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UN celebrates birth of powerful new agency for women and girls



24 February 2011 – Luminaries from the worlds of politics, entertainment, business, the media, music and film are joining the United Nations today as it [celebrates](#) the birth of a powerful new agency giving voice to women and girls worldwide.

UN Women – formally known as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – was established in July 2010 by the General Assembly, merging four previous UN bodies dealing with women’s issues.

“With the birth of UN Women, we welcome a powerful new agent for progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment,” says [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon.

“The challenges are great, but I believe that with the new energy, the new momentum and the new authority that UN Women brings, these challenges will be met. True gender equality should be our shared legacy in the 21st century.”

UN Women will be working with an annual budget of at least \$500 million – double the combined resources of the four agencies it comprises, namely the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW).

It is headed by former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, who called the launch of UN Women the first of many important milestones in the global pursuit of gender equality.

“Think of how much more we can do once women are fully empowered as active agents of change and progress within their societies,” says Ms. Bachelet, who serves as Executive Director. “Historically, we are at a point of great potential and change for women. Now we must seize that opportunity.”

Among the priorities Ms. Bachelet has laid out for the new agency is ending violence against women, ensuring their full participation in conflict resolution and enhancing their economic empowerment.

The event in the General Assembly Hall featured Mr. Ban, Ms. Bachelet, Assembly President Joseph Deiss, and other dignitaries, as well as special guests from the fields of music and film.

Mr. Ban [told](#) those gathered that the birth of UN Women could not be better timed, as this year marks the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day. “We have come a long way in a century. But we still have far to go. UN Women takes us an important step in the right direction.”

The creation of UN Women, noted Mr. Deiss, is an expression of the growing realization that the world’s most complex problems cannot be addressed without the wisdom and full participation of women.

“Complex challenges like conflicts, global warming, migration, pandemics or financial crises will only be solved through true global partnership where men and women both have a voice,” he stated.

“In uniting to establish UN Women, Member States acknowledged that the United Nations is uniquely placed to take a leading role in advancing the status of women,” he added. “They signaled their willingness to advance the gender equality agenda and, to that end, to tap into the expertise that UN Women will provide.”

The launch of UN Women is taking place during the 55th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women.

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