



Name: Datin Paduka Hajah Adina Othman

Position: Deputy Minister, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

Country of Origin: Brunei

Biography:

ADINA OTHMAN is the Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports since May 2010. She graduated from University of Kent, and University College, London in 1977 and 1980 respectively. Her working experiences encompass the fields of culture, youth and sports and community development. She is also a former Commissioner for ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. She is a leading proponent on the rights of women and children and other vulnerable groups and delivered various papers in areas covering Community Development and Women issues.

It is an undeniable fact that in order to achieve real and lasting progress, women must be placed at the forefront of the socio-economic agenda. Empowering women is key towards a more sustainable and better quality of life for all. Our presence here today and our achievement to date is living testament of that fact.

It is therefore a privilege and an honour for me to be among the contributors of such progress at the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo 2014. This Assembly allows us to reaffirm our commitment to the continued participation of women and press towards a more equitable society for us all. I wish to congratulate Japan for organizing such a prestigious event and pray that the successful convening of WAW! Tokyo 2014 would spur women's power from strength to strength for the benefit of all – men, women and children and towards enhancing greater peace and understanding in the world.



Name: Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura

Position: Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (USG)

Country of Origin: Sierra Leone

Biography:

Zainab Hawa Bangura is the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict at the level of Under-Secretary-General. She has over 20 years of policy, diplomatic and practical experience in the field of governance, conflict resolution and reconciliation in Africa. She served as Minister of Health and Sanitation for the Government of Sierra Leone, and was previously Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

In the last hundred years women have made great strides in all walks of life, but there is still much work to be done to address gender inequality. In politics, the global share of women in parliament continues to rise, but at 20 per cent it is far short of gender parity. Economically, women continue to be largely relegated to less secure forms of employment than men, with fewer social benefits. In education, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but only 2 out of 130 countries have achieved that target at all levels of education. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to undermine efforts to empower women and girls and foster true economic, social and cultural parity in society.

In order to tackle the disparities that continue to hinder economic and social development, we must create a society where women can shine as full partners at the decision-making table and equal participants in the economic and social life of countries. The World Assembly of Women serves as a powerful reminder that none of us can advance if half of us are left behind. It is only when women enjoy full equality and access to opportunities that families will thrive, communities will flourish and nations will realize their full potential.



Name: Ms. Maria Leonor Couceiro Pizarro Beleza de Mendonça Tavares

Position: President of the Champalimaud Foundation

Country of Origin: Portugal

Biography:

A graduate of the University of Lisbon Law School, Leonor Beleza went on to become an Assistant Professor in the same institution. Throughout her career she has been actively involved in women's issues, and during Portugal's transition to democracy she established herself as a leading advocate for women's rights. In the 1980's, she became the first President of the Council of Europe Committee for Equality Between Women and Men. Leonor Beleza has held a number of high-profile governmental positions and is currently the President of the Champalimaud Foundation – a world-leader in biomedical science.

Power and care need to become much more evenly exercised and shared between women and men. This is required if our world is to be both fair and able to use human capacities at their full potential.

We are still very far away, even in our democratic and developed countries. Only two decades ago was it officially acknowledged that women's rights are fully human rights. Only in the 21st century are we seeing female leadership at the very highest national level, although it is still uncommon, and not matched in the boardrooms. Only now are we seeing recognition that family life and its burdens are not solely part of the female world, even if it often looks as such.

We have been saying for decades that the collective acceptance of equality must be accompanied by an evolution in attitudes and an effective social engagement.

Real change actually requires women to dare and to act and for men to believe and to support. I hope we will all collect the benefits.



Name: Mrs. Cherie Blair QC, CBE

Position: Founder, Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

Country of Origin: United Kingdom

Biography:

Wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, leading lawyer and committed campaigner for women's rights, Cherie set up the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women in 2008 to help women build small and growing businesses in developing and emerging markets so that they can contribute to their economies and have a stronger voice in their societies. As well as fighting for human rights in her professional career, Cherie is an active campaigner on equality and human rights issues. In addition to founding her own charity, Cherie remains closely involved with charities with a special emphasis on women and children.

I am delighted to be part of the World Assembly for Women in Japan. In particular I would like to applaud the work of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and first lady Mrs Akie Abe in promoting a society where women shine. WAW! Tokyo is a real opportunity to get prominent business and political figures from across the globe to focus on the benefits of integrating women fully into society. I know Akie Abe is a powerful advocate of equal opportunities for women. I am looking forward to joining her to discuss how in the 21st Century we can reach more women through technology and give them the skills they need to grow their own businesses and achieve financial independence so that they can contribute to their economies and have a stronger voice in their societies.



Name: Ms. Pascale Boistard
 Position: Deputy Minister of Women's rights
 Country of origin: France
 Biography: France
 1997: Joined the Socialist Party (PS) of France
 1997: Graduated in political sciences from Paris VIII university
 1998: Parliamentary attaché of a MEP (Gaetan Gorce)
 2001: Parliamentary attaché of the minister of professional education
 2005: Member of PS national office
 2008: Elected at the city council of Paris (11e arrondissement) and deputy mayor in charge of integration
 2012: Member of Parliament at the National Assembly
 2014: Deputy Minister of Women's rights

France is very involved in promoting gender equality in all dimensions of its policies. We strongly encourage work and family balance, and with 65 % participation of women in the labour market, France also achieved a birth rate about 2 child per women. Equality in the work place, measures to encourage men to better share family responsibilities, and measures to better protect women vulnerable to domestic abuse, are among the main priorities of our equality law just adopted (4 august 2014)



Name: Ms. Ouided Bouchamaoui
 Position: President, UTICA (Tunisian Confederation of Private Employers)
 Country of Origin: Tunisia
 Biography:
 President of UTICA since May 2011
 President of Business-Med since September 2011
 Vice-President of the Tunisian Foundation of Control and Governance since 2009.
 Founding member of connecting group (financial network of women leaders).
 Founding member of the Maghreb Economic Forum
 Shareholder and director at HBG Holdings (exploration of oil and gas in Tunisia, Syria and Egypt).

