



WFM-C BACKGROUNDER

*Key Events in the Struggle for
Equality: From Universal Suffrage to
CEDAW & Resolution 1325*

MEDIA ADVISORY for immediate release

MARCH 8, 2011 - on the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day:

A New UN Super Agency for Women

The official launch of "UN Women" took place in New York this February 24 in an uncharacteristically decorated United Nations General Assembly Hall with attendees that included diplomats, activists, royalty, Hollywood celebrities, rock stars and philanthropists. Among the guests were Her Royal Highness Princess Cristina of Spain, actors Geena Davis and Nicole Kidman, and media mogul Ted Turner.

UN Women – known formally as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – was established by the General Assembly in July last year, with the merger of four former UN agencies and offices: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW).

Former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, a longtime champion of gender equality and women's rights, has been appointed as the first executive director of UN Women and has been given the rank of under-secretary general. This provides access among the small group of agency heads advising UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Corey Levine, WFM – Canada Gender Policy Advisor is cautiously optimistic. "Michelle Bachelet has given the initiative important credibility and presence at the UN," says Levine.

UN Women is projected to have a budget of at least \$500 million, which would be twice the combined resources of the four merging agencies. But much of that funding is yet to be pledged, as the agency is to be funded through a combination of assessed and voluntary contributions. Canada has pledged \$10 million toward the 2011 budget for the agency, a fairly generous contribution compared to the \$1.2 million contribution to the former UNIFEM.

The new agency will run programs to end violence against women, to create opportunities for women to earn an income, and to encourage women's increased political participation.

According to Levine, "In the long run, success for UN Women will depend on whether the agency is seen to have credibility with other UN bodies, member governments and other international organizations beyond commitments on paper. And as anyone who has worked in a bureaucracy knows, inter-agency coordination and coherence can prove difficult."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Ms. Levine is WFM – Canada Gender Policy Advisor. She has held numerous posts with a variety of UN agencies and is a former Gender Advisor for UNAMA, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, reporting to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Afghanistan.

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