



**Celebrating Women Leaders
April 20, 2012
Washington, DC**

**Michelle Bachelet
Executive Director, UN Women**

Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and Worldwide

Patricia Ellis: Well hello everyone, I'm Patricia Ellis, President of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women's leadership and women's voices on pressing international issues of the day. I'm so pleased to welcome you all here today for our Celebrating Women Leaders luncheon on "Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and Around the World" with Michelle Bachelet, executive director of UN Women, and what a great turnout—what a tribute to our speaker. [Applause.] We're particularly honored to host and celebrate such an outstanding woman leader, who also served as Chile's first female president, for her accomplishments and commitments to advancing women's economic empowerment and political participation and leadership. We were honored to have her speak to the WFPG last year, just about a year ago at the UN, and we're thrilled to have her back because we have a chance to hear about UN Women one year later, and to hear about their initiatives in the Middle East, what kind of progress is being made, and the challenges that remain. It's also a special honor for me and a few other people in this room to host Michelle Bachelet. We were very privileged to be part of the delegation of American women who attended her inauguration in 2006. I can only say it was historic, it was moving, it was inspiring to see her inaugurated. And also when she then announced that 50% of her cabinet—announced and introduced that 50% of her cabinet were women. [Applause.] And they held very, very significant ministries—defense, economics, mining. So after the inauguration, she spoke to our delegation and she said, "I know what is on my shoulders, but I know that if women can show we can do things, that it will be good for all women in the world." So what a role model—let's give her a round of applause, amazing. [Applause.]

I am thrilled that you could all join us today and show your support for the Women's Foreign Policy Group as we celebrate our 17th year of promoting women's leadership and voices in international affairs. It's truly exciting to be here with such an accomplished group of women, and who really demonstrate the breadth of our WFPG family, and also our male colleagues who support us, of course. I'd like to begin by recognizing WFPG board members here with us today, so—Dawn Calabia, Isabel Jasinowski, Gail Leftwich Kitch, and Diana Negroponte. [Applause.] I especially want to thank WFPG associate director Kimberly Kahnhauser, who coordinated the event. Is Kim in the room? If not, please come in—okay—and all of our interns and volunteers who have made this possible. These are our future leaders, so let's give them a round of applause. [Applause.] I also want to thank our Host Steering Committee, and would like to ask them to stand. Thank you so much for your role in making this event such a success. Did anyone stand? Well, thank you anyway. [Applause.] I also want to thank our sponsors, and just stand when you hear your name and we'll applaud at the end. Our patron, the United Nations Foundation—someone from there want to stand? Our sponsor, NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Our supporters, Host Hotels & Resorts, Johnson & Johnson, and Nestlé USA. And our special friends, American University Washington College of Law, The Coca-Cola Company, IREX, Procter & Gamble, Stephenie Foster, and Donna McClarty. I'd also like to recognize the numerous ambassadors here with us today and on the event's Honorary Committee. As we are the Women's Foreign Policy Group, I would like to ask the women ambassadors to stand first. [Applause.] And of course, their male colleagues and other diplomats please stand. And so that includes senior State Department officials. This year has started off extremely well—we had a wonderful event hosted

by the Ambassador of Finland, and events on pressing issues such as Egypt, Burma, and Iran, and we also held our annual mentoring fairs in New York and DC, which a number of you participated in, so many thanks for that. We really appreciate it. We were also privileged to end 2011 with a dinner with Senator Dianne Feinstein and wonderful events hosted by the ambassadors of Turkey, Brazil, and France at their embassy. They were really wonderful—I know we have representatives of some of these embassies here. So coming up we have a very exciting spring. Jane Harman will speak about “US Policy towards Syria and Iran.” We will be having our annual Celebration of Women Diplomats, hosted by our friend Ambassador Fritsche of Liechtenstein, and then an Author Series event with board member Diana NegroPonte on her new book on El Salvador, so all wonderful activities. And a week from Monday, we’re hosting a luncheon on the “Impact and Value of Investing in Female Entrepreneurs” with Dina Powell, who heads the Goldman Sachs *10,000 Women* campaign, so we hope you can all join us for that. And I just want to thank our supporters here, and those who know us well keep coming out for our events, and we really appreciate it. For those joining us for the first time, we hope you’ll be coming back again, and very soon.

So we need everybody’s participation and support here to continue our international affairs programs, which expand the dialogue on pressing issues and really highlight the voices and the contributions of women leaders. We also want to continue and expand our mentoring activities to encourage the next generation—it’s something that’s very near and dear to our hearts, something we care so much about. And we want to ensure that women’s voices are heard on all the issues that all of us here care so deeply about. So if you’re not a member, we hope you will become one. Fill out the form and leave it before you leave. Lastly, I want to remind everyone—we have cards on the table, index cards, and you can fill out questions for the speaker and our volunteers will collect them during lunch. They’ll be passed on to Judy Woodruff for the Q&A, and that way we can get to as many questions as possible. Just keep the questions brief and include your name and affiliation.