We know that women account for more than 50% of the talent base in the world, so why neglect this powerful resource?

In the last ten years, despite the financial crisis and wars, we have seen increased government investment in female education, healthcare and childcare facilities. Laws have been passed in many countries to ensure parity in business, these are all positive steps but we must go further with this talent base.

We need to set out a global policy to address women's active roles in society, through empowerment and independence. We have to encourage and allow more women worldwide, to attain top positions in governments, institutions and corporations in order to make fundamental economic and political changes to the balance of our environment.

One of the major resources we must address immediately is women's self determination to drive social and professional projects and to transmit knowledge and values at a local and global level.

In my country, Tunisia, since 2011, we have seen clearly how women, united in their beliefs, persevered in their efforts and drove forward a revolution in a Muslim country.



Name: Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury
Position: Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament
Country of Origin: Bangladesh
Biography:

Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury is the Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament for the second time. She is the first ever woman Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament. She is a Member of the 10th Parliament of Bangladesh from Bangladesh Awami League. Serving as the State Minister for Women & Children Affairs (2009-2013), she actively engaged in promoting gender equality and women empowerment. National Women Development Policy, Children Policy and Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act were formulated under her leadership.

"Gender equality is not a goal in itself but essential for sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. Women constitute almost half of the total population world over. They also form a substantial part of labor force. Economic empowerment of women is therefore crucial. Ensuring increased labor force participation, providing increased employment opportunities with skill development training are essential components for their economic empowerment. Creating access to finance and marketing, providing loans without collateral are fundamental tenets for facilitating women entrepreneurship. Recognition of women's contribution in care economy is also necessary. In order to ensure gender equality institutions have a vital role. Institutions must not perpetuate inequality, instead eliminate discrimination. It is imperative to include all women in the development process, to identify whose voice is not being heard and use our power to change the dynamics. We cannot afford to rest yet but must continue our efforts in achieving the best."



Name: Ms. Helen Clark
Position: Administrator of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Country of Origin: New Zealand
Biography:

Helen Clark became the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme in April 2009, the first woman to lead the organization. She is also the Chair of the United Nations Development Group. Prior to her appointment with UNDP, she has an extensive parliamentary and ministerial career: Minister responsible for the portfolios of Conservation and Housing, and then Health and Labour (1987 - 1990), Deputy Prime Minister (Aug 1989 - Nov 1990), Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Nov 1990 - Dec 1993), and Leader of the Opposition until winning the election in 1999. Then, Helen Clark served as Prime Minister of New Zealand, serving three successive terms from 1999-2008.

Realizing "a society where women shine" is critical for creating an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient world. No country will reach its full potential if its female citizens do not enjoy full equality.

As we approach the 2015 end date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and define our goals for the post-2015 development agenda, we must remember that gender equality is a human right. Empowering women also makes economic sense, strengthens democracy, and enables long-term sustainable progress.

UNDP works collaboratively with other UN agencies, in particular with UN Women, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through our programmes and support for the formulation of good policies and ambitious standards and norms. We also work with a range of other stakeholders. Achieving the full empowerment of women requires everyone, including men and boys, to engage.

Congratulations to Japan for organizing WAW! Tokyo 2014, and boldly taking the lead on this agenda.



Name: Ms. Ertharin Cousin

Position: Executive Director of UN World Food Programme

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Ertharin Cousin began her tenure as the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in 2012. Cousin brings more than twenty-five years of national and international non-profit, government, and corporate leadership experience focusing on hunger, food and resilience strategies. In 2009, Cousin was appointed the United States Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome.

The World Assembly for Women provides us all with an opportunity to listen to women, to recognise their massive contribution to our world and to take concrete steps forward for women's empowerment. Empowering women is not just about equity, it also about supporting women to fulfil their central and important roles in our communities, societies and economies.

Efforts to recognise women, their capacities and their needs, are essential to global development. In the World Food Programme, we know that when we reach women effectively, families are better nourished, children are less likely to die in infancy, and they are more likely to go to school. We also know that when we reach women through efforts like the Purchase for Progress initiative, we give smallholder family farmers the best opportunity to move beyond subsistence farming.

We accept that women are our major stakeholder. We cannot win the fight against hunger without women. Empowering women is the first step toward a world with Zero Hunger.



Name: Ms. Shukria Dini

Position: Executive Director, Somali Women's Studies Center (SWSC)

Country of Origin: Somalia

Biography:

Shukria Dini is a Somali-Canadian who returned to Somalia in 2010 to participate in the transformation and rebuilding of her country of birth. She is also the Founder and Director of Somali Women's Studies Center (SWSC) based in Mogadishu. She is a gender expert and has been researching on Somali women for over 15 years. Shukria holds a doctoral degree in Women's Studies from York University, Toronto, MA in International Development Studies from Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and a BA in Political Science from University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. She took part in co-translating the UN Resolution 1325, 1820 in Somali together with her father and another colleague.

I am very honored to be among invited participants from different parts of the world who will be attending the International Symposium on World Assembly for Women (WAW) in 2014. I want to extend my gratitude to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the government of Japan for organizing this Symposium. The forum will provide women from all over the world a much-needed platform to discuss issues that are so close to their hearts. The symposium has come at a better time when women are thirsty for empowerment socially, economically and politically.

Given the crucial role women play in the society, this symposium will provide us (women) the opportunity to demand for positive changes in the lives of women in the world. A world where women are empowered socially, economically and politically will inevitably lead to a world that is secure and prosperous. There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.



Name: Ms. Dede Ahoefa Ekoue

Position: Minister of Social Action, Women Promotion and Literacy

Country of Origin: Togo

Biography:

Mrs Dédé Ahoéfa EKOUE is Minister of Social Action, Women Promotion and Literacy since September 2013. She joined the Togo Cabinet in 2010 as Minister of Planning and Territory Management, then appointed Minister of Environment and Forest Resources in 2012. She holds a Master's Degree in Business and Administration from Jackson State University USA, a Graduate Degree in Finance and Taxation from The University of Lille. Bilingual French and English.

