



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Austria
DAW

19 July 2007

Excellency,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 4 June 2007. Thank you also for enclosing the *Recommendations on the empowerment of women in the area of conflict resolution and peace building* agreed by the Women's Empowerment Network Steering Group, which I found very pragmatic and action oriented.

I agree with you and the distinguished members of the Steering Group that much more can and should be done by all parts of the United Nations system at all levels, both at Headquarters and in the field, to increase the number of women in senior positions, including as envoys to conflict and post-conflict regions.

I discussed this issue with my senior management team and it has emerged that one of the main constraints we face in improving gender balance at senior levels has been the ability to attract competent women, particularly from developing countries. Thus, the Deputy Secretary-General and I will work to ensure that the United Nations casts a much wider net for qualified women candidates for senior positions through more targeted searches, more active engagement with Member States as repositories of accomplished women, and other practical measures we are reviewing to address this pressing issue. I hope we can also count on your Network for advice and suggestions.

Since taking office, I have made gender balance a fundamental principle for my tenure. I hope to be able to show concrete results in the near future so as to improve the share of women in senior positions in the United Nations.

Her Excellency
Ms. Ursula Plassnik
Federal Minister for European
and International Affairs
of the Republic of Austria
Vienna

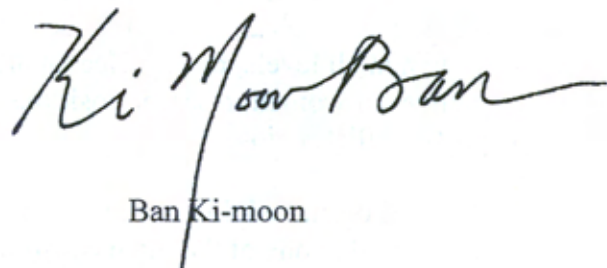


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Allow me to assure you that I remain steadfastly committed to working for 50/50 gender balance at all levels of the United Nations. My senior managers are also bound by this commitment and accountable for it.

Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General and I concur wholeheartedly with you that the United Nations needs a strengthened gender architecture able to mobilize forces of change at the global level, and inspire enhanced results at the country level. I count on the support of your Network for that to happen.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ki Moon Ban". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ki" and last name "Ban" being more prominent than the middle name "Moon".

Ban Ki-moon

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

19 July 2007

Excellency,

The Secretary-General would be grateful if you could kindly forward the enclosed letter to Her Excellency Ms. Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

A copy of the letter is attached for your information.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Paolo Galli'.

Paolo Galli

Principal Officer

Office of the Deputy Secretary-General

His Excellency
Mr. Gerhard Pfanzelter
Permanent Representative of the Republic
of Austria to the United Nations
New York

by email
same to DSG

REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

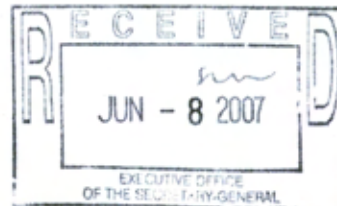
The Federal Minister for
European and International Affairs

Ursula Plassnik

H.E.
Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Vienna, 4 June 2007

No. BMeiA-XX.8.19.07/0025-II.4/2007



Dear Secretary-General,

On 31 May 2007, the Women's Empowerment Network Steering Group met in Vienna to discuss strategies for the empowerment of women in the area of conflict resolution and peace building. The meeting took place in the context of an international conference on "Women Leaders – Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East".

Women have important contributions to make to conflict resolution and peace building, both on a local and on an international level. To ensure that these contributions are effectively heard and used, the Steering Group agreed on a set of recommendations (attached).

In particular, the Steering Group asks you to urgently set up a mechanism to increase the number of women among United Nations special representatives and envoys including as heads of peace operations. The fact that there is currently no woman among 54 United Nations envoys to conflict and post-conflict regions is deemed unacceptable by Steering Group Members.

Sincerely yours,

Ursula Plassnik

**Meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network
Steering Group
Vienna, 31 May 2007**

**Recommendations on the empowerment of women in the area of
conflict resolution and peace building**

On 31 May 2007, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Dr. Ursula Plassnik hosted a meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network Steering Group in Vienna to discuss strategies for the empowerment of women in the area of conflict resolution and peace building. The meeting took place in the context of an International Conference "Women Leaders – Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East".

Women have important contributions to make to conflict resolution and peace building, both on a local and on an international level. To ensure that these contributions are effectively heard and used, the Steering Group agreed on the following recommendations:

- The Steering Group urges the Secretary General of the United Nations to set up a mechanism to increase the number of women among United Nations special representatives and envoys including as heads of peace operations. The fact that there is currently no woman among 54 United Nations envoys to conflict and post-conflict regions is unacceptable.
- The Steering Group commits itself to work towards the nomination of more women as envoys and mediators also in other international and regional organisations.
- Whenever visiting conflict or post-conflict regions such as the Middle East, Steering Group members will hold consultations with women's groups and women human rights defenders.
- The Steering Group calls upon the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission to effectively integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of its work and to ensure that women are included in peace processes.
- The Steering Group reaffirmed the need to strengthen the gender architecture of the United Nations, with a view to ensure a more effective and efficient delivery of United Nations gender related programmes and mandates in the field.
- The Steering Group further calls upon national and international actors to systematically review their cooperation programmes with a view to introduce targeted gender related activities into their strategies and programmes on peace and security.

Steering Group members further decided to nominate focal points within their offices to ensure effective implementation of these recommendations and to coordinate future activities of the Women's Empowerment Network.

**Meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network
Steering Group
Vienna, 31 May 2007**

List of Participants

Host: **H.E. Ursula Plassnik**

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, Austria

Co-Chair: **H.E. Condoleezza Rice**

Secretary of State of the United States of America

H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa

President of the UN-General Assembly, Bahrain

H.E. Benita Ferrero-Waldner

EU Commissioner for External Relations

H.E. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic

Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Republic of Croatia

H.E. Antoinette Batumubwira

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Burundi

H.E. Kinga Göncz

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary

H.E. Sumeira Malik

Minister for Women's Development, Islamic Republic of Pakistan