So thank you once again for joining us. We are so pleased that we can honor Michelle Bachelet. We really appreciate her coming to Washington to be with us today. I now invite you to enjoy your lunch, and we will be back shortly to begin the program. [*Applause.*]

[*Interlude.*]

Ms. Ellis: I hope that you all enjoyed your lunch, and now the exciting part begins. We have a great program in store for you, and so it is now my pleasure to introduce today’s moderator, an outstanding, award-winning journalist, Judy Woodruff. She’s co-anchor and senior correspondent for the PBS NewsHour, and I am happy to say she is a friend and former colleague. We are so pleased to have Judy back, particularly given her schedule, and thank her so much for joining us—Judy. [*Applause.*]

Judy Woodruff: Thank you Pat, I am just delighted to be here. I want to first of all say what a thrill it is for me to be in this room of amazing and accomplished women, and I see some men—we’re delighted to have all of you. I’m going to add a word of welcome to what Pat said earlier. I have to say, as somebody who covers politics for much of my professional life, I just want to point out that yes, we’re in the middle of an election year, women have already become the subject of a lot of attention, some of you may have noticed. And so much so that both parties are vying for the votes of women, and in my view it’s about time that women were getting as much attention as they are. [*Applause.*] So, I think it’s a good thing. The only other thing I’ll add right now before I get on with introducing our remarkable speaker today is to say that when I see a room of accomplished women like this, it reminds me of what the Canadian writer Charlotte Whitton said. This has been a couple years ago, and she said, “Women, in order to be thought half as talented as men, have to be twice as good.” And then she added, “Luckily this is not difficult.” [*Laughter.*] With apologies to our men guests.

I just want to say a word, to pay tribute to Pat Ellis, my good friend. [*Applause.*] To pay tribute to the wonderful work, Pat, that you’ve done in creating the Women’s Foreign Policy Group. Pat and I were colleagues at the NewsHour, and I’ve just been thrilled, as I know all of you have been, to see the

remarkable things she's done in launching this organization and seeing it grow to what it is today. It is my great pleasure to introduce the person you've all come to hear—the first undersecretary and executive director of UN Women, and you'll be meeting her in just a moment. She was formerly, as I think everyone knows, the president of Chile. She was appointed to her current position, the head of UN Women, by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, she took office in September of 2010 with a mandate to lead, support, and coordinate the work on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional, and local levels. As head of UN Women, she has focused on women's economic empowerment and political participation and leadership. Since becoming the executive director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet has traveled to dozens of countries, she has visited the Middle East several times to support women's full participation in the transition there. She visited Cairo—we've just been talking about it—three times over the last year, sharing her experiences of course from Chile, her home country, meeting with women there, with youth activists. In January, she participated in a conference in Beirut on democratic transition, followed by a visit to Morocco in March for International Women's Day, and called on women's full and equal participation in politics, in the economy, across the region. She met with officials from government, from civil society. She then traveled to Libya to support women's political participation in the upcoming elections there, and the drafting of a new constitution. This year, she's also visited Brazil, Paraguay, she just returned from Brussels this week, where she spoke about women and sustainable energy, and signed an agreement between UN Women and the Council of Europe to advance gender equality.

Before joining UN Women, she of course—before becoming president of Chile, she was a trained pediatrician and epidemiologist, with then an extraordinary career in politics. Serving as minister of health, as Latin America, and then, as we said, as Chile's first female minister of defense, where she introduced gender policies to improve the conditions of women in the military and in the police. And then of course went on to be elected president of Chile, serving from 2006 to 2010, the first woman to do so. Given her busy travel schedule, we are extremely fortunate to catch Michelle Bachelet in the United States and to have her here in Washington. Please join me in giving a warm welcome to our guest speaker, Michelle Bachelet. [*Applause.*]

Michelle Bachelet: Thank you, Judy, for those very kind words. Good afternoon. I am really pleased to join you again this year, and now here in Washington, DC, and I would like to thank specifically Patricia Ellis, for inviting me and bringing all of us together. Thank you Patricia, and thank you every one for coming today, and special thanks to Judy Woodruff.

Last year when I addressed the Women's Foreign Policy Group in New York, I spoke about the role of UN Women in empowering women worldwide. Today, now that UN Women is more than one year old, as I said—we are just walking, but we need to start running. I would like to give you an update on two priorities, but of course in the moment of questions and answer, we can speak of any issue which you prefer. And why I am talking about these two priorities is because we are placing particular emphasis on these this year. And it is also because if you look at the Millennium Development Goal number three—that is, empowering women—these two areas are the ones where we have the biggest gaps in terms of women's progress, and we're talking about women's economic empowerment and women's political participation, or I would say political empowerment too. Within this context, I will also speak about my recent visits to the Middle East, the changes that are happening over there, and how women are faring in the transition. But I would like to start by providing you with a snapshot of women's political participation, and this is so important for so many reasons. I don't know if I need to convince you that women are important in politics. If you need more arguments, you can ask me at the end. [*Laughter.*] But I will name probably just two.

First of all, when women participate in politics and the economy, it reinforces women's civil, political and economic rights—of course cultural, all kinds of rights. Second, women's participation strengthens democracy, the economy, and sustainability. So what I mean to say, on one hand it is the right thing to do—but it's not only the right thing to do, it's also that having parity and equality make for a healthier society.

Last month, during the UN Commission on the Status of Women, that every year at the UN analyzes progress of the women of the world in one specific area—this year was about rural women, and their livelihoods and their conditions—but during that, there was a lot of side of events and sessions. UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we launched a 2012 global map of women in politics. The map shows that progress remains very slow and very uneven, and needs to be accelerated to achieve equality.

If we think that the United Nations has 194 member states after South Sudan is part of the UN, only 18 have women heads of state or heads of government. We lost two the last time because Tarja Halonen, she is no more the president of Finland, and we had a prime minister in Mali that, after the coup of course, has changed. But we did increase in one—that is, the new president of Malawi, Joyce Banda. So this is a change in the situation, but if we think of 194 member states, we're talking about less than 10%. It's true that in 2005, there were only eight countries with women leaders, but still, it's better than fewer. Only 17% of ministers are women, up from 14% if we compare to 2005. And only 19.5% of legislators are women, a mere half-point increase from two years ago. So that's why I say, these are statistics that are not to celebrate. They are very worrisome statistics at this time in history, and really impossible to justify. If we look at the total percentages, we see that the Nordics have the highest percentage of women ministers at 48%, followed by the Americas—I mean the whole region of the Americas—at 21%, and Sub-Saharan Africa at 20%. In Europe, the percentage of women ministers is 15%. In the Pacific, 11—but probably very driven by Australia and New Zealand—followed by Asia at 10%, and the Arab States remain the lowest at only 7%.