Women constitute more than half of the world population. They bring a huge contribution to the well being of children, families, and communities and they are key drivers of the economy in many countries. However, the world is so far from recognizing their contribution and from tapping on their full potential. For example, persisting inequalities and cultural misperceptions are preventing the world from fully capitalizing on their capacity to grow our economies. This summit is an unique opportunity to reflect on how best to unlock the potential of women to bring about the economic and social progress that we are longing for, for ourselves and our children. We must all empower the women of today and the next generation of women. Indeed, when women shine and rise to their full potential, the world can not but rise to a higher level to become a more prosperous and inclusive place.



Name: Ms. Elke Ferner

Position: Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Country of Origin: Germany

Biography:

Elke Ferner had worked as a software engineer before she became a Member of the German Parliament in 1990 for a period of eight years. From 1998 to 2000, she served as State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Affairs. In 2002, she returned to the Parliament where she has been staying until today. In 2013, she started her career as Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Minister Manuela Schwesig thanks you very much for inviting her to the symposium "Toward a society where women shine" and regrets being unable to participate herself. The Minister has asked me to represent her here in Tokyo. Consequently, it is my privilege and pleasure to inform you about the Federal Government's equality policy concepts and plans. At the same time, I look forward to hearing about the experience and priorities of equality policy in Japan. The Federal Government's equality policy aims to effectively translate the equal rights that have become enshrined in our legislation, into actual everyday reality - not only in the world of work or politics, but in all spheres of life. After all, this is a basic prerequisite for greater social equity, and it is an explicit mandate entrusted to us by our Basic Law.

To be contemporary and successful, equality and family policies must enable and encourage a relationship of co-equal partnership between women and men, a partnership at eye level. This only works if policies look at both sexes. While major successes have indeed been achieved in equality policy, the attitude that assigns to women the role of child-raiser and to men that of breadwinner, is still prevalent in many areas of our society. Therefore, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports not only women and girls, but also men and boys, in defining and living their respective roles outside of gender stereotypes.

I look forward to discussing some of these aspects with the conference participants. I wish this symposium much success and a fruitful outcome.



Name: Ms. Grace Fu Yien

Position: Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs

Country of Origin:

Biography: Republic of Singapore

Ms Grace Fu is presently serving as Singapore's Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources. Ms Fu is concurrently the Chairperson of the Women's Wing of the People's Action Party.

Ms Fu sits on the boards of the Peoples' Association and is involved in or has been involved in a number of committees including the Ministerial Committee on Ageing, the Economic Strategies Committee and the National Integration Committee.

Prior to her appointment to political office, Ms Fu had served as Chief Executive Officer, PSA South East Asia and Japan, as well as Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Terminals.

Ms Fu graduated with Bachelor of Accountancy (Honours) in 1985 and obtained a Masters of Business Administration from the National University of Singapore in 1991.

Ms Fu is married with three sons and enjoys outdoor activities like rafting, swimming and hiking.

Against the backdrop of competition for human capital and ageing population, an international focus on engaging women in the workforce is timely.

Women in Singapore are well educated and aspire to have a rewarding career and a good family. We want to support this aspiration. The Government is increasing childcare and eldercare capacity and making them more affordable. Maternity and Parental leave have been enhanced by law. Companies are encouraged to adopt family-friendly HR practices to attract and develop female employees, and we like to see more women being represented at senior management and company boards. Greater sharing of family responsibilities between men and women is to be encouraged.

The World Assembly for Women: Tokyo 2014 provides a great opportunity to learn from one another and explore new ideas to support women. I look forward to meeting you.



Name: Ms. Irene Hirano Inouye

Position: President of the U.S.-Japan Council

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Irene Hirano Inouye is President of the U.S.-Japan Council, a non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., dedicated to building people-to-people relationships between the United States and Japan. She is the former President and founding CEO of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, a position she held for twenty years. A recipient of bachelor's and master's degrees in Public Administration from the University of Southern California, she has extensive experience in non-profit administration, community education and public affairs with culturally diverse communities.

A world where women are empowered and can advance cannot be created by any one part of society. Women and men, government and business leaders, those who work and those who support their family at home must all cooperate.

We commend Prime Minister Abe for mobilizing global leaders for this important cause. Each of us are bringing our own experience--but we will also take home what we learned, and continue to collaborate. The U.S.-Japan Council promotes strong U.S.-Japan relations through people to people connections, valuing the power of networks. Through the TOMODACHI Initiative, we invest in the next generation of young women and men who will ensure the future of our relationship.

Just as there is no one group that can change everything, there is no one action that immediately brings results. This Symposium enables us to develop valuable connections to support changes in culture and society.



Name: Lady Barbara Judge

Position: Chairman of the Energy Institute of University College London and Chairman of the UK Pension Protection Fund

Country of Origin: United Kingdom, United States

Biography:

Lady Barbara Judge CBE is a corporate lawyer. After receiving a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Juris Doctor with honours from New York University School of Law, she became a partner in a major US law firm. In 1980 she was appointed by the President as Commissioner of the US Securities & Exchange Commission. In 2002 she joined the Board of the UK Atomic Energy Authority and was its Chairman from 2004-2010. Thereafter she was appointed Chairman of the Energy Institute of University College London and Chairman of the UK Pension Protection Fund.

Women throughout history have been underutilized and dependent, therefore humanity has never realized its full potential. I believe that women should be able to work – not because they are alone or because they are economically in need – but because they have a brain and they should be able to use it fully. They should be able to earn their own money because in this world - money equals independence. It is therefore my belief that to be truly independent women should be able to have careers and fully participate in a nation's economy.

Now that women are graduating at higher rates from university and more doors are beginning to open to them, the timing has never been better to focus on increasing women in the economy. In Japan with an aging work force, decreasing population, and strict immigration rules, women must become a more integrated part of Japan's future. I believe that Japan's most important natural resource is its women.



Name: Mrs. Tawakkol Karman

Position: Nobel Peace Prize laureate, President of WJWC

Country of Origin: Yemen

Biography:

Tawakkol Karman was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 in recognition of her work in non-violent struggle for the expression rights, safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work in Yemen. Upon being awarded the prize, Tawakkol became the first Yemeni, the first Arab woman, and the second Muslim woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, as well as the youngest Nobel Peace Laureate to date, at the age of 32. Karman is a mother of three as well as a human rights activist, journalist, politician, president of Women Journalists without Chains organization.

