



WOMEN'S FORUM REPORT
YEAR 1

Creation: Editions Gallimard
Editorial adviser: Sophie Sneessens

Editor in chief: Heidi Ellison

Reporters: Anne-Sarah Conway-Vimier,
Cyril Escaravage, Valérie Klemenz,
Jean-Albert Mauger, Marjorie Barrios,
Carol Caruso, Céline Freni-Perrot,
Claudia Wehner-Näff

Graphic design: Romain Quenisset

Proofreading: Elizabeth Ayre

This book contains summaries of the sessions held during the first Women's Forum for the Economy and Society, held in Deauville, France, 13-15 October 2005, along with photographs, biographies of and interviews with many of the participants.

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EDITORIAL

Aude Zieseniss de Thuin, Founder and President of the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society

The first edition of the Women's Forum, heralding hope and new energy.

A synthesis of the discussions, conclusions and questions covered at the first edition of the Women's Forum, this work encapsulates the quality and intensity of the debates during the event.

It is no easy task to describe an atmosphere, but we hope that this book will bring to life the tone of this first edition - different, warm, and strong-willed - which carried a hopeful and humanitarian message and the mark of emotional intelligence. We have attempted to transcribe the true pleasure that the 580 participants had in being together, but also to share their collective need for action in order to imagine a different kind of future.

The 2005 edition was a challenge. We want the 2006 edition (October 5-7 in Deauville) to be even more pragmatic, interactive, international and with a higher degree of solidarity. The international Board, which today is made up of 14 members (Germany, Argentina, Benelux, Brazil, China, Colombia, USA, France, Japan, Morocco, Mexico, Peru, Slovenia), will play a pivotal role.

For the Forum not to remain just a series of wishes, concrete action has been taken. The Institute, an indispensable follow-up to the three days of debates and a permanent structure, will create a link between each edition while the association Force Femmes will work to help women 45 and over find their way back to the professional sphere.

The year 2006 will be one of consolidation and overture, carried by the message of hope that embodied the first edition.

Based on its values of humanism and innovation, ESSEC has naturally committed itself in favor of managerial diversity, for two reasons: the search for greater equity and for economic common sense. Within the ESSEC

A STATEMENT FROM THE ESSEC & MANNHEIM EXECUTIVE MBA WEEKEND CLASS OF 2006

& Mannheim Executive MBA, we have undertaken reflection on the participation of women in executive programmes and, more broadly, on the access by women to positions in higher management, which are still too often limited to men. Because the expression of women's viewpoints, ideas and solutions can and must contribute to ways of improving both firms and society itself, the ESSEC & Mannheim Executive MBA has supported the first edition of the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society and put to good use the skills of its participants to ensure the success of this first event.

For its class project, the Executive MBA class of 2006 decided to join Aude Zieseniss de Thuin in the adventure of launching the first-ever Women's Forum for the Economy and Society.

This project had many virtues for us: not only did it involve using skills in a number of fields, ranging from marketing to logistics, but it also made us feel that we were in on a groundbreaking new event. We were primarily attracted, however, by the idea that change can only take place when men and women work together. We were enthusiastic from the start, feeling that we had hit on a gold mine of new ideas for becoming better managers and promoting diversity in our companies. Using women's visions as the basis for discussion is highly innovative, and there is good reason to think that such a forum will have a far-reaching influence.





This project has involved intensive teamwork in an international atmosphere, providing us with an update on globalisation and encouraging us to rise above preconceived ideas about gender.

We would like to thank those who helped make this book possible: Carol Caruso, Céline Freni-Perrot, Claudia Wehner Näff, Marjorie Barrios and our guide in this adventure, our editor in chief, Heidi Ellison, as well as Sophie Sneessens of Gallimard. We are also grateful for project support from the staff of the ESSEC & Mannheim programme, especially Viviane de Beaufort and, from the ESSEC Group, Béatrice de Luget. And a heartfelt thanks to the WEF COS team and Aude Zieseniss de Thuin for their generosity in sharing this experience with us.



With the first edition of the Women's Forum behind us, we hope that this book will provide a good roadmap for where we need to go from here. In 30 or 40 years' time, when we have reached gender balance at the CEO level, this book might be a historic document. In the meantime, it will serve as a reminder of a trend-setting event.



The publication of the book may mark the end of the EMBA class of 2006's official involvement, but in reality it is just a beginning. ■

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

The programme of the Women's Forum in Deauville focused on "*building the future with women's vision*", an idea that inspires the daily actions of the people behind these three days of dialogue. The quality of the conferences matched the renown of the participants, and the topics discussed included almost all the major (sometimes very serious) questions that societies, individuals and companies ask themselves about the present and the future. These difficult subjects are no more feminine than masculine, but women have shown that they have important things to say about a great variety of situations, expectations, struggles and ideas.

In this context, it seems to me that the Forum illustrated the importance of listening, which is based on respect for the other and is the condition for consensus and dialogue, and the basis for social connections. What women want first and foremost are: an audience for their words, consideration for themselves as women and as individuals (in the context of a solid tradition of sexist derision, which only the naïve would say has disappeared from our society) and finally freedom, which is a *sine qua non* for all the rest and does not exist everywhere, in law or in fact. Access to education is not guaran-

“When women claim rights for themselves, they defend the cause of humanity as a whole

teed either, and without it, the strongest beliefs can lose their strength and effectiveness.