The number of countries with more than 30% female parliamentarians—and you probably remember that this was one of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, because it is known that without 30%, it's very difficult to really mainstream gender issues into the national legislature or the national policies. But going back, if we think on the numbers, if we compare 2010 to today, we had in 2010 26 countries that could show more than 30% or more of female representation in parliament. Now it's gone up to 30 countries. And this is a very important indicator, because attaining 30% of women in parliament as I said is a target of the Beijing Platform for Action. So this is something we need to keep pushing for, and we need to keep pushing because we know it's not easy to have access to decision-making positions in parliament, in governments, or in the economic arena.

And we know also that there are some issues that do work, there are some measures that do work, and I mean what we call temporary special measures, such as quotas. But not only quotas, and I mentioned some others. Because they make possible that women's participation in politics accelerates. And let me share with you that during 2011, elections were held in 59 countries. Of those 59, 17 had legislative quotas, and in those, women gained 27% of parliamentary seats. And if you compare it to the rest of the countries where there were no quotas, we could only get 16% of female representatives. So, special transitional measures do work to support the possibility of women having access to parliament, or to councils, or to whatever way you include the quota or any other special transitional measures.

We also know that when there are more women in parliament—because somebody could ask, “Okay but why is it, why do you need more women in power? Does it make any difference?” And I always remember that Eleanor Roosevelt—can you believe Eleanor Roosevelt was talking about women's participation? And somebody said to her, “You know, we have women there but they haven't made any difference in politics.” And then she told him, “And do you ask why men haven't made any difference either?” [*Laughter.*] So, the thing is that—but then she added, like the story Judy told us, “Okay they know we're good, so they expect much more from us.” Well, the truth is that we know when more women are in decision-making positions in politics—let's say parliament, because this has been measured and surveys have been done in the IPU [Inter-Parliamentary Union]—what I mean to say is that when women and men lead together, decisions better reflect and respond to the diverse needs of society. We see that when you have more women in municipalities, for example, there's a lot more advance on social policies—housing policies, water, sanitation, health, and so on. Because I was in

Brussels at this sustainable energy for all initiative, and it was interesting to me when I was preparing that speech to find that when you have more women in parliament, there was more tendency to approve environmental treaties for example, or environmental policy—so women do care a lot about the environment too. So wherever I go, I call for more women parliamentarians, presidents and prime ministers. I encourage countries to use quotas to expand women's participation. And it's so important because I am so convinced that democracy is not only about voting. Democracy is also about the right of being elected. And it's also about the right to deliver good for everyone, and to include the diversity of a society. So I do believe that democracy is stronger with the full and equal participation of women.

And this is especially relevant to countries in conflict, but also countries during transitions. Let me go then to the transitions in the Arab world—from Tunisia to Egypt to Libya to Yemen, where calls for justice, freedom, and dignity echoed throughout the Middle East and North Africa. And we saw women at the forefront of these movements, leading protests, marches, and social media campaigns to change the status quo. And women should be at the forefront now in meaningful political participation so they can also be part of the reshaping, or charting, the future of their countries. Yet if I may say, over the course of the year it has become clear that women will face significant challenges ahead in seeking equal participation in the political arena.

Judy already mentioned I have visited several times in the region—three times Egypt, the first in March, just immediately after the revolution, and then in June and November, and also in Tunisia I went last year, now Libya and Morocco, and Beirut. And in all those visits, of course I had meetings with the government authorities, but also with women's groups, and different kinds of people belonging to a civil society. We have a clear mandate to support women's rights, women's empowerment, and also promote women's participation. And while the Arab uprisings and transitions have created the opportunity for greater gender equality, they also render the previous gains by women in the region vulnerable. Because there is constitutional redrafting taking place in several countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. And we have to stay focused on women's participation in political processes so that women's rights, all the rights—economic, cultural, social, civic, and political rights—are protected and advanced, and enshrined in the new constitutions.

Furthermore, the transition in the short term has not been inclusive to women in decision-making bodies, as evidence we have seen in the processes—and also in the election and also in the composition of transitional councils, of all kinds of transitional governing bodies. If we examine the situation of women's political participation and representation, we see that although there were some encouraging developments—such as Tunisia adopting a law securing parity on candidate lists, and also through the introduction of quotas for women parliamentarians in Morocco, which resulted in a 6 percentage point increase in women legislators last year, in the case of Tunisia they elected 26% of women—the so-called Arab Spring has yet to deliver for women in politics. Indeed by the end of 2011, women represented only 10.7% of parliamentarians all over the Arab States—more or less the same proportion as that in 2010, and despite the promising start to the year, the Arab region remains the only one in the world without any parliament that includes at least 30% women.

In Libya, the adopted Election Law stipulates that the General National Congress—that is, the constituent assembly—will be composed of 200 members elected freely and directly, and they divided it into two kinds of candidates. 80 candidates from lists—party lists or entities, because there aren't many parties—and 120 elected directly as independent. Of those 80 [candidates], they will require parity on those party lists for 80 of these seats. And the other 120 it does not include, because they are individuals. In Egypt, however, the new law on the Exercise of Political Rights amended—oh, and the election in Libya is in June, so we will have to wait to see the results. But, I have to tell you the truth, I'm not particularly extraordinarily optimistic, but we are working there, supporting women who want to be candidates so they can have more leadership skills and so on.

