



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and  
newswire products from



## Ban: leadership of young women crucial to advance development worldwide



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks at the Seoul National University Global Health Center in the Republic of Korea. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

13 August 2012 –

The empowerment of young women is key for advancing development around the world, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said today, adding that it is a priority for the United Nations to encourage their active participation in society.

“The lack of women’s representation – of women’s empowerment – affects individual women’s rights – and it holds back whole countries,” Mr. Ban [told](#) participants at the first World Congress of Global Partnership for Young Women and Second Global Partnership Forum in Seoul, Republic of Korea (ROK).

From farming to leading Governments and troops, women have repeatedly shown that they can excel in many areas and make positive contributions to their countries, Mr. Ban said. However, he noted that they still do not enjoy the same benefits as men, and called on Governments to support their advancement.

“Although there has been important progress, women still do not have a strong enough voice in decision-making. Women make up just a fraction of all chief executives of the world’s biggest companies. Fewer than one in ten presidents or prime ministers are women, and less than one in five parliamentarians are women,” Mr. Ban said.

“Women do more work for less pay than men. Women produce up to 80 per cent of all food in sub-Saharan Africa, but their households are poorer, so they spend more of their income on food,” he added.

The UN chief emphasized the need to encourage initiatives that advance women’s rights, including the promotion of education, reducing maternal mortality, and combating domestic violence and rape.

“Gender discrimination blocks progress. Equality makes it possible to achieve huge breakthroughs,” Mr. Ban said. “We are moving on all fronts to invest in women so they can reach their full potential, drive development and lead us to a better future.”

In addition, the Secretary-General underlined that the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) would not be accomplished without addressing women’s needs and rights, and noted that this would also be the case when looking to the post-2015 development agenda.

“Reaching the MDGs and advancing to the next stage will only be possible when we unleash the power of women,” he said.

Mr. Ban arrived in ROK over the weekend, and has since met with various Government officials – including the Prime Minister, Kim Hwang-sik; the Foreign Minister, Kim Sung-hwan; and the Minister of Unification, Yu Woo-ik – with whom he has discussed a range of topics, from the Oceans Compact initiative, which he launched on Sunday, to the situation in Syria and the Korean Peninsula.

Tomorrow, Mr. Ban’s activities in Seoul include meeting the Speaker of the Korean Parliament, as well as members of the UN Global Compact, a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, anti-corruption and the environment.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Rio+20: Sustainable development needs women’s empowerment, UN official says](#)

