



Zonta International

Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide

October 22, 2010

Dear Zonta International Members,

Recently, on 11 October 2010, the new Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General, UN Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, made a statement to the 65th Session of the General Assembly, Third Committee. While it is too long to reproduce here, there are some statements that should be of interest to all of us.

Ms. Bachelet stated, "I express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his confidence in entrusting me with the privilege and responsibility of building the newly established United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Let me congratulate the General Assembly for having the vision and commitment to put words into action."

Ms. Bachelet noted that the General Assembly has made three changes that have the potential to benefit gender equality and the empowerment of women. The first change is the decision to have the head of UN Women assume the position of Under-Secretary-General which will have wide ranging effects. The second change will bring about opportunities to have "a stronger voice to ensure a more coherent UN system response" to ensure gender equality. Third, Ms. Bachelet noted, in establishing UN Women, the General Assembly has "acknowledged that financial investments in gender equality must be commensurate with the ambition of our vision for change. We must reverse decades of accepting minimal resources for work on gender equality...we see that rarely is more than six percent of the budget visibly dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality."

In her statement, she noted that over the next months she will focus on four tasks. First, she will make efforts to assure that UN Women is operational by 1 January 2011; second, she stated that UN Women is "committed to strengthening the response of the entire UN system to assist Member States to advance gender equality." To accomplish this task, she will strengthen ties with entities of the UN system so that together they can "start a new era where the gender equality support from the entire system...can deliver as one"; the third priority is to "re-engage with the many constituencies that advocated so vigorously for the establishment of UN Women." She also stated that she was looking forward to hearing from women's groups from all over the world so that she will be able to understand what it is women expect from UN Women; fourth, she proposes to reach out to Member States and build new, ground-breaking partnerships to assure that new resources will enable UN Women to make the needed investments for gender equality and women's empowerment, "so that we can turn aspirations into change for women and girls."

Zonta International President Dianne Curtis has sent a letter of congratulation to Ms. Bachelet and conveyed the hopes of all of us that this historic step will truly help to, finally, bring the issues of violence against women and women's equality and empowerment to the forefront and that it will gain both the moral and financial support needed.

If you would like to read the entire statement, please go to www.unwomen.org/ where you will find the entire statement plus other interesting news and information about UN Women.

As news unfolds over the next months before and after 1 January 2011, we will keep you informed as to the progress of UN Women. I am sure that all of you join in wishing Ms. Bachelet a warm welcome in her new role as Under-Secretary-General.

Yours in Zonta,

Mary Ann Tarantula
Zonta International United Nations Committee Chairman