No one is stronger than a woman once she believes so. Throughout the history, women have been exposed to different types of injustice and oppression. However, this neither did stop them from giving nor minimize their enthusiasm to build the earth with love and peace. In all trying times of humanity, woman was most enduring for pain and difficulties in an interesting way.

The greatness of woman and her power are represented in her ability to keep her pure essence and maintain her constructive struggle even in the worst conditions. This world, which is getting more complicated, needs more of ethical and spiritual power which women have in order to continue without conflicts or wars. One of the facts that should not be denied is that woman is the life-full of optimism and challenge.



Name: Ambassador Caroline Bouvier Kennedy

Position: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

On Nov.19. she assumed duty as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Japan as the first female U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Prior to her nomination, Ambassador Kennedy worked as a lawyer, author, and editor. She has authored, co-authored, or edited more than a dozen books and has had articles published in the New York Times, Newsweek, and Time Magazine. She served as chief executive of the Office of Strategic Partnerships of the New York City Department of Education and has served on the boards of numerous non-profit organizations and foundations including as president and director of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation. Ambassador Kennedy also served as a member of the Obama for America Vice Presidential Search Committee in 2008. She is the daughter of John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States of America.

We are the generation that can change history and bring about social, political and economic equality for women. There are women here from around the globe, and so the potential for lasting change is in our grasp. Every single person attending WAW! can play a part in bringing women more fully into leadership roles in all fields, many of them represented here. It is the right thing to do for our countries, for our families and for our futures.

A Japanese proverb says 小打も積もれば大木を倒す Shōda mo tsumoreba taiboku-wo taosu. (With many little strokes a large tree is cut down.) We know that we will not solve all of the issues facing women today, but every time women gather to inspire, collaborate and empower each other, we create the opportunity to make change happen. The power of the ideas generated here are limitless and I look forward to hearing them.



Name: Mrs. Naina Lal Kidwai

Position: Immediate Past President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Executive Director on the board of HSBC Asia-Pacific and Chairman India

Country of Origin: India

Biography:

Naina Lal Kidwai is Executive Director on the board of HSBC Asia-Pacific and Chairman India. She is Non-Executive Director of Nestle S.A. and Immediate Past President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). She is a member of various government committees for Trade & Industry; the Governing Board of National Council of Applied Economic Research; the National Institute of Bank Management; Global Advisor Harvard Business School and the Chair of its India Advisory Board; World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Climate Change and Vice Chair of the Water Council; and Advisory Council of the Inquiry of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

Empowerment of women in a society means they have a voice, stand up for their rights and contribute to the economy. I am a firm believer in empowerment through livelihoods - women who earn begin to get due respect in the home and society.

Today companies recognize the need for diversity of viewpoints and ideas and insights. Women make purchasing and investment decisions and are important as consumers. There are several role models of women entrepreneurs and women ceos who run leading successful companies, and women leaders in politics and government.

Enlightened companies have policies like flexi hours, mentoring, creches as they work to attract and retain talent. Society and governments must also embrace this change. The woman's role at home needs support as she moves out --ideally without guilt or fear to deliver to her full potential.



Name: Ms. Wasna R. Lathouras

Position: President, Narai Intertrade Co.,Ltd.

Country of Origin: Thailand

Biography:

Ms. Wasna R. Lathouras is the founder of a Thai company “NaRaYa” which is the leading Asian brand for fabric bags and accessories. Ms. Wasna R. Lathouras and the NaRaYa brand received many awards, including several Prime Ministers Awards (2000, 2002, 2003), "Superbrands" (2005, 2006) from Superbrands England, "Outstanding Woman of the Year" (2004, 2005) and, more recently, the Bai Pho Business Award (2009). She also received the Insignia of Honour of the Direkgunabhorn from HM The King of Thailand for her social work helping government agencies develop the skills of rural people all over the country.

WOMEN – “BUSINESS, FAMILY OR BOTH?”

In Asia, we were taught that women were born to be only “WIFE & MOM” which I am very proud to be. But God has also gifted us with a brain just like men.

As many women step out to work and succeed in the business world, many of them proved that they could perform at the highest level in many organizations.

However, whatever we say, whatever we do, we shall never forget to look back to our children and our husbands. I strongly believe that “Business cannot succeed if you do not have a strong support from your family”.



Name: Ms. Ellana Lee

Position: Senior Vice President and Managing Editor, CNN International

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Ellana Lee is Vice President and Managing Editor for CNN International Asia Pacific, based at the network’s regional headquarters in Hong Kong. As head of the network and its editorial output, she manages CNN’s award-winning on-air and online news and feature programming produced throughout the region, including the correspondents and newsgathering teams across 10 operations from Kabul to Seoul

It's a great pleasure to be participating at the very first WAW conference here in Japan. Working at CNN I have the privilege of working with some of the world’s top journalists. They’re passionate, they’re insightful, they’re fearless and many of them are female. They use their position to make a difference, to go beyond the headlines and to tell stories that matter. They report from the frontlines of Iraq and Afghanistan, they report from devastating natural disasters and they report on the untold stories, the stories you remember long after the screen has faded to black. Many of these stories highlight the pain and suffering experienced by women around the world.

Not everyone is as lucky as us. As media and as women, it is our responsibility to tell these stories to make a difference. We must continue to highlight women’s issues in the Asia Pacific region, we must continue to fight for change and empower women world-wide.



Name: HON. Loren Legarda

Position: Senator, Republic of the Philippines

Country of Origin: Philippines

Biography:

BA, University of the Philippines, cum laude; Master's in National Security, National Defense College of the Philippines. Three-term senator. Chair: Senate committees on Environment and Natural Resources, Climate Change, and Cultural Communities. Founder, Luntiang Pilipinas, an urban greening movement. Author of landmark laws on environmental protection, disaster risk management, climate change. Global Leader for Tomorrow, World Economic Forum (2000); Global 500 Roll of Honor, UNEP; Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

I wish to greet the organizers of WAW! Tokyo 2014 - World Assembly for Women in Tokyo for undertaking this initiative to advance women empowerment.

