



**Message from Michelle Bachelet
Executive Director of UN Women**

**20th anniversary Soirée
Women's World Summit Foundation
13 October 2011**

I congratulate the Women's World Summit Foundation on your 20th anniversary as you celebrate women's creativity in rural life. I have always said that there is no limit to what women can accomplish when we set our minds to it. And the women being honored tonight are a case in point, and they are an inspiration to all of us.

All over the world, in every community, women are putting their wisdom and talent to good use. There is no shortage of creativity in rural women. And, yet despite all of the important work that women do, our contributions are often invisible in national accounts, our efforts are almost always undervalued, and the compensation that women receive for the same job is less than the amount received by men.

The good news is that individuals and groups such as yours have contributed to the remarkable advances that have been made over the past century in the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment. Even within one generation, we have witnessed a transformation in women's legal rights, which means that today, 125 countries have outlawed domestic violence, 115 guarantee equal property rights, and women's voice in decision-making is stronger than ever before.

But we still have a long way to go to achieve gender equality. And to make greater progress, last year the United Nations established UN Women and I was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General to lead the organizations as the Executive Director. Created by public demand, we have set for ourselves five strategic priorities to enable all us to make greater progress for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Our priorities are to advance women's economic empowerment; to end violence against girls and women; to make sure that women play a central role in peacemaking, peace-building and transition; to support countries to prioritize gender equality in plans, policies and budgets; and to increase women's participation and leadership.

Next year at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the focus will be on the empowerment of rural women. I am pleased to report that UN Women is leading the UN system is developing a strategy for women's economic empowerment. By removing the barriers that women face to participating fully in public life and the economy, we can enhance economic growth and make greater progress in reducing poverty, improving health and education, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals that we have established as an international community.

Again, I congratulate the Women's World Summit Foundation on the occasion of your 20th anniversary and welcome you to the ever-growing network that is UN Women.