Finally, women are legitimately asking for equality – a right which is far from being a given, whether we are talking about daily life, work or politics, even if it is proclaimed, even if we can note with satisfaction the success of the "*first women*" – the new chancellor in Germany and president in Liberia – and even if the original content of this Forum and the actions undertaken by the participants confirm that they are men's equals, and often much more. Is it true, as many say, that women are stronger than men when it comes to qualities like intelligence, intuition, a clear view of reality, imagination, determination and diplomacy?

When women call for liberty, equality, respect, consideration and education for themselves, they are also defending the cause of humanity as a whole. These are rights that should be universal, including the right to diversity and therefore to femininity, which I won't try to define, but also to diversity amongst women themselves in terms of personality, actions and thinking. All this explains the outstanding interest of the Women's Forum, which every woman and man can appreciate by reading this report. ■



*Building the future with
women's vision*

Jean-Paul Bailly
Chairman of Groupe La Poste



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THURSD



WOMEN'S FORUM REPORT
YEAR 1

AY 13 OCTOBER

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9:00 A.M.

WELCOME ADDRESS

Aude Zieseniss de Thuin

WOMEN'S TIME IS NOW !

|| *The time has come for women to take on their full role as participants in the affairs of the world at all levels,"* said Aude Zieseniss de Thuin, Founder and President of the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society in her welcome address at the Forum's first annual session.

In explaining why she had founded this new Forum that brings together movers and shakers from all over the world, she said, *"It's time for women to think about how to exercise their responsibility, a responsibility that generations of women have dreamed of."*

She wondered whether the outcome of such recent catastrophes as the earthquake in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the flooding of New Orleans and the tsunami in Asia would have been different if half of the decision-making had been done by women.

For Zieseniss de Thuin, the goal of the Women's Forum is to gain a *"better understanding of what is happening in the world and to help to generate the willpower and energy necessary to implement a more fruitful gender balance in our society."*

To this end, the Forum has gathered 90 *"creative, imaginative and action-oriented people"* –speakers

and participants from over 40 countries– in a private, independent, non-partisan setting where they can make new contacts and exchange ideas.

"We live in a dangerous world, and the stakes are high" she said, adding that women are rightly ambitious and need to get practical answers to such vital questions as:

- How can women impact the future of globalization especially in the areas of health, environment and education?
- What role should women take in restoring values and trust in our societies?
- How can women contribute their vision in the realms of business, politics and society?

Those are just a few of the many topics that were scheduled for discussion in the Forum's 11 plenary sessions, 14 workshops and more intimate *Discovery Moments*.

In officially declaring the Forum open, Zieseniss de Thuin called for *"deep thought and sound action"* on the part of all women and noted that the Forum was to open and close with discussions of the connection between the economy and society, because that is *"precisely the domain in which we, women, can be the most effective in the near future."* ■

9:10^{A.M.}

OPENING PLENARY - RECONNECTING POLITICS WITH THE PEOPLE

Elisabeth Guigou, Françoise de Panafieu, Laurence Parisot, Catherine Vautrin

CAN WOMEN SAVE THE POLITICAL SYSTEM?

Voter disenchantment in Western countries was a major topic of discussion at the opening day plenary session entitled "*Reconnecting Politics with the People*". The distinguished panel included Elisabeth Guigou, former French Minister of Justice and currently deputy for Seine-Saint-Denis; Françoise de Panafieu, French Member of Parliament and Mayor of Paris's 17th district; Laurence Parisot, President of MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises de France) and Chief Executive Officer of IFOP; and Catherine Vautrin, French Minister in charge of Social Cohesion and Parity.

The consensus was that people in Western countries are increasingly disillusioned with politics. The population is increasingly sceptical, both politicians and trade unions are losing ground on the popularity front, and political legitimacy is in crisis. The panellists were asked what contribution women could make to a political system that seems poorly adapted to responding to economic and social issues.

The elections of Angela Merkel as

German Chancellor and Laurence Parisot as the first female president of MEDEF offered a "*breath of fresh air*", said Vautrin, who noted that Europeans do not recognize themselves in the current political landscape. The results of a recent poll taken by the French newspaper *Le Parisien*, in which 89% of respondents said they wanted more women in politics (the rate is currently 13% in the French Parliament), came up several times during the session.

The lack of direct contact with the people was identified as one cause of this disenchantment, and more women in the mix was seen as one way of helping to close the gap.

Guigou noted that politicians no longer project a unifying vision to people who are looking for consistency, sincerity and courage.

The lack of trust was also seen as linked to a sense of weariness that comes from always seeing the same political faces. Panafieu believes that new female faces would

“Europeans do not recognize themselves in the current political landscape

definitely help diversify the political landscape. She mentioned that although women represent a majority of Paris's population, only three of the mayors of its 20 districts are women, raising a laugh when she added, *"A female mayor of Paris would solve that problem"*.

In defence of the political world, Parisot pointed out that politics must not be confused with politicians, while Vautrin noted that change takes time – even a good law is useless until it is implemented. She sees the role of government as not to be responsible for changing everything but for doing the groundwork through legislation and letting other organizations and companies act. To support women's professional advancement, for example, the government could encourage companies to provide day-care centres by offering them tax breaks rather than creating state-owned centres.