It is a privilege to be part of this conference to be able to share my country's achievements and challenges in promoting women empowerment, especially in the area of disaster risk reduction and management.

The Philippines is a nation vulnerable to natural hazards and the effects of climate change and women, regardless of nationality, are more vulnerable to disasters than men. We are working double time to overcome these vulnerabilities. Women at the grassroots are already embracing disaster risk reduction as their cause and have been silently and effectively at the frontline of disaster prevention and climate adaptation efforts. Their efforts to keep their families safe and make their communities resilient contribute to building a safer Earth.

Despite being at greater risk during disasters, women can harness their strengths. Their naturally caring nature makes us able environmental leaders and powerful agents of climate resilience. It is time to usher a new phase where women are no longer portrayed as victims but heroes.



Name: Ms. Sheila Lirio Marcelo, MBA

Position: Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Care.Com, Inc. She founded Care.com

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Ms. Sheila Lirio Marcelo is Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Care.Com, Inc. She founded Care.com in 2006 and today, the company is the largest online care destination in the world, with more than 10.7 million members across 16 countries. She graduated magna cum laude from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in Economics and received her M.B.A. and J.D. degrees with Honors and the Dean's Award from Harvard University.

Sheila Lirio Marcelo's inspiration to found Care.com stemmed from both her personal and professional experiences. A mother sandwiched at an early age between care for two small children and ailing parents, Sheila knew her challenge to find quality care solutions was not unique to her family. Passionate about mission-driven businesses and her career firmly rooted in technology, she knew that was the answer. Founded in 2006, Care.com, a publicly traded company on the NYSE, currently serves more than 11.8 million members in 16 countries.

Japan's Womenomics agenda aims to increase women's employment by 8.2 million, thereby increasing women's labor participation rate to the level of men and adding up to 15% to Japan's GDP. The success of this agenda relies on women's access to child and elder care options, as well as daycare facilities. Care.com is engaged in conversations with the Japanese government to help address Japan's child and eldercare needs, working together with the people and leaders of Japan to help meet its goal of creating a society in which 'all women shine.' For when women and families have access to reliable care for their loved ones, communities, economies and societies thrive.



Name: Mr. Kevin McCann AM

Position: Chairman of Macquarie Group Limited

Country of Origin: Australia

Biography:

Kevin is Chairman of Macquarie Group Limited and Macquarie Bank Limited (a global Investment Bank) and Fellow of the Senate of the University of Sydney, Kevin is Co-Vice Chair of the New Colombo Plan Reference Group and a member the Australian Treasury Advisory Council (ATAC) established by the Australian Government, and a Member of the Senior Business Leaders Forum. Kevin practiced as a commercial lawyer as a partner of Allens Arthur Robinson (and its predecessor firm Allen Allen & Hemsley) from 1970 to 2004 and was Chairman of Partners from 1995 to 2004. Kevin has a Bachelor of Arts and Law (Honours) from Sydney University and a Master of Law from Harvard University.

My commitment to the advancement of women in leadership roles in business and government springs from two principles. One is social, in that I wish to be part of a society in which women are not discriminated against because of their gender. A society which is inclusive, is richer, than one which is not. My second principle is based on economic considerations. Developed societies have invested in the education of women, but the combination of social customs, structural impediments and bias, both conscious and unconscious, has held back their progress to leadership roles. In an era of low global growth and productivity, this is a waste of talent which no society can afford. For Developed Countries, which have a rapidly ageing population, combined with declining workforce participation, there is an economic imperative for greater participation by women in the workplace and leadership. My long experience as a Director of major Australian listed companies, has convinced me that we achieve better decision making, when we have diversity around the Board table, and especially in gender. Fact based data establishes that gender diversity provides better corporate outcomes whether they are measured in terms of financial returns, creativity or innovation. I am attending the Symposium as a member of Male Champions of Change in Australia, a group of senior business leaders and senior public servants, committed to advancing gender equality in Corporations and Government. I expect that at the Symposium, the delegates will bring their various experiences to our sessions, and out of our discussions, develop proposals for Japanese leaders to implement, which will provide women with opportunities both in the workforce and in leadership roles.



Name: Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Position: Executive Director of UN Women

Country of Origin: South Africa

Biography:

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was appointed United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women in August 2013. As a former South African Government Minister and Deputy President, she oversaw programmes to combat poverty and share the benefits of economic growth, with a particular focus on women. Actively involved in civil society and the struggle to end apartheid, she is a longtime champion of social justice, women's rights, and gender equality.

Welcome to WAW! This Symposium can be a game-changer for gender equality and women's empowerment; connecting activists, leaders, and experts, and setting the stage for a world in which women are free to participate fully and equally in all spheres of life, as envisaged in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

20 years on, as governments, civil society and the international community review progress made and challenges remaining, it is fitting that Tokyo hosts this gathering. Japan's commitment to dedicate more than \$3 billion over three years to gender equality and women's empowerment globally, and to support UN Women, is commendable. Domestically, the Government's goal - for 30% of leading positions in all spheres of life to be held by women by 2020 – is a significant step forward.

The fundamental premise for UN Women's creation, and a key lesson of the Millennium Development Goals, is that we cannot achieve sustainable development without gender equality and women's empowerment. Looking to the post-2015 agenda, whether it is in governance, education, the economy, peace and security, health, or environmental sustainability, we must tear down barriers to the rights of women and girls so that they can achieve their potential.

Let's get to work!



Name: Mrs. Zia Mody

Position: Founder and senior partner of AZB & Partners

Country of Origin: India

Biography:

Born on July 19, 1956, Zia Mody, founder and senior partner of AZB & Partners, is one of India's foremost corporate attorneys. She has a B.A. (Law) from Cambridge, an LLM from Harvard, and is a member of the New York State Bar. She began her career as a corporate associate at Baker & McKenzie, New York, before moving to India to set up practice, establishing the Chambers of Zia Mody, which became AZB & Partners in 2004.