In Egypt, the new law on the Exercise of Political Rights amended the previous quota for women, which used to allocate 64 seats—that was 12%—in the parliament to women. The amended law required

each political party to include one woman on their candidate list, but did not require women to be placed in “winnable” slots. So this January, after all the three processes of elections in parliament, the results in Egypt saw a dramatic drop from 12% to only 2% of women. That means 9 women elected out of 508 members.

Needless to say, these developments are less than satisfactory, given that temporary special measures have been a key strategy for including women in countries emerging from conflict. And let me tell you, that if we saw, if they told us that we have 30 countries in the world that have more than 30% of women, a third of those parliaments with more than 30% of women have been states in democratic transition. So democratic transitions, or post-conflict countries, have been in some places in the world a positive moment so women could gain better positions. So this period of transition is critical for women and for those seeking democracy.

But probably I have to say, something that I’ve been asking myself—because in many places it was not a cultural revolution. It was a revolution due to the need and the demand for freedom, yes, for freedom of speech, for freedom of press, freedom of association, and a demand for social justice, because there was a lot of poverty, lack of jobs, young people very well educated and so on. But it was not, if I may say on the hard work of many of those people in Tahrir Square, to believe that democracy had to do with women’s rights. And I have seen that in many other places also, not only in the Arab world—where democracy that is not looked at as a process of inclusion, of diversity, of delivering for everyone, and so on. So women’s rights advocates are calling for genuine transformation that ensures the equal rights of all citizens, and provides women and men with equal opportunity and participation.

Another key factor is economic empowerment, because there is high youth unemployment and a low level of women’s participation in the labor market in the region. The percentage of women in the labor force in Arab States is 26%, half the global rate that is 52%. And overall it is clear that having the world’s lowest representation of women in politics and in the labor force hurts both Arab women and also current and future prospects for the region. Because I am so convinced, I think again I will go back to the Nordic experience. When you talk to the Nordic—I mean at least three of the five Nordic countries have men as the minister of gender equality. And when you talk to them, well it’s coherent, isn’t it, it’s completely coherent. You usually only see women in those places, so it was very interesting to talk to them. And they start to say, “Look, if we are rich now, if people come here, we started talking about gender equality.” And the typical answer is, “No you are rich, that’s why you can do it. We are poor countries, we cannot do it.” And our answer immediately is they said, “We are rich because in the minute we were underdeveloped, we understood that the key factor was to include all our potential—women and men. So we are rich because we did what you have to do in the beginning, and not on the contrary.” So I think that’s a very interesting experience. [Applause.] It’s not only as I say, what I mean to say, I think having women everywhere in decision-making is the right thing to do, but it’s also the smart thing to do. It’s also smart economics, as The World Bank usually says.

But let me share with you few words about Afghanistan. As I wrote recently on last Sunday in the *International Herald Tribune*, the once remarkable gains in protecting and promoting equality between women and men are now facing their most serious challenges as the world redefines its role in Afghanistan. For over 10 years, Afghan women have fought to ensure their rights and important gains they have made—they have made a lot of important gains—namely, a constitution that enshrines equality between men and women, a parliament in which women—through a quota law—in which women hold 28% of the seats, the implementation of the country’s first law on ending violence against women, and the establishment of shelters and services for women and girls recovering from violence. We also see that girls are back in school—constituting 2.4 million of the more than 7 million children in primary and secondary education. The Women’s Affairs Ministry and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission have been strengthened. That Afghanistan has taken so many steps in so short a time, it’s really highly notable—and a sign of hope for a stable, just, and democratic country.

But as the peace and reconciliation process evolves, as the International Security Assistance Forces draws down, and as more and more parties are encouraged to come to the negotiating table, Afghan women are seeing that the pace of change as regard to women's issues has not only slowed down but in some ways has gone into reverse. Early warning indicators are there, but not yet being heard. Violence against women and girls—in the form of physical and emotional abuse, but also in all the forced marriages, honor crimes, and so on—remains at almost pandemic levels. Impunity of the perpetrators of violence is almost absolute. I have to say though, that in the more than 125 countries of the world that do have laws against—very important laws against violence against women, the laws are okay, they are alright, but the implementation is very bad. It's not only the situation that I am presenting right now. And usually it is because of sometimes lack of political will, but many times lack of human or financial capacity.

But women also who run away from forced marriages continue to be jailed. Women are often pressured to withdraw complaints and opt for mediation by elders, even in cases of serious crimes of violence, leaving them without any protection or justice. And one other concern is that religious leaders recently released a statement justifying certain types of domestic violence, proposing limitations on women's education, employment opportunities, that women should go to the street with a man by their side, and calling for the wearing of the hijab. The single most important recourse we have to mitigate these risks is to ensure that women are engaged, that their voices are heard and their perspectives are taken into account in the peace and reconciliation process. Women struggled to be heard at the international conference—the last one last year, at the end of last year on Afghanistan in December in Bonn, and they tried to be heard in the discussions of Afghanistan's High Peace Council. They will strive to make their mark at the NATO summit meeting on security next month in Chicago, as well as at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in July.