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89% of French people
want more women
in elected positions

In the French political context, recent sexist remarks by prominent politicians on the possibility of Ségolène Royal running for president did not go unnoticed. Guigou was scathing in her reaction to comments on the subject by Laurent Fabius, Jack Lang and Henri Emmanuelli (all of whom she mentioned by name), who are members of her own (Socialist) party: *"This outburst of machismo is totally unacceptable, inadmissible"* she said. *"We must be constantly on the outlook for backsliding like this."*

Parisot had the last word on the matter: *"Their reaction was so strong that I don't think it was just a case of machismo. Could it be that they fear the competition?"* ■



Elisabeth Guigou, Françoise de Panafieu, Catherine Vautrin, Aude Zieseniss de Thuin

11:00 A.M.

PLENARY BRAINSTORMING - WHAT ARE THE TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE OUR LIVES OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS?*Claude Smadja, Tracy Corrigan*

TEN YEARS DOWN THE LINE

The plenary session room was full to capacity for this brainstorming session, which incited lively, in-depth discussions at every table. The topic was *"What are the trends that will shape our lives over the next ten years?"*.

Claude Smadja, president of Smadja & Associates Strategic Advisory, and Tracy Corrigan, joint news editor of the Financial Times newspaper, set the stage by suggesting topics for discussion by each table: the world energy crisis and the need to secure energy sources; the economic and political effects of China's rapid growth; health, longevity and the pension crisis in European countries; and the impact of new technologies.

The participants showed no signs of wanting to stop, but once the 30-minute discussion time was up, each table reported its findings, revealing some strongly felt concerns about the future. Here is a brief roundup of them:

China and India seemed to be on everyone's mind. Some partici-

pants wondered how developments in the two emerging powerhouses will affect jobs, industry and global politics, while many non-European participants, particularly those from other emerging markets, see the growth of China and India as a "benediction", because it will give other "emerging societies" easier, more affordable access to the medicine and technology they need.

Values and ethics: A number of tables expressed concerns about increasing disconnectedness on the individual and societal levels. As individuals, our values are constantly being redefined by work/life balance issues. Many participants felt that technological advances are closing the gap between life and work, with increased stress as we become available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and travel more and more.

Some noted that as a global society, we live in an increasingly violent climate exacerbated by a lack of education and a lack of communication between societies and cultures, the

“China and India
seemed to be
on everyone's mind



Tracy Corrigan,
Claude Smadja

threat of nuclear proliferation, fear of terrorism, the growth of fundamentalism, as well as fear of the growing power of emerging countries like China and India. One participant commented that many people are afraid of "cultural fusion".

Work: "We are living longer yet working less", said one participant. Concern was voiced about how this will affect pension systems. Someone else noted that women's lives would change as working part-time and having flexible working hours become a more acceptable part of the working world.

Longevity and social issues: Nervous laughter greeted this observation: "What will our lives be like if marriages aren't lasting more than 10 years and we are living until 120? Does that mean we will live to have 10 marriages?"

Health: This general concern was discussed from a number of different angles. In addition to our

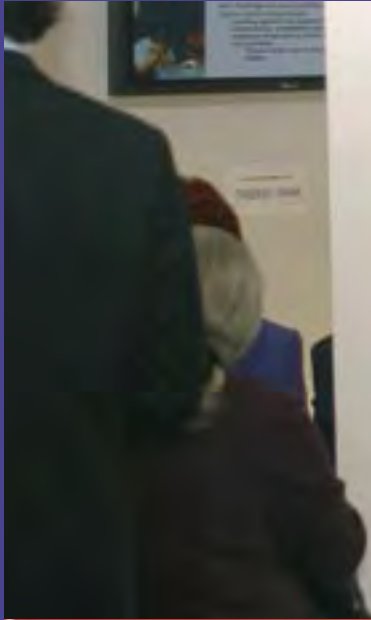
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Many people
are afraid of
"cultural fusion"
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increasingly stressful lifestyles, participants mentioned the threats posed to our health and well-being by nuclear violence (one person even mentioned the possibility of World War III) and limited natural resources, including energy and water, which will affect each and every one of us regardless of where we live in our global village.

It was pointed out that although the gap in available health care between the developed and underdeveloped worlds keeps growing, all societies are affected. Africa may suffer enormously from HIV/AIDS, but even the United States suffers from unequal access to health care.

The participants left the session not only with an increased awareness of the problems women will be facing in the next decade, but also hope inspired by the enriching contacts and in-depth conversations at the roundtable discussions. ■

DISCOVERY MOMENTS



Trends Corner



Solidarity Corner

1:15 P.M.

LUNCHEON SESSION I - PLAYING DETECTIVE IN THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN LIFE

Yves Coppens

SURVIVAL THROUGH ADAPTATION

For millions of years, the main activity of living creatures has been adapting to new environments, said Yves Coppens, a distinguished French palaeontologist who was a member of the team that discovered Lucy, the famous 3-million-year-old Australopithecus skeleton, in Ethiopia's Afar basin in 1974. Coppens was speaking at the Women's Forum luncheon session entitled "Playing Detective in the Origin of Human Life".

"Nothing is stable," he continued. "Everything is unstable, everywhere : in the universe, on our planet, in our life, as far as climatic change, for instance, is concerned. We have to think about how to adapt ourselves to the new environment."