In today's world, the equality of women is imperative. It is only with their active involvement in entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, representation on the Board of Directors that the society will progress. Their growing influence is bound to have a deep positive impact on the enrichment of society and therefore on the development of mankind as a whole. Man and woman are like two wings of a Dove. If any wing is unequal, the Dove cannot fly.



Name: Professor Dr. Nwe Nwe Oo

Position: Director General, Department of Health Planning, Ministry of Health

Country of Origin: Myanmar

Biography:

1988 Medical Officer, Women and Children Hospital, South Oklapa, Yangon; 1997 Township Health Officer, Divisional Health Department, Mandalay; 1999 Demonstrator, Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Medicine, Mandalay; 2004 Post graduate Lecturer, University of Community Health, Magway; 2005 Professor, University of Medicine, Mandalay; 2007 Professor and Head of Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Medicine, Magway; 2012 Rector, University of Nursing, Yangon, Director of WHOCC for Nursing and Midwifery Development; 2014 Director General, Department of Health Planning, Ministry of Health, and Co-secretary of the National Health Committee

In this new world, Universal Development is in pivotal role and human resources development is in a part of it. Enablers of human resources development include those individuals and organizations whose active intervention can catalyze the human resources development process.

Among these individuals, we, the women, who are not because of human being itself, whose love and care could change this new world. Women have the ability to see opportunity and give their ideas life and inspire others to do the same. Additionally, Women are Natural Givers and socially conscious leaders that serve to cultivate innovation and initiative for both themselves and others.

Given the unprecedented economic, environmental, and social challenges we face, we need to be drawing on the expertise of the best and the brightest; many of them are women whom possess lots of potentials.

I believe this event will be a great opportunity to get new ideas and exchange views based on different experiences of participants and send out message on women empowerment to the world to make women shine in our society.



Name: Mr. Mikael Palmquist

Position: President & CEO of IKEA Asia pacific

Country of Origin: Sweden

Biography:

After obtaining MSc in Business Administration at Göteborg University, Mikael Palmquist joined IKEA Sweden in 1998. After four years in Sweden, he moved to China, where he was responsible for Business Controlling and Store Operations. After three years in China, he joined IKEA Global, based in the Netherlands, as Global Retail Business Navigator. In this role he was board member of IKEA Japan K.K. along with other country boards for four years. Mikael then worked as Deputy Country Manager in IKEA France, and since January 2011 President & CEO of IKEA Japan K.K. Then move to IKEA Asia pacific to work as the Retail president of Asia pacific region since January 2014.

Togetherness is a central value of IKEA culture and diversity and inclusion emphasize the importance of our culture and value which is the foundation of our vision "To create a better everyday life for the many people."

Inclusion of diverse co-workers enables us to gain a competitive advantage, attract competent co-workers, increase co-workers' contribution and broaden our customer base. We believe peoples' different backgrounds and perspectives as an asset and encourage co-workers to be themselves and apply their uniqueness at work.

We are committed to create an inclusive organization to grow our future together.



Name: Dr. Vanda Guiomar Pignato

Position: Secretary for Social Inclusion, El Salvador

Country of Origin: El Salvador, Brazil

Biography:

Vanda Pignato, Brazilian by birth and naturalized Salvadoran, is a lawyer who has dedicated her career to human rights through international relations. In 2009, she was named as the Secretary for Social Inclusion of Presidency and was reappointed in her position by the current government on June 1, 2014. Dr. Pignato has drafted, promoted and implemented the Women's City program which is an integrated and comprehensive center for specialized services for women seeking to make a positive impact across all of the variables that determine wellbeing for women.

The World Assembly for Woman in Tokyo is a great opportunity to exchange knowledge and ideas on a vital issue: it is urgent to advance in women's empowerment to exercise more leadership in all of social, economic and political areas.

If women have more access to education and participate in economic and political areas, we are able to get more development and wealth. A country which invests in their women is a country which invests in its progress.

I congratulate this initiative which contributes to foster women's leadership for strengthening the democracy and total respect to human rights.

It is our generation and the next ones to come, who must move in this direction and support women to reach a fairer life for our daughters, for daughters of our daughters and for all people in the world.



Name : Ms. Noni Sri Ayati Purnomo, B.Eng., MBA

Position : President Director PT. Pusaka Citra Djokosoetono, Blue Bird Group Holding

Country of Origin : Indonesia

Biography :

Noni Sri Ayati Purnomo recently took the challenge to be the President Director/CEO of Blue Bird Group Holding to manage the whole group business portfolio. Besides managing the Blue Bird Group Holding, she is also the President of Blue Bird Peduli (Blue Bird Care – a philanthropy division of Blue Bird Group) which recently launched the 'Women Empowerment Project' that empowered the wife of Blue Bird Group Drivers and Employees, with a potential member of more than 30,000 women.

I would like to extend my gratitude to The Prime Minister of Japan HE Shinzo Abe as well as the Japanese Government to initiate and host the 'World Assembly for Women' symposium." The symposium would have a significant impact for the improvement of women wellbeing and hence better economy and education. I am very proud to be part of this symposium and hope to be able to learn from each other.



Name : Dato' Rohana Rozhan

Position : Executive Director and CEO, Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad

Country of Origin : Malaysia

Biography :

Dato' Rohana Rozhan is a pioneer member of Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad, one of Malaysia's and South East Asia's leading media group. She has held various positions since joining in 1995. She was the group chief financial officer of Astro All Asia Networks Limited and was appointed as the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the company in 2006. Rohana holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Economics from University of Kent, Canterbury, UK. She began her career in the Unilever Group in London. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, UK and a Member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants. She has also completed the Advanced Management Programme at Harvard Business School, USA.

Each and everyday, women have to make choices. My wish is for all women to fundamentally believe that it is within their reach to have it all. If they believe this, only then will they fight for their right to reach out for their dreams. There are no short cuts, there are no concessions made, and there are no entitlements. It is a marathon where oftentimes, women have to sprint. It is an everyday choice, to turn up, and to be a present and contributing member of the team. We have to be at least as smart, as fast, as tough, as brave as the next person in the room.

