

EOSG

Secretary-General's remarks at the Women's International Forum

9 March 2007

"How does the SG see the UN in the next 5 years?"

- It is used to be said that "behind every great man there is a great woman." Now, it might be more accurate to say **great women can be found behind, beside, and often, in front of their male counterparts.** I am grateful for your active role and engagement. I am pleased to witness your central role in international politics and I am honoured to have this opportunity to interact with you today.
- My greatest ambition as newly installed Secretary-General of the United Nations is to make this Organization, the only universal body humanity has, even more relevant to the challenges that our world faces today. **This Organization has always held great promise, but now I want to ensure that it delivers on its promises.**
- The 21st century has been posing greater demands and expectations than ever before on all of us. From tackling climate change, poverty and disease, to combating terrorism, keeping the peace and building stable post-conflict societies, to the protection of human rights and dealing with humanitarian emergencies, **we have to rise to the numerous challenges of our times.**
- I care about this Organization and I want to help it realize its great potential. That is why reform of its management is a top priority for me. **We need a model body, efficient, transparent and accountable, able to deliver what is expected of it.**
- I have started my tenure by **restructuring the house in the area of peace and security**, to ensure an adequate and effective response to the increasing demands for peacekeeping operations. I foresee a possible increase of 35-40% in the number of peacekeeping personnel this year alone. In five years from now, the UN will have significantly increased its presence on the African continent to stop violence, assist in recovering from war and build lasting peace. Disarmament and non-proliferation, of weapons of mass destruction as well as other deadly devices, is also a major priority.
- Moreover, the UN has a key role to play in **ensuring that globalization has a human face and soul.** We cannot have sustainable global growth without eliminating abject poverty and disease that torment the poorest among us. **The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** are meant to guide us in that direction. We are now mid-way in their implementation and progress is

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uneven. I intend to reinforce it and even push beyond the minimum MDG requirements in certain key areas.

- Our global environment is under significant pressure, not least because of increased human activity. The UN must play a central role in efforts to **address climate change** through joint commitments by all, developed and developing nations alike, using all means available from mitigation and adaptation to market incentives and of course innovation and new technologies. I will work resolutely for a universally agreed framework to succeed the current Kyoto Protocol commitments after 2012.
- The United Nations has a lot to contribute in many more areas where humanity is facing acute challenges. From the achievement of the **global health goals**, like combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, to the elimination of violence against women and **gender equality**, adequate **migration** policies, **youth employment** and supportive environments for the **elderly**, as well as moving toward **harnessing the internet and biotechnological revolution** for the benefit of all.
- Income poverty reduction through **aid and trade** is also a responsibility of the international community and I will continue to push for that. **Good governance** and national accountability are also key elements for the fulfillment of the development agenda.
- Let me now turn to **the role that women can play** to help achieve a more developed and secure world. Women are not only passive actors subject to vulnerability. They/You are agents of change. Women have often played an active role in reconciliation efforts, for example. The advancement of women also corresponds to reduced fertility rates, improved maternal and child health, and overall higher economic returns for society as a whole. Gender equality and women's empowerment is central to the achievement of all the MDGs and overall conflict reduction. **The UN will continue to fight in the years ahead to improve the status of women.**
- The Commission on the Status of Women is ending today its 51st session. This year, the Commission focused on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. The UN has already adopted a "**zero tolerance**" policy and I will continue to ensure its full implementation.
- **The UN has also seen an increasing number of women joining its ranks.** I personally rely on female colleagues in some key areas of the UN's work, starting with my Deputy. But we need many more women in the Organization,

particularly at the decision-making level. I intend to encourage the positive trend of recent years until we achieve real gender parity in the UN.

- I thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today and I look forward to benefiting from your comments and advice.