Since childhood, Coppens, who was born in Brittany in 1934, has been fascinated by prehistory. At the age of 21, he made his first major discovery when he

excavated a Megalithic tomb. As he was the slimmest of the group on the dig, his colleagues decided that he should be the first to step into the burial chamber, where he found some pieces of gold, copper and ceramics. The tomb turned out to be 7,000 years old, making it one of the first monuments of mankind and among the earliest architecture.

Coppens went on to become a palaeontologist and began to travel all over the world. On an excursion in Chad he found his first skull, an exciting moment, since palaeontologists measure their success by the number of skulls they find. He later moved to East Africa where in 1974 he and Donald Johanson and Maurice Taieb discovered Lucy, who was named after the Beatles song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds".

“Lucy was named after the Beatles song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"”

Coppens believes that "knowledge means the importance of knowing where we come from" and that

studying prehistory, palaeontology and archaeology can help us develop new ideas for the future. They also give us reason for optimism: when we look at how mankind has evolved over millions of years, we can safely assume that we will continue to evolve and that our species will survive.

Thanks to studies of prehistory, we know more about how human culture developed over 3 million years, while the history of 13 billion years of evolution shows the tendency of things to progress from simple to more complex, better-organized systems: from the quark to the molecule to the cell and finally to the human being. One reason for human complexity may be our better-organized and larger brains, he added. Whilst Lucy had a brain capacity of only 400 cubic centimetres, today's human brains have about 1,400 cubic centimetres.

"Lucy would be very impressed to see our heads today", said Coppens with a laugh. ■

“
Lucy would be
very impressed
to see our
heads today



Yves Coppens

1:15 P.M.

LUNCHEON SESSION II - PHOTOGRAPHING SUFFERING, GENERATING CHANGE

Claudia Andujar

LEARNING FROM THE YANOMAMI

“We must understand that all the world is one. Everything is interlinked – one thing is needed to allow another thing to work out,” said photographer Claudia Andujar at the luncheon entitled “Photographing Suffering, Generating Change.” Andujar had gained this wisdom and more from spending decades photographing the Yanomami people of Brazil and championing their cause.

Born in Neufchatel, Switzerland, in 1931, Andujar spent her childhood in Romania and Hungary. In 1956, she emigrated to Brazil, where a photography project documenting the way of life of the Carajá Indians in Central Brazil led her to a career in photojournalism. Her work has been published in Life, Look, Fortune, Aperture and many other magazines.

In the early 1970’s, Andujar met a group of Yanomami Indians, hunters, gatherers and horticulturalists who inhabit part of the Amazon tropical rainforest on the border of Venezuela and Brazil. The Yanomami population of about 12,500 constitutes the largest indi-

genous community in Brazil that has preserved its traditions – no easy feat in today’s world.

Intrigued by their way of life, Andujar abandoned her career as a photojournalist to embark on an in-depth photographic essay on the Yanomami (the word means “human being”), for which she received a two-year fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

Over the years, Andujar watched the Yanomami struggle to survive amidst the sometimes-negative influences of the Western world. One of the most significant cultural dislocations in Yanomami history occurred in 1974 when the government began to build the Perimetral Norte, the Trans-Amazonian highway, in Northern Brazil. At first the Yanomami

embraced the visitors it brought from the outside world out of curiosity, but these same visitors also brought disease and death to the tribe, which, lacking immunity, suffered a devastating measles epidemic brought on by exposure to the Western workers. Villages were

“The Yanomami people have taught me to dream

also cleared to put in roads. Andujar temporarily gave up photography to help establish health outposts for the Yanomami during this crisis. Ironically, the Brazilian government ran out of money and stopped the highway's construction, leaving the Yanomami feeling that their tribesman had died for nothing.

During the 1980's, Andujar witnessed another devastating incursion into Yanomami territory when thousands of illegal small-scale gold miners arrived in the Amazon. By the end of the 1980's, they numbered 40,000 in the Brazilian Amazon, while the entire Yanomami population was just 11,000. The Yanomami suffered from even more epidemics, notably malaria, with this intrusion resulting in the decimation of 20% of the Yanomami tribe.

In her expressive photos, Andujar shows outsiders not only the suffering but also the beauty, rich culture and spirituality of the Yanomami people. Her passion for photography is built on a strong belief that photography can "*open a window onto other people's lives*". Her pictures offer a glimpse into the Yanomami's complex spiritual and magical world. Like most human beings, "*it is through their own suffering that the Yanomami have learned.*"

The major crises they have lived through in the past few decades have taught them to become more adaptable and conscious of the negative effects of foreign influence in their territory. The Yanomami practice shamanism, which is a pillar of their culture. Spectacular individual and collective shamanic rituals are still a regular community activity. Each of the roughly 185 Yanomami villages has at least one or two shamans, most of them men, and some have up to 10.

The Yanomami use the shaman spirit as a guide to help them through daily struggles and with difficult decisions. According to the Yanomami, the shamans "*bring down*" images of beings from the mythological

origins of the world and make them dance. During the ceremonies, these spirits appear to the shaman as tiny human-like characters in the form of shining particles of dust. The shaman reproduces the special song and dance of each spirit, one by one. The main role of the shaman is to protect the members of the community from predatory powers, human or non-human, and to cure them.