I have to tell you, we worked very hard, we supported very hard—unfortunately the government included women in the delegation but also a lot of women from NGOs could go to Bonn, and we were very happy about that. But when we see the outcome document, there's not a word—not a word—about women's issues and women, and any commitment on how to progress and maintain the gains but also continue progressing. So I think sometimes we need the international community to be more aware of that too. The government of Afghanistan and the international community must listen to Afghan women, and not allow their gains to be given up in any peace process. And I am very thankful to Secretary Clinton—she has been raising her voice, always calling on this issue, and really raising this issue. Women have suffered immeasurably during the last 35 years of war—and it is unacceptable that they should now pay the highest price for any peace deal. Women cannot accept peace at any price, nor should the international community. All over the world, women's full and equal participation in the political and economic arena is fundamental to democracy and justice, which people on the other hand are demanding. Equal rights and opportunity underpin healthy economies and societies. So we need to keep working on many fronts. This is what we are doing at UN Women together with partners in government, civil society, and the private sector, and with people like you.

We are now gearing up for Rio+20—the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. We know that no development can be sustainable without the full and equal participation of women. And we are not talking about full and equal participation—I am not talking about what usually happens in some very interesting document that women and children are like the brackets—you know, like a shopping list of a thousand things, and always the declaration ends with “and women and children.” No. We need to understand that they have to be integrated in the whole strategy of how you deal with sustainable development. [*Applause.*] It's very difficult to get there, so applaud me when I achieve it. [*Laughter.*]

On the eve of the Rio Summit, we will be convening, together with Brazil, a summit of women leaders to make our demands heard. We are also looking forward to next year's Commission on the Status of Women, which is focused on ending violence against women. So all over the world, women have shown time and again that no matter the difficulties, no matter the obstacles, no matter that we have to be twice as good—because we all can tell those stories that Judy was mentioning—women rise to the

occasion. I see this wherever I go and it only motivates me to do more, and to build stronger partnerships and stronger alliances, so that's why I'm so happy to be here with you today. I thank you for your support and of course I am looking forward to our discussions. Thank you. [Applause.]

Ms. Woodruff: President Bachelet, thank you very much for that uplifting and provocative set of comments you've made. I have so many questions that I came with and we've gotten some wonderful questions from the audience, and as you can see I am having a hard time figuring out how what to juggle here and which ones to start with. But I want to ask you about the Middle East to begin with. Many of these countries you talked about in the Arab world and more broadly, Muslim countries, where the religion, Islam, is a powerful force. What argument do you make to the leaders of these countries, or the religious leaders, to get women more involved, because for some of them it's an article of faith in their religion, in their faith and in their culture—what do you say to them that sometimes contradicts what they believe?

Ms. Bachelet: Well, I have to start saying to you that you need to have and think, what's the kind of argument that could produce a shift not only in Muslim countries, you have to produce a shift in countries where the religion is Catholic, in all kinds of countries. Gender equality is not a priority for the majority of people who are making the decisions in governments, in parliaments. And some people could have cultural reasons, and in some other people in some other countries there are social norms. In some other countries, it could be the religion used as an excuse, if I may say, because we have the experience, and we work with presidents, with prime ministers, with parliaments, and we try to build a very strong case on why it's so important to, if I may use that word, invest in women. And when I am talking of investing, I am talking of developing the best social, economic, cultural, political, civic policy that will really permit women to play the role they need, they deserve in society. I truly believe and approach this issue from the position of human rights, but I need to go also with very strong evidence why it's a win-win situation if he or they make those kind of decisions, and of course, depending on the country, the kind of information and evidence you can show. But I have to tell you that on the contrary, we also have very good experience in some Muslim countries, working not only with governments, parliaments, but also with religious leaders. I can mention two different experiences—Kyrgyzstan, for example. We worked there with religious leaders to discuss a very sensitive issue for some countries—that is, women's land rights. And through the work we did together, they became convinced that if they study the religious texts, there was nothing there that really, really, really could sustain the idea that women do not deserve to have land rights. So they were supporting, and there was a law that was passed, and now women are able to have land rights. There are some issues that are more difficult—inheritance, for example, nationality of the mother, nationality of the children—but as I would say, we tried to build a very strong case, not an abstract global case, not only—because very abstract people would tell you, “Yeah, you're right, thank you very much, goodbye.” They would say the politically correct thing, but it won't make any difference. So we have tried to fight. But I have to tell you I have had some results and some not.

I had a very particular experience, not in the Arab world, but in some other part of the world, where I spoke to the president who I knew very well from before, and every time I would speak about women he was asking me, “Okay, but what did you do in health?” And I did this and this as president, and he was writing, “Very interesting, I'll do that. And what did you do in education?” Okay, write that out. And I would insist on women, women, women, and finally after 45 minutes—and he was not a Muslim, I have to tell you—he said, “Don't worry, Michelle, I love women.” [Laughter.]

Ms. Woodruff: So let us guess who it was. [Laughter.]

Ms. Bachelet: He really loved them but not in the way I wanted him to love them. [Applause.]

So it's not religion only. It could be some interpretation of some religious text, but in others you can see different interpretations in many places. And we have, as I told you, good experiences—the other one was in Ethiopia and Mauritania, where we work on FGM, female genital mutilation, working with the

religious leaders, and also on early forced marriage. Where does it say in the Koran that girls can be damaged and receive so many terrible burdens? And they were so convinced, they had been championing on that. And also some of these religious leaders, when they got—somebody brings a girl to get married and now they are asking for the birth certification, so because in those countries the law says you have to marry over 18 years old. So I think—and that’s our approach—we need to work with governments, with parliaments, but also with community leaders, with religious leaders, and try to build the best possible solution. In the case of FGM, it’s a social norm, and men want to marry women who have been circumcised. So we need to work with boys, with young men. It’s not only about women, because some mothers they don’t want to do it but they say, “I want to give them a better life, that’s why I do this.” So it’s very interesting because you need in those cases—their laws say its prohibited in all those countries, but still people in their communities are doing it because that’s the way to ensure that their daughters will have a husband, and in those places a husband is the possibility of food, of family, stability, and so on.