Women will face many cross roads, many choices to make, and it most certainly will always be a balancing act, where the feeling of guilt of not being the perfect superwoman is ever present. If women decide to reach out and go for it anyway, they will start breaking down all the barriers, real, imagined, or self imposed. For those around us we ask for support of our right to dream and to choose. And hopefully one day soon, all daughters would have the same opportunities as sons.



Name: Ambassador Catherine M. Russell

Position: United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Cathy Russell currently serves as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's issues. Prior to assuming this position in August 2013, she served as Deputy Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden. During her tenure at the White House, she coordinated the development of the Administration's strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence globally. She previously served as a Senior Advisor to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on international women's issues. During the Clinton Administration, Russell served as Associate Deputy Attorney General. She received a B.A. in Philosophy from Boston College and J.D. from George Washington University

I am so proud to take part in the transformative WAW! Symposium. Women are critical to every issue we face—from strengthening economies, promoting democracy and good governance, to addressing security challenges like terrorism and weak rule of law. Including women in peace negotiations and security efforts helps prevent conflicts and leads to more durable peace agreements. Increasing women's economic empowerment boosts economies, and providing access to a safe, quality education for adolescent girls provides the foundation to become healthy, successful women. Gender equality is critical to our shared goals of prosperity, stability, and peace, and women and girls should have every opportunity to unleash their full potential. Simply put, countries that invest in women and girls are more stable, secure, and prosperous. And it is clear, as Secretary of State John Kerry has said, that, "no country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind."



Name: Dr. Sima Samar

Position: Chairperson, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)

Country of Origin: Afghanistan

Biography:

A renowned advocate of human and women's rights, Dr. Samar was appointed as the inaugural chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in June 2002. Prior to her appointment as the chair of AIHRC, she was elected as the vice chair of the Emergency Loya Jirga and also served as the Deputy Chair and Minister of Women's Affairs in the post-Taliban Interim Administration of Afghanistan (IAA). She also served as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan between 2005 and 2009. Dr. Samar has participated in many international forums on human rights, democracy and transitional justice and received several prestigious awards.

Despite the great efforts made for advancement of human rights and particularly for betterment of women's rights since WW-II, we are still witnessing gross violation of human rights in many parts of the globe which are mainly left without accountability and justice. The suffering of refugees and displaced persons, and in particular of women and children, is multilayer and intertwined. Untold stories of sexual abuses, rape (under different names), disappearance, domestic violence, honor killing, kidnapping of young girls and human trafficking are still happening in countries suffering from civil strife and conflict. Women in conflict situation have less power particularly in male dominated societies, and war itself is mainly a male business.

The evidence makes strong case for the role of organized and empowered women (as game changer) in their communities in the fight against violence and injustice. Unless women are heard and involve in every part of decision making these problems will not be solved and humanity will not be saved.



Name: Ms. Mari Skare

Position: NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security

Country of Origin: Norway

Biography:

After joining the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1991, Ms. Mari Skare has extensive experience. Prior to her nomination as Special Representative, she served as Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative at the Norwegian Delegation to NATO. She also served as Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul and previously as counsellor and legal adviser at the Norwegian Mission to the UN. Throughout her career she has worked with issues relating to women and security, particular through her positions as Minister Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy in Kabul and the Norwegian Delegation to NATO. She holds a master degree in law from the University of Oslo.

Women's and girl's security needs and interests are often overlooked in conflict and post-conflict situations. Due to their social roles and status, a conflict may affect men and women differently. Already existing inequalities may be exasperated and women and girls therefore harder hit by the conflict than men. It would be a mistake not to analyze a conflict also from a gender perspective and plan accordingly. It is, however, critical that women are seen as actors not victims; they represent an under-utilized resource. If our intellect, abilities, competences and experiences are not included in prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, we miss out opportunities to resolve the challenges we face. We cannot afford to exclude women. This is not simply a question of what benefits women, but of what benefits the whole society - men and women, boys and girls.



Name: Dr. Sheila A. Smith

Position: Senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Dr. Sheila A. Smith, an expert on Japanese politics and foreign policy, is senior fellow for Japan studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Dr. Smith is currently completing a project on Japan's Political Transition and the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and has started a project on Japan's New Strategic Challenge, the subject of her next book. In fall 2014, she will launch a new project on Northeast Asian Nationalisms and Alliance Management.

Hillary Clinton pointed out decades ago that women's rights are human rights, and since then we have learned that societies thrive when women are given full access to economic and political rights. Yet for so many women around the globe, access to the basic human needs of food and shelter, to protections against violence and to education is denied. Even in societies such as the United States and Japan, many women struggle to claim the protections that our societies offer. As we think about the future of women, we must continue to focus on this discrepancy and advocate for those who do not have the opportunity to raise their own voices.

Education, I believe, is the critical fulcrum for the advancement of women. My own career and life was in large part transformed through access to education, and as an educator I have seen the transformative impact that new ideas can have on the lives of young women. Whether aspiring to build a new business, or to pursue public service, or to advocate for the needs of others, a woman needs access to the skills and confidence that comes with access to knowledge. As we seek to develop an agenda for women in Asia and around the globe, we must begin with giving them access to the ideas and knowledge that will allow them to shape their worlds.



Name: Dr. Mireya Solís

Position: Philip Knight Chair in Japan Studies and Senior Fellow,
Brookings Center for East Asia Policy Studies

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Mireya Solís is the Philip Knight Chair in Japan Studies and senior fellow at the Brookings Center for East Asia Policy Studies. An expert in Japan's foreign economic policies, Solís earned a Ph.D. in government and an M.A. in East Asian studies from Harvard University, and a B.A. in international relations from El Colegio de México. Her main research interests include Japanese politics, political economy and foreign policy; international and comparative political economy; international relations; and government-business relations.