When the Yanomami realized that shamanism could not cure the foreign diseases, they began to react more to the external environment. The people now believe that the Western world operates in a harmful way and that Westerners must stop being destructive and eliminate the chaos in which they live in order for the world to survive.

In 1998, Andujar published the book *Yanomami: The House, the Forest, the Invisible*, featuring 85 of

WHO IS?

Claudia Andujar *is not only an acclaimed, highly talented photographer, but also a great humanist who has devoted a large part of her life to preserving the homeland and lifestyle of the Yanomami people of Brazil, who live in the Amazon tropical rainforest and whose lives have been repeatedly threatened by diseases introduced by outsiders.*

her poetic photographs. Her work has been shown internationally in both solo and group exhibitions, and her photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Eastman House in Rochester, the Amsterdam Art Museum and other museums around the world. She has contributed to numerous book projects, documentaries and photographic exhibitions on the Amazon and its indigenous populations.

Showing slides of her work after the luncheon, Andujar explained how she tried to depict this belief in shamanism by capturing the effect of light during spiritual ceremonies, since the Yanomami believe that this light is a reflection and representation of the spirits entering their lives. She also tries to express the harmony between human beings and nature and represent manifestations of shamanism in her photographs by superimposing images of natural elements from their environment onto photos of the Yanomami people.

But Andujar is not just a photographer; her work with the Yanomami has turned her into an activist fighting for their cause. In 1978, she played a key role in the creation of the Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park, the Comissão Pró-Yanomami (CCPY). The original goal of this non-profit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to the defence of the territorial, cultural and civil rights of the Yanomami Indians was to fight for the demarcation of indigenous Yanomami territory. In 1992, after a 15-year campaign, the Brazilian government finally set aside more than 96,000 square kilometres of protected land, an area the size of Portugal, for use by the Yanomami people. Since then, the overall population has started to grow slightly.

Andujar believes that the commission was successful because it always respected the Yanomami's needs and desires. With the help of CCPY, the Yanomami are now fighting for much-needed reforms in the public indigenous health services system. Education is also a high priority for them. "*The Yanomami are a curious people, and they realized the benefits of learning more about the outside world,*" said Andujar. "*They wanted the commission to help them learn how to read and write, learn mathematics and speak Portuguese so they could communicate with the Brazilian government and others.*" In 1995, the CCPY set up an intercultural education programme to strengthen Yanomami language skills and to provide access to information on regional, national and international social programmes.

Andujar mentioned other important CCPY projects, including agroforestry, environmental recuperation and beekeeping, all of them intended to help support and protect the Yanomami way of life and cultural traditions. Andujar has devoted her life's work to contributing to the positive growth and development of the Yanomami people. Her humanitarian efforts have helped change governmental policies, while her creative photography has allowed the Yanomami to share their culture and spiritual knowledge with the outside world.

According to Andujar, the Yanomami would like to send this message to the outside world: "*To live harmoniously, we must know how to respect others, respect the culture and ways of life of other cultures.*"

Andujar feels she has been paid back in full for her devotion to the Yanomami cause, saying, "*I am thankful to the Yanomami people for having taught me to dream and to have helped me create my images.*" ■

1:15 P.M.

LUNCHEON SESSION III - LESSONS FROM THE OCEANS

Raphaëla le Gouvello

alone ON THE HIGH SEAS

“Solo windsurfing is a fantastic school for life”, said transoceanic windsurfer Raphaëla le Gouvello at the luncheon on the theme “Lessons from the oceans”. One lesson she’s learned is to never give up. “The ocean teaches you humility and patience,” she said.

But what’s left for le Gouvello, the owner of STERMOR France, an aquaculture health and nutrition consultancy? She has already windsurfed solo across the Atlantic (2000), the Mediterranean (2002) and the Pacific (2003)? Well, she hasn’t tackled the Indian Ocean yet, so the next big wind will send her off alone on a 70- 75-day trip from Australia to Reunion Island.

What does it take to accomplish such a frightening exploit? According to le Gouvello, you need passion, conviction, curiosity and the desire to always push yourself beyond your limits. Even though she goes it alone on the high seas, preparatory teamwork and perseverance

“Being alone at sea is an intense, almost spiritual experience

are keys to a successful solo windsurfing experience.

She starts by defining clear targets and building a highly motivated and skilled team that includes an architect, a communication team, sponsors, etc. She then makes careful studies of the feasibility of the project, the route and climate change trends.

Innovation is another sine qua non for sporting success. Constant technical improvement of equipment with custom-made and high-tech components is critical to improved performance. After an accident in 2002, when she could not get back on her board and experienced hypothermia in the middle of the Mediterranean, she partnered with ESA to design an airbag that would allow her to turn her board upright

on the surface of the water even when her energy levels were very low.

And what personal qualities are required for this kind of adventure? According to le Gouvello, it takes patience, stubbornness,

efficiency, enthusiasm, project management skills, realism, pragmatism, confidence and high-quality work. While an ability to deal with the unexpected is important, monotonous work and tedious daily monitoring are also part of the picture. As she usually makes slow progress of about 60 miles per day, she tries to avoid thinking too much about arriving and instead sets intermediate goals for herself.

Lack of wind, silence and loneliness can be discouraging and make the time pass slowly, but solo windsurfing is not all about monotony – there are also moments of high drama, when storms arrive, for example. And then there are sharks. The best way to deal with that kind of fear, says

“When you're at sea, you realize to what extent humans are social creatures

le Gouvello, is to identify it and work on it, by diving with sharks in an aquarium, for example, as she did.

