

Second Annual International Women's Day Celebration Breakfast
"Global Dispatches: Women Moving Forward - and to the Top"
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Global Dispatch: Women's Political Representation Worldwide
Anne Hoiberg, Director, Women's Equity Council, UN Association of San Diego

In my comments today, as we celebrate International Women's Day, the 26th year that the Women's Equity Council has commemorated this special day, I will discuss 1) the progress made in women's political representation worldwide, 2) the importance of quotas in electing women to political office, 3) suggestions for nominating the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, and 4) recommendations of training programs for potential candidates among YOU, those of you whom I hope are considering a run for elected office.

I will begin by stating that every woman has a right to participate in her government, as delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, now ratified by 181 countries); Beijing Platform for Action, which was signed by 189 nations in 1995; and the Millennium Development Goals. According to the Beijing Platform for Action, "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved."

Ten years ago, when Bella Abzug spoke here in San Diego, she challenged us to take charge, to go beyond "the words," and to declare the 21st Century as our century to create a world of peace and equality. After five years into this new century, we women have to decide if we want men to continue as our political leaders, or if we think it is time for us to take control of our governments for the betterment of all of us and for the survival of our planet.

Presidents and Prime Ministers: Let me begin by describing to you those countries where women are the Presidents or Prime Ministers. Since November, we have made incredible strides in electing women into positions of power: Angela Merkel, who holds a Ph.D. in Physics, to serve as Chancellor of Germany; the re-election of Tarja Halonen as President of Finland (and Conan O'Brian's look-alike); Michelle Bachelet, a pediatrician and former Minister of Defense, as President of Chile; Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the U.N.'s past Special Rapporteur on Trafficking, as President of Liberia; and Portia Simpson Miller as Prime Minister in Jamaica. Five new leaders in five months! Unfortunately, the election of these five brings the total of women Presidents and Prime Ministers to twelve throughout the world: twelve out of 191 nations in the United Nations.

In other countries, women serve as President or Prime Minister in Bangladesh, Ireland, Latvia, Mozambique, New Zealand (where the top three positions in national governance are held by women), the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Prior to the Beijing conference, the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council endorsed a target of having at least 30% women in positions of decision-making by 1995. Comparisons across nations by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in January 2006, however, indicate that only twenty nations of the U.N.'s 191 member states have representation of at least 30.0% in their lower house of parliament: Rwanda (48.8%), Sweden (45.3%), Norway (37.9%), Finland (37.5%), Denmark (36.9%), Netherlands (36.7%), Argentina (36.2%), Cuba (36.0%), Spain (36.0%), Costa Rica (35.1%), Mozambique (34.8%), Belgium (34.7%), Austria (33.9%), Iceland (33.3%), South Africa (32.8%), New Zealand (32.2%), Germany (31.8%), Guyana (30.8%), Burundi (30.5%), and United Rep. of Tanzania (30.4%). Regional averages place the Nordic countries at the highest with 40.1% and the Arab states at the lowest with 8.0%; the world average is 16.3%.

In the United States, 66 women (15.1%) serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, joining fourteen women (14.0%) in the U.S. Senate. The California Democrat delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives includes eighteen women and fifteen men, whereas the State Republicans' delegation of 20 has only one woman and nineteen men. Both U.S. Senators from California are women. In California's State Assembly of 80 members, 31.3% are women: nineteen Democrats and six Republicans; in the State Senate of 40 members there are twelve women (30.0%), all Democrats. In San Diego County of 18 cities, there are five women mayors and 20 city council members.

Washington State has outdone all other states by electing a woman governor and women U.S. Senators as well. At the U.N., seventeen women serve as permanent representatives at the United Nations.

Quotas: In his report to the U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan lists actions for increasing women's participation in decision-making that he hopes the Commission will consider in recommendations to Governments and political parties. The actions to be taken by governments include making the commitment to establish the goal of gender balance in all levels of government as well as to legislate initiatives to engender women's advancement. Eighty-one countries have enacted either political party quotas, as seen in the Nordic countries, or electoral quotas, as observed in Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, to increase the number of women seeking elected office. Another suggestion is to set timelines when the "critical mass" will be achieved; it is estimated that achieving 30% in all countries will occur in 2040 and parity in 2050. **Fast track and slow track countries:** post-conflict countries tend to be fast track, such as Rwanda, Mozambique, Burundi, and South Africa, as contrasted with such slow-track countries as the United States. (Afghanistan with its electoral quota has a representation of 27.7%, and Iraq achieved 31.1% in January 2005, which declined to 25.5% in December 2005.)

Secretary General of the United Nations: 2006! At the end of December of this year, Secretary-General Kofi Annan will have completed his final term as Secretary-General. During the past week at the United Nations, the buzz centered on the possibility of electing a woman to serve as the next Secretary-General. Who will the next Secretary-General be? Could that person be a woman? Members of the European Women's Lobby have been collecting names of women who would be more than qualified for this position while urging all of us to submit names to our representative, in this case, Ambassador John Bolton, at usa@un.int. We also need to check the website of Equality Now at

www.equalitynow.org to follow the progress we are making in electing a woman to serve as Secretary-General.

Training Opportunities: For candidates and campaign workers, there are training programs offered by such organizations as Emily's List, Wish List, National Women's Political Caucus, and political parties. A new program, titled, *Yes We Can*, is a training and job placement program organized by U.S. Senator Barack Obama through his Hopefund in partnership with Emily's List. This program is open to 20 young African American, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islanders who will commit to completing the training and working on a Democratic campaign from June 1 through the November elections this year. If you are interested in applying for this opportunity, please check out the website of www.hopefundamerica.com/yeswecan

During the past thirteen years, the National Women's Political Caucus of San Diego has conducted candidate and campaign training programs; for example, last year, NWPC partnered with Wish List, the Republican counterpart of Emily's List, to offer candidate training here in San Diego, and, two years ago, NWPC partnered with Lifeline Television to bring to San Diego an all-day campaign training program at Loew's on Coronado. NWPC of California is offering an all-day campaign training program on Friday, the 31st of March; to learn more about the training, please check the website at nwpcca.org.

Conclusion: In my comments, I've discussed, first, the current situation in which women in the past five months have been elected to serve as President or Prime Minister, while 20 countries now have more than 30% women serving in their parliament or house of representatives, 20 countries out of 191. Second, quotas, whether party or electoral, have proven extremely effective in the successful outcomes in these twenty countries. Third, we all need to do all we can to recommend and support a woman to serve as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. And, fourth, there are training programs open to women who have even the teeniest interest in running for elected office or for working in a campaign.

In the United States, a slow-track country with no quotas and no timelines, we all hope that women on their own will be ambitious about politics, which is becoming increasingly more difficult in the current climate of pervasive corruption, greed, and cronyism. Since 2000, for example, the number of Republican women serving in state legislatures has declined from 650 in 2000 to 607 in 2005 whereas the number of Democratic women has increased by only 34 to 1,041 in 2005. With state legislatures regarded as the pipeline for women seeking higher office, such disappointing numbers suggest that it may be necessary to implement targets or quotas. I think our goal should be to reach a 50:50 ratio by 2020 in all levels of government, which requires our political parties and organizations to develop programs to recruit, train, and support women candidates. As we look forward to the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in 2020, our efforts should be directed toward achieving universal suffrage and gender balance—all nations deserve nothing less.

In Kofi Annan's comments today at the U.N., he concluded by saying, "At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders declared that 'progress for women is progress for all'. On

this International Women's Day, let us rededicate ourselves to demonstrating the truth behind those words. Let us ensure that half the world's population takes up its rightful place in the world's decision-making."