So one of the things, if I may say, that I have learned coming from a country where gender equality has been advancing but not is perfect, is that we need to work very deep, we have to go to the roots of some social norms and social traditions and to try to build from that. Because otherwise, if we just move on the titles, we could say the politically correct thing and we won’t have any results. So we need to work at the top and also at the bottom and building in the society real changes.

Ms. Woodruff: I didn’t mean to restrict it just to the Middle East, just to Islam, because we just saw in this country that the Catholic Church just in the last few days has spoken in a very critical way to women who are religious in the church. There’s a difference, but it’s in more religions, more cultures, more countries, and takes many forms. There’s a question here about what can the international community do to help overcome the cultural barriers keeping women out of, from advancing in the Arab world. I think that’s what you’re talking about, that you have to tailor your approach to the individual country, to the individual region and culture.

Ms. Bachelet: Yes, you have to tailor it, and if I have learned in my life, language makes a complete difference. I’m not saying not to say the right thing, I’m saying in my own experience talking to people who are more—I mean, if you want somebody to understand, you have to use the right language, the right language for that people, and that’s not different from my country, from this country or from the Arab region.

But I would like to add something else—to enable more women to be seen as women that should play a bigger role, we need to use many more role models. And that’s why I’ve been trying to work with communities, but also to convene with women leaders of the world, that they, whenever we go to a place, to show that women are capable. I know we’re capable, it’s a pity we have to demonstrate we are capable. But it is like that in many places, and so we need to try to support women, because for me, one of the problems in those countries where women are in very precarious conditions—I’m saying all over the region, all over the world—because maybe one of the regions of the world that is also with very low levels of gender equality is the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia. I mean, of course you see other regions that aren’t low, like Australia and New Zealand, but in the rest—we need to support women because the problem is invisibility of women. Women are not perceived as leaders, and we have a lot of leaders, but they are there in the community, not in the decision-making positions. So that’s why we believe, and in my own experience, Judy, if I hadn’t been minister of defense, I would have never been somebody that somebody would have thought could be president of the republic. When I was minister of health, nobody thought I could be president of the republic. *[Applause.]*

Ms. Woodruff: Why is that? I mean, why did you have to—

Ms. Bachelet: Because people—I mean, I’m not asking that every president of the world should be a female—I’m not on that so much. It would be great. *[Laughter.]* But one of the good things about women is that we can share. We can include. We can leave men also in good positions. No, but what I

mean to say is that people from some specific positions, they think it has to relate to power. If you are a health minister, you are a care-giver, and what do women do always? Care-givers. So it doesn't change any paradigms. So you need to break some paradigms so people could say, "Oh, come on, this woman was the minister of defense, there we didn't have any coup d'état, the country's running well, we're not having wars, so she's capable of dealing with the military. If she's capable of dealing with this, she'll be capable of dealing with parliament, etc." [*Laughter.*] I mean, I'm trying to elaborate a bit in this way, to say that something happens in people's minds, that suddenly they realize that women can do it. And we need to do that, because that's not happening in many places.

Ms. Woodruff: The anecdote a minute ago with the nameless leader who made the comment that he did—I mean, it raises in my mind the question—are you received and taken seriously when you meet with government leaders?

Ms. Bachelet: They are all very nice, I have to tell you. [*Laughter.*] Taken seriously? I think some. Some—I mean, they all receive me, but probably because everybody is thinking, "This woman might be president of Chile again, so we have to have a good relationship with her. You never know." [*Laughter and applause.*]

Ms. Woodruff: Which raises—you may run again?

Ms. Bachelet: No, no, no, I'm mentioning this because I think it's a capital that UN Women has to use. I see myself as being useful. But going back, because I see where you want to go and I don't want to go that way. [*Laughter.*] I just mentioned it—I think some of them don't take me seriously, and if they do it's because probably an advisor told them, "Better receive this woman, because, you know..." But they started making jokes sometimes—"No we want women to work, but not that much because who will make the food?" And then you say, "Well you can make it then, Prime Minister." And they say, "Oh no, no, we burn the food. We're not good at that."

Ms. Woodruff: They really say these things?

Ms. Bachelet: Yeah, like joking you see? But when people start joking in that kind of situation, you see that they don't take that seriously. Or because they believe maybe that you are a crazy feminist so it's like, "Okay, let's hear what this woman has to say." But on the other hand, there are a lot of people who take it very seriously, seriously, seriously. And there are some people who take you seriously, but they have an attitude—it's not their fault. I mean, some old leaders. One of them told me, "Oh, I really care about women, you know I had a mother and I had a wife." So when somebody goes that way, you also know you are not getting anywhere, because it's not about that. But I take it in a good way, because this is a job—I mean, not my job, it's a task—that really will take time. But we need to continue being persistent, because we need to change minds and we need to change culture, and that takes time. But on the other hand, the way to accelerate culture and changing mindsets is through giving women a chance, through having women in relevant places, letting them know that women are capable. Because I tell you now, that after being a minister, after being a president, I would think that in my country many things will happen. But there will never be somebody who—at least, out loud—speaking and saying, "No, women are not capable." Because they had the experience, so it opens so many hopes. Little girls know, they can even be president of the republic. So it's that mindset, that even maybe if I could have imagined campaigns, lots of arguments, debates, I wouldn't have done it. So that's why I'm so convinced that we need something very strong.