The hardest part of each crossing is making the adjustment when she reaches her destination. "You need some time to digest the whole experience," she said

Le Gouvello quoted Jean-François Deniau, Founder and President of the group "Écrivains de Marine": "Every departure to the sea is an entrance to the night." She feels it sums up very well the way she feels when she leaves the coast. "When you're at sea," she said, "you realize to what extent humans are social creatures."

Being alone on the ocean is an intense, almost spiritual experience. "You have plenty of time to think about the purpose of life and what's important for the future". This often leads her to think about broader issues like sustainable development and ocean preservation, which can help ensure a healthy future for the planet.

How do her adventures contribute to women's causes, she wondered. She answered her own question by saying that she hoped they would inspire other women to strive for freedom and encourage them to work harder to reach their own goals. The feeling that she is contributing in some way to the cause of women in turn gives her the strength to continue her efforts. ■

WHO IS?

*After windsurfing solo across the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Pacific, **Raphaëla le Gouvello** is now planning to follow the winds across the Indian Ocean. She holds a doctorate in veterinary science and a master of sciences in aquaculture and runs her own aquaculture health and nutrition consultancy, STERMOR France.*

1:15 P.M.

LUNCHEON SESSION IV - WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT GENDER

Françoise Héritier

QUESTIONING GENDER-BASED INEQUALITIES

What is the origin of male domination? How have inequalities been legitimised, and how can we overcome them?

In the luncheon session entitled "*What We Didn't Know about Gender*", a well-known French anthropologist, Professor Françoise Héritier of the Collège de France, talked about some of the crucial insights she has gained from her studies of gender, which might help us understand past misogynistic beliefs and how they can be countered.

According to Héritier, all societies legitimise inequalities between men and women with representation models that people never question. To illustrate, she offered this example: when a baby boy cries, people assume that he is angry, but when a baby girl cries, people assume she is frightened by something.

Apart from these representation models, she feels that male domination has been built on two major historical

misconceptions: the primitive matriarchal model and biological inferiority.

The theory of the primitive matriarchal model suggests that some civilizations were originally ruled by women. Those civilizations may have been the birthplace of inventions we still use today, but unfortunately, the female leaders of these societies were never able to use their inventions to their full potential. If this were true, it would once again support the representation of male domination of females. But Héritier noted that the existence of such a model has never been proven.

The theory that women are biologically inferior to men has never been proven either. Héritier said that girls need exactly the same kind of stimulation as boys do to develop intellectually. Unfortunately, it is still common practice to orientate boys towards certain "*male fields*" like the sciences and girls towards "*female fields*" like the arts. The distribution of male and female

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The theory that women
are biologically
inferior to men
has never been proven

disciplines starts very early at school, and the development of synapses occurs differently in each environment.

Héritier went on to explain the striking way mankind has of categorizing in a dialectical way.

Right from the beginning, humans perceived the world as being made up of antagonistic pairs that cannot exist without one another. Men and women have always been associated with one or the other

“Our thinking
would be different
if we were
gender-free

component of each pair, e.g., men are rough and women are soft; men are active and women are passive.

This ongoing categorization of our perceptions has a strong impact on our thinking and behaviour. Our thinking would be different if we were gender-free.

Héritier also recalled the historical evolution of beliefs about making babies. Some civilizations believed that boys came from the father and girls from the mother, so how could a woman give birth to a male without God's goodwill?

She finished her talk by mentioning that women have historically faced three main obstacles set up by men to impede female personal development and preserve male domination: they have been deprived of the freedom to choose their destiny; they have been deprived of knowledge; and they have been deprived of access to positions of authority. ■

WHO IS?

*A well-known French anthropologist, **Françoise Héritier** is an Honorary Professor at the Collège de France and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, where she has held a tenured chair in comparative studies of African societies since 1982. During her distinguished career, she has conducted extensive research on gender issues.*

1:15 P.M.

LUNCHEON SESSION V - MAKING A PLACE FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

Baroness Susan Greenfield

LEARNING TO
LOVE SCIENCE

The last thing one would expect to hear from a highly esteemed neuroscientist and Director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain is "*I hated science at school!*", but that's what Baroness Susan Greenfield told the guests at the lively luncheon session entitled "*Making a Place for Women in Science*".

Greenfield is also Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Oxford and the author of "*SET Fair: A Report on Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology*", written at the request of the UK Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in 2002.

Today, the scientific community is in danger of losing a great deal of talent by ignoring female scientists and not encouraging young girls to study science, said Greenfield.

"*Why is science not popular with schoolgirls?*" She noted that girls are much more interested in relationships, emotions and

personal contact than boys are. Unfortunately, science at school is more about "*distilling water and observing amoebas*", she said. As a schoolgirl herself, she was much more interested in questions like "*Why do people make war?*" or "*How do relationships work?*" She didn't find the experiments interesting or feel that they had any connection to her real life. Science seemed like an unpleasant thing: everything was already known, there was nothing new to discover and there was no room for individuality.

If girls are to be attracted to science, it must have some relevance to their lives and interests. Greenfield effectively showed the audience how science can

be made comprehensible and interesting by describing her own research on the connection between the mind, brain and individuality in such a fascinating way that many an audience member started to think about changing jobs and becoming a scientist.

