

# Secretary-General

SG/SM/11201

WOM/1653

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## SECRETARY-GENERAL STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ATTAINMENT

### OF UNITED NATIONS GOALS, IN REMARKS TO AMERICANS FOR UNFPA GALA

Following is the text of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as prepared for delivery, at the Americans for UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund] Gala for the Health and Dignity of Women in New York, yesterday, 2 October:

I am delighted to join all of you for this opportunity to stand up for the health and dignity of women. I thank Anika Rahman and Americans for UNFPA for making it happen.

Allow me to offer my warmest congratulations to tonight's honourees. Distinguished international and American honourees, your commitment to human rights and justice for all women is an inspiration. Let me say a special word of congratulations to Mr. Ted Turner, one of the staunchest allies of the United Nations and of women around the world, on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. It is richly deserved.

The cause we celebrate tonight goes to the heart of the founding principles of the United Nations. Our Charter proclaims the equal rights of men and women.

Today, we understand, even better than our founders did, that the empowerment of women is a fundamental condition if we are to make progress towards the goals for which the United Nations was created -- peace and security, improved living standards and respect for human rights.

As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I have a personal commitment to lead this fight. Too many women die during pregnancy and childbirth because their right to sexual and reproductive health is denied. Too many women become infected with HIV because they do not have the power to protect their own health. Too many women are subjected to violence -- one of the most systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world.

That is why UNFPA's work is so important. From Syria to Sudan, I have seen at first hand how my UNFPA colleagues assist refugee women who are pregnant and far from home, how they provide services to improve maternal health, how they work tirelessly to protect women against violence. I will always remember how, on one visit to UNFPA in Damascus, the sight of a healthy and happy mother and baby from Iraq made me proud of the work we do.

This work needs to be understood. And it needs to be supported. Americans for UNFPA plays a vital role in making that happen. Please accept my gratitude for your efforts, and please keep up the fight. By supporting UNFPA, you are contributing directly to the health and dignity of women in nations all over the world.