Maybe some of you heard me tell the story, ambassador of Finland, I always tell the story of Tarja Halonen, because I believe it's a fantastic story. She was the president of Finland for 9, 10 years—12. And she was like 9 years president of Finland, and she went to a kindergarten. And there were all these little children, and she asked them, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And they answered very interesting answers, typical for children—from engineer, doctor, nurses, firefighters, pilots, etc. And then she asked a little boy, "But don't you want to be president of Finland?" And he said, "No, in Finland

boys and men cannot be president of the republic.” [Laughter.] So if you would have asked me, “What is a vaccine”—because I’ve been asking myself, “Okay, we have defeated so many diseases,” and I’m a doctor, pediatrician, epidemiologist—“Could it be a vaccine to produce this change?” [Laughter.] There’s not, unfortunately, there’s no shortcut. But I mean, it’s how we can—that’s why empowering women in all these aspects is so important. Because if women are considered relevant—women are relevant, but are not as perceived and considered relevant—I would think we will accelerate much more this progress on gender equality.

Ms. Woodruff: Let me ask you about Afghanistan. There was one question about that, and I’m going to expand on it. Given what you said about what you’ve seen and what’s happening with women in Afghanistan, the direction the country is going, how worried are you that once NATO pulls out by 2014 that women will be in a particularly vulnerable position? And thus, do you think it’s a mistake for NATO to be planning to leave then?

Ms. Bachelet: Well I think that international operations can’t stay forever, and particularly when the country wants them to leave. I think in some instances you need to hand over the responsibility to the country and to all the institutions—president, parliament, and so on. I am not an expert on Afghanistan as a total mission to say it’s the time, it’s not the time—but whatever it is, there is a commitment with governments to get out of Afghanistan in 2014. So it is going to happen, it is going to happen anyway—unless something different happens, you can never say with politics—but as things go now, it’s going to happen. So the thing is, how do we ensure, through different ways—I mean, you can never ensure 100% what will happen inside a country, they have their sovereign ways of defining things. But some time ago I was asked this same question, and my answer was much more optimistic than now. I said, “Look, we have had all these advances that I mentioned during my speech, we have a parliament with 28% women, we have ministries, we have laws, we have etc., etc.” So I am convinced that it will never come to the day zero, or to day one. But on the other hand, I’ve been seeing some early warning that makes me say it’s not enough what we’re doing. We need to ensure through diplomatic, political, whatever means there are to ensure that in the process where the international forces are getting out, we need to ensure that women will be taken into consideration, their needs, and they’re not being set back. So that had to be through empowering women, through supporting women’s civil society, through ensuring that not only can women be participating and sitting in those conferences, but that the outcomes of those conferences, that at the end it’s an agreement between a country and the international community and donors, that that kind of agreement put women in the center. And not like the last conference, where there was not a word—not a single word—about it. So I think it needs everyone to be more aware. The countries who are sitting on those places, they have to ensure—or at least make all the possible things to ensure that women continue progressing.

Ms. Woodruff: You spoke in your remarks about quotas and the importance of quotas, especially I think you said as a temporary strategy, a special measure to ensure the progress of women. But there are clearly some countries where quotas are not—in the United States, for example—where quotas would not be politically acceptable. How do you know when it’s the right thing to try to impose or to try to encourage a country and when it’s not?

Ms. Bachelet: Well the first thing I should say is that it’s not only about quotas. If you need to develop a plan to accelerate women’s participation in different elected representative bodies, you need to look at the laws, because there are laws, electoral laws that facilitate, and others that produce a lot of obstacles for women. So it’s not only about a quota. First of all, the whole law—and you have to see if the whole law, the way it’s conceived, will permit more women or not. The second is, transitional special measures. And I said transitional, because the day that this is normal, you don’t need special measures. It’s like affirmative action that you have, it’s the same thing as affirmative action. I hope we will come to that day, and that day we won’t need UN Women anymore, because gender equality will be something normal. But the thing is that I—I mean you said this is politically impossible here, but what, you have 16% of female representation in parliament?

Ms. Woodruff: 17% in Congress, yes.

Ms. Bachelet: It's very low, for a country who gives so many opportunities for women, I believe. So it's clear that you will need also here a quota.

Ms. Woodruff: And where women are 52 or 53% of the vote.

Ms. Bachelet: Yes, so we are not pushing only for quotas. We're pushing for thinking on systems that would facilitate [women's progress]. In the case of Tunisia, it's very interesting—it's parity, it's not quotas. The lists need to have 50% of women and 50% of men, and they should be ultimate—because if you put all the women on the bottom, no women would be elected. So in Tunisia it was 26% because it was so much the excitement with democracy that there were 108 parties—so the possibility of women or men to be elected was very little. But of course then, 26% was very good. So I think the way is to analyze, and what we are doing, is providing electoral assistance in terms of analyzing the electoral system with electoral people from the department of political affairs, we have a lot of electoral experts that are working in many places—demand driven, of course. I mean, when they want help, we give them. And so they can, in their own parliament, discuss these different laws and analyze which way they can increase women's participation.

Ms. Woodruff: Several, many other questions—what was the best advice your mother ever gave you? The person who wrote this didn't sign, or I would give them credit for it.

Ms. Bachelet: She gave me a lot of—and she continues giving me—a lot of good advice. I know that this, maybe it sounds not very good, but I have to say—when I was young, and I was very active and reading a lot and so on, she said to me “You know what,”—when I was like 15, 14, I don't remember what age—“women can marry, but they can do also much better than that, so you can do much more in your life.” I think in my country at that time, I think marriage was like the main destiny for women. My mother was married and had a happy marriage, but she really thought that I could dream of whatever I wanted to do. Of course she did not think that I would become president of the republic, but I think that helped me, because it helped me look at life—there were so many opportunities. And she did it at the right time, when we had to make some choices too.