At the university level, she noted, an

“The public image of science as objective, intellectual and cold is not true

alarming fact can be observed. In biomedical studies, the proportion of male and female students is almost balanced at the beginning (other scientific fields are almost completely "male" right from the start), but later shifts to a significantly higher percentage of male students because women leave their studies to have children.

Women have three options: don't have children, have them very late or interrupt their careers to have them. Maternity breaks are difficult for scientists because they can put women far behind their male colleagues, with fewer publications to their credit when they rejoin the university. This puts them at a disadvantage

in any competition with male candidates who have a "perfect" CV and publication record. Unfortunately, the quality of scientific work is still judged by the number of publications, said Greenfield, adding that a new way to evaluate CVs is needed.

Another handicap for women in the sciences is the public image of a scientist as a "dull, badly dressed man who thinks about 'higher things'". To overcome these barriers, we have to improve the image of scientists in both the media and the public mind. Young women should be taught that it is all right for scientists to be interested in their looks.



Béatrice Dautresme,
Baroness Susan Greenfield

At the postgraduate level, a new problem crops up. Surveys show that the work of top female scientists is evaluated on the same level as poorly rated men. This produces the "*glass-ceiling phenomenon*": women can see the top ranks but can't reach them.

To overcome all these barriers, we need to encourage young women and female scientists to get involved, ask questions and be persistent. Future technologies might help by opening up new possibilities for working from home and automating lab procedures. Improvements in reproductive technology might also make it easier to be a "*late mom*". Of course, future technologies will not be able to replace "*real*" scientists, who are needed to interpret information, give it meaning and turn it into knowledge.

Mentors and good friends can help women weather hard times on their way to the top. It is important to cultivate friendships and "*have a chat and a glass of wine with a good friend*", said Greenfield, "*when life - once again - seems to be unfair*".

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The work of a
scientist can be
compared to
writing a novel or
composing music

Asked about her personal experiences with female laboratory staff, Greenfield said that with a mixed crew the atmosphere in a lab changes. Women often try to avoid confrontations, and male and female staff members have to be approached differently.

Men usually don't take things personally, but when Greenfield criticises a female employee, she always has to start by saying, "*I like you as a person, but...*". Women are more sensitive to relationships, but also tend to overreact and be thin-skinned, which can have negative effects.

Greenfield added that the public image of science as objective, intellectual and cold is not true. Work can become highly personal to a scientist – it's "*your baby*", she said. The work of a scientist can be compared to writing a novel or composing music and, just like a writer or a composer, a scientist needs courage, inspiration and determination.

But no matter who we are or what we do, she concluded, "*First we have to know what we want and how to achieve it!*" ■

3:15 P.M.

BRIEFING SESSION IN PARALLEL I - TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Martin Illsley, Françoise Soussaline

HOW WILL FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES affect your life?

The Women's Forum brought two leading technology experts together to inform participants about the potential impact on their lives of cutting-edge technologies in their respective industries.

Martin Illsley, Director of Accenture Technology Labs Europe, spoke about Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), a new technology that wirelessly transmits the identity and location of an object via radio waves. RFID technology captures data on tags coupled with sensors and transmits this information to a computer system, eliminating the need for human intervention. Its potential efficiency and cost savings for companies may be enormous, since it will help them ensure that products are in the right place when consumers need them. These tags are already being embedded in consumer products such as razors, CDs and even clothing.

Illsley pointed out that the possible uses of such a technology are endless, but mentioned that they

can also raise fears of a "big brother" society. To ward off these concerns, many companies are beefing up efforts to build customer trust and loyalty.

Enhanced handheld communications technologies will also improve efficiency for consumers, as well as customer relationship management, since they offer a way of communicating special offers, account information and updates in real time.

Illsley also spoke about predictive analysis technologies, which will intelligently follow and record the behaviours of consumers and react in helpful ways by making recommendations, "determining consumers" needs, optimizing campaign targeting and detecting fraud.

On a different subject, Françoise Soussaline, Chairman and Chief Executive Office of IMSTAR, France, reported on innovations being developed in the biotech world to drastically improve the health of future generations. Many women scientists are offering a new



Technology can raise fears of a "big brother" society



perspective on the technical evolution of and approach to healthcare, a welcome change since some of the major threats to human health overwhelmingly affect the female population.

These scientists are focusing on innovations in both tailored and preventative medicines. One of these tailored technologies is Quantitative Imaging, which provides a pathologist with a high-resolution image showing details that were previously impossible to see. Quantitative Imaging and diagnostic medical tools are highly beneficial in the fight against many threats to human life, such as breast cancer, Alzheimer's disease and chronic and inflammatory diseases.

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Women scientists are offering a new perspective on the technical evolution of health care

Other preventative medicines under development include Molecular Characterization, which analyzes the status of human tissue and could, for example, contribute to eliminating most deaths from

cervical cancer in just a few years. Soussaline noted that these advances in biotechnology can only be achieved through continuous education and support from health care industry leaders.

"As the health industry progressively accepts and includes developments arising from the genomic revolution, the challenges we face as scientists and as medical experts are also evolving," she said. ■

3:15 P.M.

