



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

New partnership between EU and UN Women to enhance gender equality worldwide

Brussels, 16 April 2012 - A new partnership between the EU and UN Women set up to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations on their work on empowering women and gender equality, was today signed by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice President of the Commission Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs, with Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women Michelle Bachelet.

The new Memorandum of Understanding signed on the margin of the EU Sustainable Energy for All Summit in Brussels, reaffirms the partnership between the two organisations to support gender equality and women's empowerment around the world and ensures closer collaboration; sharing information, expertise and analysis in order to effectively advance women's rights.

Cooperation will primarily focus on ensuring women's representation in decision-making in the fields of economics, politics and justice worldwide, as well as better access for women to work and social opportunities.

Crucially, the partnership will see the two organisations coming together to take action on combating sexual and gender-based violence. This will include a commitment to provide more support and protection to survivors of violence and increasing access to support and services for those women affected.

Catherine Ashton said: "Discrimination against women and girls remains the most pervasive and persistent form of inequality. Together with UN Women we will work to improve the role of women in political and economic decision-making. We will also fight impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, ensure better protection of women and improve their access to justice. These are issues that need our full attention and this new partnership enhances our ability to work even harder to reach these goals."

EU Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs added: "As I travel around the world, I can see that women are the agents of change. There will be no human and economic development without a sound respect of women's rights and conditions. This is a fundamental part of the development policy that I wish to champion. I'm convinced that this partnership will take our collaboration with UN Women to a new level, ensuring more efficiency and better support to women all over the world."

UN Women Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director Michelle Bachelet said: "The full participation of women strengthens democracy, peace and sustainable development globally. By signing this strategic partnership, the European Union and UN Women reaffirms their strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This partnership builds on on-going collaboration in several areas of work. The EU is a very important partner to UN Women and the MoU will enhance our co-operation on policies and programmes which make a difference in the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide."

The partnership will involve the two organisations working together on policies and programmes on gender equality and women's empowerment. It will also mean that relevant information, analysis and strategic assessments are regularly shared in order to improve collaboration.

Background

The EU and UN Women are already working together regularly, for example, on the Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality Programme, set up to help national governments; civil society and donors to improve resources and accountability on gender equality in 15 countries. A program recently started on enhancing women's participation in peace-building and post-conflict planning in Liberia, Timor-Leste and Kosovo. The new Memorandum of Understanding confirms this partnership.

EU's work on gender

As the world's second largest donor, the Commission has a crucial role to play in furthering the development of women and girls. Since 2004, for example, thanks to EU support: more than 85,000 new female students have been enrolled in secondary education, more than 4 million births attended by health personnel and 10.8 million consultations on reproductive health carried out.

EU Sustainable Energy for All Summit – the Gender dimension

On 16 April, the European Commission and the Danish Presidency of the EU Council are organising the **EU Sustainable Energy for All Summit**. The afternoon session of this event will focus on gender and access to sustainable energy for women where Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women Michelle Bachelet will provide the keynote address.

Women are disproportionately adversely affected by the lack of modern energy services. Energy plays a major role in women's daily lives; in practical uses, such as cooking and processing food and collecting water, and in meeting their wider needs; allowing them to study in the evenings, providing street lighting for safety, and enabling communication.

This Summit is being hosted by President José Manuel Barroso and EU Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs. Other high level participants include the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, as well as representatives from developing countries, industry and civil society organisations committed to achieving sustainable energy for all by 2030. This ambitious goal was set up by a High Level Group, led by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, of which Commissioner Piebalgs is a member.

For further details about the EU's work with women, go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news/documents/factsheet_womensday_en.pdf

To find out more about UN Women, go to:

<http://www.unwomen.org/>

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards.

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/energy/sustainable/se4all_en.htm

To find out more about the EU Sustainable Energy for All Summit, go to

<http://www.cvent.com/events/eu-sustainable-energy-for-all-summit/event-summary-ecd2a79dca4245f281c8f1bdc9936c08.aspx>

<http://www.sustainableenergyforall.org/>

Contacts :

[Catherine Ray](#) (+32 2 296 99 21)

[Wojtek Talko](#) (+32 2 297 85 51)

[Maja Kocijancic](#) (+32 2 298 65 70)

[Daniel Almeida](#) (+32 2 213 1445)