governments would make themselves accountable on what has been achieved and what further commitment and action is required”, Melkert said.

Ad Melkert also mentioned that the nexus between health, water and sanitation should be singled out as the key to address the overall dismal results of the MDGs concerning mother and child mortality.

Furthermore, Melkert noted that discrimination is not only an issue in developing countries, since cultural patterns and hidden obstacles are often still an issue in developed countries.



Mr. Melkert emphasized that people must not forget the promising changes occurring in many societies, however. Creating opportunities for women in these countries has contributed greatly to successful economic and social development. Ad Melkert mentioned one inspiring initiative in Central America called the Equality Seal, which is a labour certification on gender equality supported by UNDP. The certification is a voluntary process created for use in the private sector to verify that companies meet standards that promote workplace equality for women and men. An example of a certified enterprise is Fresquita Vegetales, which promotes workplace gender equality in recruitment, remuneration, training opportunities and labour rights. The company provides medical services and has policies on sexual harassment and work-family balance. A recent study shows that the Equality Seal has increased the company's labour productivity and helped create a work environment that is free from discrimination.

Although important and inspiring initiatives are under way, the global pace of change is by no means sufficient to achieve the objectives, a projected seven years from now. "The reality shows that many lives are being inhibited from being lived to the fullest", said Ad Melkert.

Finally, in concluding, Mr. Melkert also asked philosophically, referring once more to the financial crisis, "Why would our sense of emergency be triggered more by plummeting shares than by mothers dying at that most precious moment of living birth?" He pointed out that it takes more than money to garner results, and that "most essential is a strong universal call for equality of entitlement and opportunity for girls and women".

Ad Melkert concluded his speech with a hopeful statement:

I am optimistic that common sense will prevail to gradually bring back economic growth and market stability. That same common sense—and just a fraction of the vast resources earmarked for the markets—will be all that is needed to resolve the Mother of All Crises; to ensure that being a woman or girl in the poorest of circumstances will no longer be a verdict of neglect and be turned into a ticket to access opportunities for the future ...

**Ad Melkert's speech is available** at: <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2008/october/ad-melkert-on-gender-and-millennium-development-goals-mdgs.en?sessionId=axbWzt8vXD9>.

## HIGHLIGHTS: THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT

### World Economic Forum

A 2008 study published by the World Economic Forum, a Swiss research organization, co-authored by Harvard and University of California-Berkeley, measured the size of the gender gap in 130 countries. They researched the gaps in terms of outcome variables, and ranked countries according to gender equality rather than women's empowerment. The Global Gender Gap Index explored the gap between men and women in four main categories:

- Economic participation and opportunity;
- Educational attainment;
- Political empowerment;
- Health.

The Gender Gap Index assesses countries' division of resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

The survey results in the ranking of 130 countries in terms of women's equality with men. The main findings include:

- Norway leads in closing the gender gap between men and women;
- Finland, Sweden and Iceland rank second, third and fourth, respectively;
- More points were given to countries where women headed the Government. Countries included: Finland (second), New Zealand (fifth), Philippines (sixth) and Ireland (eighth);
- France made significant gains due to the greater level of women's participation in politics and economy. It now ranks 15th, up from 51st in 2007;
- The United States also improved its ranking in 2008, due to the increased empowerment of women and female participation in decision-making in political areas;
- Two African countries: Lesotho (16th) and Mozambique (18th) also rank among the top 20 countries.

The complete ranking of countries surveyed can be found at: <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/rankings2008.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/GenderGapNetwork/index.htm>

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

- An article "New international study shows women with symptomatic fibroids delaying treatment despite substantial burden on quality of life" was published in *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 October 2008, and on marketwatch.com. It described a study which attempted to determine the effects of uterine fibroids on the quality of life of women. The study conducted a survey in the United States, Canada and five European countries. The results, announced during the annual meeting of the American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists, revealed that one in five women suffer from symptomatic fibroids for more than five years before seeking treatment. In addition, more than one-third of women who were aware that they had fibroids did not choose to treat the condition through surgery or through medication. In effect, they continue to live with the symptoms, which include pelvic pain, abnormal bleeding and frequent urination. **The quality of life of women who have surgical treatment improved more than those who opted for medication.**

ETHICON is conducting further studies and evaluation on a treatment called Doppler-guided Uterine Artery Occlusion as a form of treatment to reduce the fibroid bleeding and other symptoms. ETHICON Women's Health and Urology is dedicated to providing innovative, minimally invasive treatments for common urologic and women's health conditions. The division offers solutions for enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hyperplasia); female stress urinary incontinence; pelvic floor repair; post-surgical adhesions; heavy periods (menorrhagia); and benign uterine conditions, such as fibroids and polyps.<sup>9</sup>

## WORK LIFE

### Telecommuting Study

by Jenny Ringarp, OFPW Intern

Ms. Constanze Westervoss is assisting Ms. Paulette Woolf, Chief Management Support Service at the United Nations, on a study regarding telecommuting in the UN system. A team from New York University is assigned to the task. The origin of this study lies in the Organizational Suggestion Box created by

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ethicon.com/bgdisplay.jhtml?itemname=about-gynecare>.

Under-Secretary-General Angela Kane to support her office in taking a more proactive role in managing reform efforts and improving management practices across the Organization.