Every female professional trying to break the glass ceiling, every working mother trying to navigate the myriad choices that go into nurturing a family and building a successful career can relate to the aspirations, dreams, and challenges that Japanese women face at this critical juncture. For all of us, both inside and outside Japan, change comes when society recognizes that curtailing a woman's creative and productive potential amounts to much more than an individual loss; it undermines economic dynamism, it foregoes the creative opportunities of a more diverse workplace. And for each one of us striving for work-life balance, comes the added responsibilities of managing multiple professional and personal demands on our time, of seeking out every chance at professional development, and of gaining confidence about the value of the contributions we make. Japan's campaign to create a society where women can shine is a universal quest; Japan's success in this endeavor will be a widely shared success.



Name: Ms. Deborah M. Soon

Position: Senior Vice President, Strategy & Marketing, Catalyst

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Deborah M. Soon is responsible for Catalyst's business strategy and planning, market assessment, and overall marketing operations. She leads strategic initiatives, including Corporate Board Services and Inclusive Leadership Initiative. Prior to working at Catalyst, Ms. Soon was a consultant at Spencer Stuart, a leading global executive search firm. Previously, she was the CEO of Larscom, a telecommunications company she took public in 1996 and subsequently led as a public entity.

Catalyst, the leading international, non-profit research organization expanding opportunities for women and business, believes that women are a rich, untapped resource in the global economy. We strongly agree with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's position that women are crucial to Japan's economic growth. The economic empowerment of women can improve a country's growth and stability, combat the shrinking labor force, and contribute the diverse perspectives necessary for any business seeking innovation. Catalyst's research, and that of many others, shows that when women are included in the workforce, companies benefit in four key ways: (1) improving financial performance; (2) leveraging all available talent and not just 50% of the potential workforce population; (3) reflecting the marketplace; and (4) increasing innovation and team performance. In fact, companies with more women in senior leadership roles, on average, financially outperform those with fewer.

Far too often, and in far too many parts of the world, women are sidelined in business, government, and society at large. At Catalyst, we know that the best solutions to the obstacles women face at work vary by country and region; awareness of and respect for cultural differences and regional nuances are essential. We commend Prime Minister Abe for taking a bold stance by asserting the critical need for women in the workplace and recognizing that when companies benefit, so do families, communities, and the country of Japan. We are honored and proud to be a part of the "World Assembly for Women" symposium, celebrating Japan and its extraordinary commitment to progress while acknowledging that we still have a great deal of work to do together.



Name: Ms. Anne Sweeney

Position: Co-Chair, Disney Media Networks, and President, Disney/ABC Television Group

Place of Birth: United States

Biography:

Anne Sweeney is co-chair, Disney Media Networks, and president, Disney/ABC Television Group. In this role Ms. Sweeney oversees ABC Studios, the ABC Owned Television Stations Group, and the ABC Television Network. She also oversees Disney Channels Worldwide, a portfolio of 107 kid-driven, family-inclusive entertainment channels. Additionally, Ms. Sweeney's responsibilities include cable network ABC Family and the company's equity interest in A+E Networks and Hulu. She has been named one of the "50 Most Powerful Women in Business" by Fortune and one of "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women" by Forbes. She has been honored with many awards.

All around the world, courageous and talented women are writing new chapters in the story of how they are helping to create more prosperous societies.

In the United States, women-owned firms employ nearly 8 million people, and generate \$1.4 trillion in revenues – a number that would give them the 13th largest GDP in the world if they were a country.

And a McKinsey study estimates that without the 38 million more women added to the U.S. workforce between 1970 and 2009, the U.S. economy would be 25% smaller than it is today.

These statistics highlight the impact women have not only on business, but on economies overall. When communities help women succeed, countries thrive.

I salute Prime Minister Abe and the First Lady for launching this campaign to write a new chapter for Japan, one in which women shine brighter than ever before.



Name: Ms. Carmen Vela Olmo

Position: State Secretary for Research, Development and Innovation

Country of Origin: Spain

Biography:

Carmen Vela is the Spanish State Secretary for Research, Development and Innovation since January 2012. Before her election, she was CEO at INGENASA, a biotechnology company based in Madrid and devoted to Animal Health. She is a biochemist with more than 30 years experience in Immunology, Virology and related fields. She was member, of the Advisory Group of PEOPLE, the External Advisory Committee of EUREKA and President of the Spanish Society for Biotechnology.

In many parts of the world, including Europe, Latin America, and many countries in Asia, women are 60% of university graduates. Women graduate with excellent qualifications, better than those of their male counterparts. But this highly educated female workforce does not find equal recognition in scientific and technological occupations in neither the public or private sectors. According to the EC, women are only 20% of full professors in Europe, and below 30% in the US; their participation in positions of responsibility in the private sector is even lower. We are not having the best scientists without women.

Excellent science requires equal recognition of the talent of all. The scarce participation of women is a waste of talent that our economies cannot afford. The data show that advancement is very slow. Because time alone does not improve the situation, active policy measures are required to ensure all talent available is fully recognized independent of gender for the benefit of society.



Name: Ambassador Melanne Verveer

Position: Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security

Country of Origin: United States

Biography:

Ambassador Verveer is the Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. She most recently served as the first U.S. Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, coordinating foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic and social advancement of women. From 2000-2008, she served as the Chair and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, and during the Clinton Administration, she served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady.

While creating "A Society in which Women Shine" is Japan's goal, women's empowerment and equality is also an imperative for all nations. It remains a simple fact that no country can get ahead if it leaves half of its population – its women -- behind. When women participate fully in the lives of their societies, and when they lead and thrive, all of society benefits. Advancing women's progress is fundamentally the right thing to do.

One the biggest challenges we face the world over is how to grow economies and create jobs. President Abe is to be commended for his leadership in pressing for an enhanced role for women in Japan's economy. He knows that women are key to Japan's growth strategy. As the World Bank has noted "gender equality is smart economics. Women's participation in the economy grows economies, raises the standard of living, and creates inclusive prosperity. Women, however, confront barriers in the workplace and as entrepreneurs --- barriers which must be addressed, whether discrimination in laws, practices, or customs, if "womenomics" is to be realized.

I believe we are at an inflection point. Investing in women is a high yield investment with enormous dividends for the kind of world we all want to see. When we close the gender gap and enable all women to "shine", we will unleash one of the most positive, powerful forces for shaping our countries and creating a better world.