

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Beryl Sten

“We already have significant visibility. Let us use it in all other international and local contacts.”

The Hawaiian saying: “The Future is guided by our Past” leads us to our commitment to support the programs of the United Nations for the advancement of women and gender equality.

Zonta International has a proud and unbroken record of partnership with the UN. In June 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was signed in San Francisco by signatories of fifty countries. Zonta International was represented at the inauguration and in 1946 the then International President Louise Grace said about the UN: “This organization is the best existing machinery for establishing conditions under which peace and social justice can prosper.”

Zonta International has over the years benefited greatly from prominent leadership in our relations to the UN – PIP Helvi Sipilä, PIP Folake Solanke, Margaret C. Snyder, former director of UNIFEM and International Honorary Member, and our latest International Honorary Member, Noeleen Heyzer, former Executive Director of UNIFEM, now Under-Secretary-General to Head the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Last but not least, Jackie Shapiro, who has served as Co-Chairman of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, and Chairman of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York in 2005-2007. Additionally she has served as First Vice Chairman of CONGO (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations). These remarkable women are just a few out of many not mentioned here who are guiding us from the past and still are for the future.

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ethics of this Declaration are of the highest importance as a standard-setting system in a global perspective. This year there is a golden opportunity for each club to honour the 60th anniversary of this Declaration by arranging a special event on the very day, December 10.

Some other cornerstones Zonta International is referring to in our objectives find their roots in many UN documents, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UNIFEM, the women’s fund in the UN, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, Beijing Platform for Action, +5 and +10, as well as some of the Millennium Development Goals.

The proposed Biennial Goals for 2008-2010 include future International Service projects together with the ZISVAW projects. The project selection process takes time, careful consideration, and respect for prior Zonta International commitments, as well as a close ear to our members’ wishes.

Since 1959 Zonta International has an unbroken record of partnership with various UN agencies concerning International Service projects. However, over the last three biennia, these projects have been quite small.

Our partners in the proposed 2008-2010 projects are all under the UN umbrella and they all meet with the goals and objectives of Zonta. Through our collected resources to the recognized UN agencies operating worldwide, Zonta International is seen as a major partner, which gives us visibility and credibility through this co-operation. The concentration of projects within the UN agencies is also necessary to protect our consultative status in the UN and we have a proud record to protect in that regard.

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Please read more about the proposed service projects on the following pages of this Program Issue of *The Zontian*.

Zonta International may be a small organization. On the other hand if a small organization like us can be such a relatively big donor we might set an example to be followed by companies, foundations and organizations. We can be a very attractive partner for those with an interest in advancing the status of women.

UNIFEM/UN Trust Fund has recently issued its annual global call for proposals. Reading this, it underlines Zonta International's impact when Joanne Sandler, UNIFEM's Deputy Director, mentions that "...UNIFEM is grateful that Johnson & Johnson and civil society donors such as Zonta International ... are strengthening their partnership."

We already have significant visibility. Let us use it in all other international and local contacts. In the UNIFEM booklet "A Life Free of Violence is Our Right," edited in connection with the 10 years of investments made by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, Zonta International is mentioned as an important donor on the inside cover. Whenever I have had the opportunity to listen to a public speech by Noeleen Heyzer or Joan Libby-Hawk, UNIFEM Public Affairs Specialist, they have praised Zonta International as an important and appreciated donor to UNIFEM.

Now and then we are hit by reports that staff working in and for UN agencies, including the peace keeping operations, are violating the code of conduct by committing rapes or other abuse of the people they are hired to help. We find such reports shocking and disgusting, and so we should by all means. Laws, policies and codes of conduct may be there, but we can never protect ourselves from individuals violating them.

Any misconduct emphasizes the important role of Zonta International to advocate for women's rights. In the context of the UN Resolution 1325, women should participate equally and fully in all efforts in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building or in post-war rebuilding as well as in planning of avoidance strategies for the future.

This we are doing by supporting projects that meet our Zonta International Objects – improving the status of women everywhere and upholding justice and human rights.



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