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UN chief urges men to champion the cause for gender equality



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today challenged men to champion the cause for the empowerment of women, saying they remained “second-class citizens”, often subjected to violence in many societies, despite the important gains made in improving their participation in social, economic and political affairs.

“I believe that unless you change mentality and behaviour of men, it will be very difficult to change this situation,” said Mr. Ban in an address to the Global Summit of Women in Istanbul, Turkey, where he was honoured with the Women's Leadership Award in recognition of his efforts to promote gender equality.

He noted that he was the first man to receive the award in its 21-year history.

“So, beginning from me as the first man to receive this, I sincerely hope that there will be many more men who will receive this award,” said the Secretary-General, recalling that he had in 2009 launched the Network of Men Leaders to combat the scourge of gender-based violence.

The Network brings together current and former politicians, activists, religious and community figures – including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho – to combat the global pandemic.

He said the UN has, during his tenure as Secretary-General, focused on health care, especially through a global strategy for women's and children's health to save at least 16 million lives by 2015, recognizing that access to health care remains inadequate or unavailable even though it is critical for building stable, peaceful and productive societies.

On the empowerment of women within the UN system, Mr. Ban told the summit that the number of women in senior management positions had risen by 40 per cent over the past four years.

“I am working hard to break down barriers for the advancement of women by tearing down this glass ceiling at the United Nations,” he said.

On the latest developments in North Africa and the Middle East, the Secretary-General told the summit that he has been urging leaders there to listen to the voices of women and the youth when they engage in dialogue with those calling for political reform.

“I never failed to mention women in the Arab world because I know that women in the Arab World must be emancipated, and they must be given equal rights. Women who have fought for gender equality know that the battle does not end there. The battle does not end until there is no discrimination, against any human being, on any grounds. The battle does not end until all people can enjoy a life of dignity,” said Mr. Ban.

“I am counting on you, women leaders from around the world and from all walks of life, to work with me to realize this goal. I am asking world leaders, and I am asking business leaders, and I am asking women leaders to work together to achieve that goal where everybody, men and women, without any fear of violence, without any fear of discrimination can work in harmony and in dignity as human beings,” he added.

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