One of the suggestions received via this medium, over and above the advocacy undertaken, inter alia, through the Secretary-General's report on the Improvement of the Status of Women in the UN System and elsewhere by the Office of the Focal Point for Women, was made by Ms. Aparna Mehrotra, the Focal Point for Women herself. She pointed out the benefits and increasing demand in the Organization to implement telecommuting as a means to modernize, increase productivity, incur certain budgetary savings on account of certain impending dislocation expected under the new construction project, the Capital Master Plan, and contribute to emissions reductions associated with climate change, the stated priority of the Secretary-General.

The initiative has the support of the Secretary-General and as of the time of this publication 3,700 responses to the telecommuting survey sent out to all UN staff were received. Under-Secretary-General Angela Kane is devoted to the issue and has expressed her support to benchmark the analysis so that it can pave the way for implementation of existent and new policies in time for the Capital Master Plan. "Official calculations of the Capital Master Plan, for example, indicate that if 20 staff would share 10 desks by the use of telecommuting, the Organization would save over \$1 million (approximately \$105,000 per person). Some 3,000 staff are expected to be relocated, yielding cost savings of \$10 million if only 200 staff (less than 10 per cent) would telecommute on a regular bases. No new policies would be required. Achieving that result would simply require management to make the use of existing policies."<sup>10</sup>

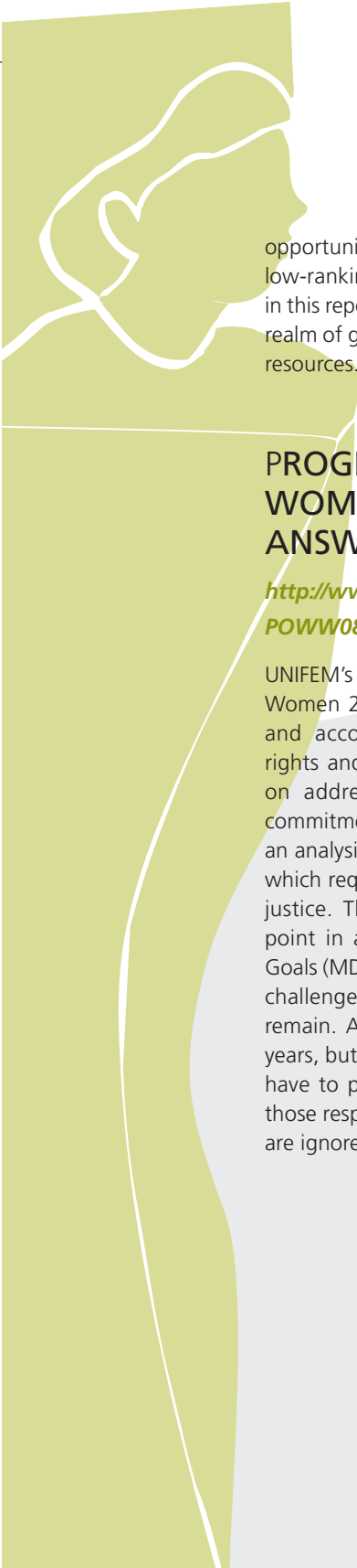
## RECOMMENDED READING

### Global Gender Gap Report 2008

<http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2008.pdf>

The World Economic Forum provides this report as a framework for quantifying the magnitude of disparities between men and women. For the 2008 report, the study considers the efforts of the Global Gender Parity Group and Regional Parity Groups in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia who also researched global challenges in the realms of economy, education, politics and health. The founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum hopes for an increased awareness of challenges ad

<sup>10</sup> *Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system*, 18 September 2008, paragraph 106.



opportunities, and seeks to motivate change in high- and low-ranking countries through the country index included in this report, which indicates the countries that lead in the realm of gender equality, regardless of available economic resources.

## PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2008/2009: WHO ANSWERS TO WOMEN?

[http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/media/POWW08\\_Report\\_Full\\_Text.pdf](http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/media/POWW08_Report_Full_Text.pdf)

UNIFEM's biennial global report, Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 "Who answers to women? Gender and accountability" reveals that achieving women's rights and the Millennium Development Goals depends on addressing and strengthening accountability for commitments to women and gender equality. It contains an analysis and corresponding recommendations in areas which require development, such as politics, security and justice. The report is significant, marking the midway point in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. Nonetheless, several accountability challenges at the national and international levels still remain. Achievements have been registered in the past years, but for women to accomplish gender equality, they have to participate in public decision-making and hold those responsible to account when their rights and needs are ignored.

## THE STATE OF WORLD POPULATION 2008

### Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender and Human Rights

<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>

The report of UNFPA, launched on 12 November 2008, reflects the value of cultural sensitivity to successful development strategies that promote the exercise of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

## WEBSITES

<http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/portal/home>

The Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York have created this new website. It has several links, including the Calendar of Meetings, iSeek stories, Permanent Missions, UN News, Daily Journal, useful UN links, updates of the Capital Master Project and the List of UN Senior Officials.

## INFO

You can find a monthly list of senior vacancy announcements (P-5 and above) at

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/>

You can read Network online at

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/Network>

To receive hard copies of Network, please send an e-mail request to [network-newsletter@un.org](mailto:network-newsletter@un.org)

### NETWORK—The UN Women's Newsletter

Editor-in-Chief: Aparna Mehrotra,  
Focal Point for Women, OSAGI/DESA

Production: Cynthia C. Gale, OSAGI/DESA

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### Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat

United Nations  
Two UN Plaza, DC2-1290  
New York, NY 10017

Tel.: 1 212 963 6828; fax: 1 212 963 9545

E-mail: [network-newsletter@un.org](mailto:network-newsletter@un.org)