

International Women's Day Message
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The year 2010 is a milestone year for women's rights and gender equality—marking the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Declaration and Security Council resolution 1325. Only five years are left until the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time women everywhere, but especially in developing countries, continue to face the enormous challenges of the global financial crisis, widespread food insecurity, natural and man-made disasters and climate change. Meeting those challenges, as UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2008-2009* made clear, requires greater accountability at all levels.

For this reason, we call attention to another potential milestone in 2010 — a move to establish a new UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, as strongly supported by the UN General Assembly in a September 2009 resolution. For as the Beijing +15 meeting takes stock of progress over the last 15 years, it will be clear once again that despite improved normative frameworks, implementation still needs a push forward. The forward motion on this resolution is timely, too, in the context of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, for which the target date of 2015 is the same as for achieving the MDGs. It also mirrors efforts to improve accountability for implementing Security Council resolution 1325, which recognized the key role women play in all aspects of recovery from conflict.

In recent weeks we have seen women's significant role in helping countries recover from disaster. Following the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti, women, who head nearly one-half of the country's households, have taken the lead in recovery efforts, caring for communities and neighborhoods, improvising communal meals and child care arrangements. UNIFEM staff members in Haiti witnessed women in temporary shelters trying to build a sense of security for their families, making connections and sharing what they have with their neighbors.

Two weeks ago the President of Chile, Michele Bachelet, traveled to Haiti to express solidarity with these women struggling to rebuild their lives and communities — and this week she is inspiring her own country to come back stronger from another devastating earthquake. This is the kind of leadership, from the community to the highest level that women have demonstrated in all places seeking to come back from conflict and crisis. But unlike in Chile, women are rarely part of the decision-making process on relief or resources, or on how to plan for the next time disaster strikes.

Human security and humanitarian assistance, like human development requires greater numbers of women at all decision-making tables. Surely the world owes this to women in Haiti, as much as to those of Chile.