Ms. Woodruff: And she's still alive.

Ms. Bachelet: Oh she's still alive, she's very, how you say, a very down to earth person? I'm also a very down to earth person—I have dreams but I'm also very practical. If I would say I was president of the republic, but I always knew how much the bread cost. And I think when you know that, you understand what is going on, what is happening with the people. Because usually when you are so high, you never know those normal things and you can forget.

Ms. Woodruff: Good advice for every politician. This is—you mentioned the Ambassador of Finland, she actually submitted a question. What are the three most urgent issues you'd like to change in the world in order to enhance and improve equality among women, among people?

Ms. Bachelet: Well I believe one of the most important things is, if I may use that word, sustainable development. Because what we're talking about is how we build a more harmonic, a more equitable, and a more fair and just world. And I think that's what we have seen in the streets in the past year. Next to the crisis, but what the crisis produced, the financial crisis is sort of the ignition of all this phenomenon of feeling this 99%, that they don't like the world in which they live, it doesn't give them the opportunities. And you can have a lot of different grievances, because you could see the people in the street, but there were lots of people inside their homes not liking the world where they live. So I believe we need a better world, and we need to think on, when we are talking about sustainable development, we are talking about an economy that can be better, productive, very successful, that's no discussion, but also fairer, with fairer conditions, social conditions for everyone, and of course also

environmental, because this is our planet. I know there has been a lot of discussions with people saying, “We don’t believe in climate change,” but living here in the US, with somebody not believing? With 100 hurricanes and tornadoes a day? With—I don’t know, I do believe in climate change. And I do believe it’s our duty, and I do believe we need to give our children and grandchildren a world where they can survive.

You know, the problems that the planet has in front of us are so big. We are now 7 billion people. In 2040, we might be 9 billion people—and that means that we will need like 30% more water, 40% more food, and 45% more energy. And if we don’t think on this seriously, and I don’t see many people thinking on the change of population, and we will have longer expectancy of life, so we will have to deal with more people. And people are growing up, their relations form faster, and not in rich countries. It’s growing faster in middle-income and low-income countries. So we will have more people, we will live longer, we will have more chronic non-communicable diseases, but with less food, water, and energy. So when I’m talking about sustainable development—because if we, to get to sustainable development, women are essential. They have to be part of the solution. But on the other hand, when we’re talking about harmonic, we’ll be having women in a better situation. Women with access to energy, women with access to food, or women producing food for other women, boys, men, and girls.

So, I really believe—I mean, the challenges are so big. And if you’re thinking on population, we cannot think on all these issues without thinking that we have 216 million women and girls in the world that want to have access to contraceptives, and they don’t have access. And if you use that every minute, I see women are giving birth or due to pregnancy complication, and that the majority of girls who die are young girls, many of them with early forced married, with early forced pregnancy, that if they would have had access to family planning, if you want to use that word, we wouldn’t have—maternal mortality and infant mortality would drop dramatically. So we need to think on solutions in a more integrated way. And I know there are people who don’t like to speak about these things—but if we don’t address these things, women will continue dying, and we won’t be able to really ensure a planet for future generations in the right way. *[Applause.]*

Ms. Woodruff: Just to wrap up, I want to say in commenting on climate change, you answered the question of the ambassador of Costa Rica, who posed a question about that. And, very quickly, you raised contraception. Is this an issue that is going to come up at the Rio+20 summit?

Ms. Bachelet: Until now, I haven’t seen it, I have to say, in many documents. I don’t know what will happen in the outcome documents. It started with a serial draft document of 20 pages, then it came to 260 pages, and now they’re trying to negotiate to streamline it to 17 pages. So when you do that, a lot of things will fall down. Everybody wants to put in some specific thing. But I would say, at least it will come in the Women’s Leaders Forum that we’re going to develop on the 19th of June, and on the 21st, the Women’s Leaders Summit with presidents and heads of state for women, this will be an issue that will be discussed, and we will try to include it in all the possible outcomes.

Ms. Woodruff: Final question—you could only serve one term as president of Chile. What are the chances you are going to run again? *[Applause.]*

Ms. Bachelet: That’s the million dollar question, everybody asks me this. And I will also answer what I always answer to everyone—the reality is that I’m completely dedicated as executive director of UN Women. That’s why—it’s my gender. If you see all the problems and all the challenges that we have, it would be very bad that I had in my head something different than this main mission that I have now. So I’m dedicated to UN Women. *[Applause.]*

Ms. Woodruff: But for all those male leaders she’s going to be meeting with, she hasn’t ruled it out yet.

Ms. Ellis: It’s so hard to come up here and have to interrupt this conversation, because it’s been absolutely, absolutely wonderful. So thank you to the two of you. *[Applause.]* Just to end the program, I

just want to thank Undersecretary Bachelet so much for taking the time to come and speak to us today, what a wonderful conversation. I want to thank Judy Woodruff so much, taking time out of her very, very busy schedule—and it is really busy. And I would just like to invite Michelle Bachelet up here to the podium, and I just would like to present you with this certificate for your outstanding leadership. On behalf of the Women’s Foreign Policy Group, we just want to thank you for your outstanding leadership of UN Women, as president of Chile, perhaps as the next president of Chile. [*Laughter.*] And for your dedication and commitment to promoting the economic empowerment of women, and their political leadership and participation, so thank you so much again. [*Applause.*]

And I just want to thank all of you for coming, and for supporting us. This now ends our luncheon for today, and we look forward to seeing you soon. [*Applause.*]