BRIEFING SESSION IN PARALLEL II - ECONOMY UPDATE

Marcia de Wachter*Marcia de Wachter*

ASIA AND AFRICA LEAD WORLD GROWTH

A few surprising facts about the world economy were revealed at the Women's Forum Economy Update session. Marcia de Wachter, Honorary Vice Governor and Director of the National Bank of Belgium, provided an analysis of the situation in regions with the fastest-growing economic growth rates: Asia, Africa, Latin America, the United States and Europe.

In Asia, growth is driven by China, whose current contribution to world growth is actually higher than that of the United States, said de Wachter. Japan's economy is gradually stirring back to life and showing 1.8% growth, although the country is currently outpaced by India.

The African continent currently has the lowest inflation rate in the world.

In Latin America, Argentina is leading growth following its recent serious economic crisis.

And why is the United States only in fourth place? According to de Wachter, there are several explanations: the fallback in the U.S. manufacturing industry, costs related to Hurricane Katrina and "one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the world".

The European economy, in fifth place, is not only slug-

gish but is also showing structural problems: domestic consumption is at a low point, consumer confidence is down and investment is at an all-time low. For these reasons, there are no signs of recovery ahead.

Growth in these regions may be threatened by a number of factors, however, beginning with oil prices: the world demand for oil is accelerating and new, non-OPEC oil-producing countries cannot produce fast enough to meet it. Under-investment in raw materials also contributes to the problem.

While most economies have been affected by oil prices since the 1970's, they are now hurt more by the cost of raw materials. We can expect high oil prices to continue for some time due to political instability in the Middle East.

In the United States, the deficit is currently financed by eight foreign banks, seven of which are based in Asia. In fact, added de Wachter, two-thirds of the richest countries' current accounts are financed by Asia, and in spite of the major financial crisis Asia witnessed in the 1990's, the ability of local banks to manage capital for other states has actually been strengthened. ■

3:15 P.M.

BRIEFING SESSION IN PARALLEL III - GEOPOLITICAL UPDATE

Thérèse Delpech

CIVILIANS BEAR BRUNT OF "NEW BARBARISM"

A look at the big geopolitical picture for the year 2005 did not offer a pretty image. The Women's Forum Geopolitical Update session featured a talk by Thérèse Delpech, Director for Strategic Studies at the Atomic Energy Commission of France and Senior Research Fellow at CERI, a major think-tank for security studies on the European continent. In her role as an academic, she also advises French government policymakers.

Delpech, author of *"L'ensauvagement: Le retour de la barbarie au XXI^e siècle"* (Grasset, 2005), provided a European perspective on the current global geopolitical context.

Geopolitical concerns should no longer be considered of interest only to politicians or experts, she said, but also to civilians. In the 21st century, contrary to Geneva Convention principles relating to combatant versus non-combatant status, civilians have been the main victims of terrorism and the

increasing use of weapons of mass-destruction. Since people increasingly live in mega-cities, it is now easier than ever to cause mass casualties, and this trend will grow in the next century.

Delpech then looked at various hotspots around the world from a geopolitical perspective:

East Asia: Current geopolitical trends are worrisome. She believes that Asia represents a true threat to geopolitical equilibrium and that the potential for social and political unrest in China is underestimated in the rest of the world. China's ever-increasing defence budgets are proportionately much larger than Europe's and pose a real threat to world peace,

especially in light of the current situation between Taiwan and China. China is continuing to develop its amphibious and submarine operations, which might well signal preparations for an attack on Taiwan, a move that could create the risk of a worldwide conflict, and it has already passed a law that

“It is becoming increasingly easy for nations or political groups to cause mass casualties”

essentially gives it the right to attack Taiwan under unspecified circumstances. Another problem is the growing wealth gap between rural areas and huge coastal urban developments, which puts tremendous pressure on Chinese social structures.

China may well represent a superpower in the next decade, but the way it is developing its military power does not indicate that it is heading towards peaceful growth. Its acquisition of military equipment goes well beyond what is needed for self-protection, as officials claim.

Europe: She sees Europe as lethargic and no longer a centre for geopolitical decision-making. The year 2005

“ The European Strategic view is too narrow

has been very disappointing in terms of the debate on the EU constitution. Europeans should feel lucky to have come through the Cold War with no blood spilled and should also acknowledge that enlarging Europe has been a major achievement.

The European strategic view is too narrow, she added. Although the Continent has some understanding of Balkan, Middle Eastern and North African affairs, it has no vision for relations with Asia, which is now seen as the centrepiece of international strategic affairs. Europe has also been unable to take a firm stand on the status of Kosovo; for Delpech, the only possible solution there is independence.

Right now, Delpech sees only two European countries – the UK and France – as taking an interest in defence issues. The 25 EU nations all have very different views on defence issues, which can be explained by their own history. The only area they all agree on is peacekeeping missions.

North Korea: The country has been sending contradictory signals about its nuclear arsenal since January. The joint declaration in September was a step in the right direction, Delpech says, but it was challenged the very next day by Pyongyang itself. Trouble may still lie ahead if the country reunifies, which could well end up being a more difficult and painful process than the reunification of Germany.

Middle East: The situation in Iran is also disquieting, with a broken agreement with London, Paris and Berlin on its nuclear fuel programme. Rising radicalism in Iran, coupled with its new

WHO IS?

*An expert on nuclear issues, **Thérèse Delpech** is Director for Strategic Studies at the Atomic Energy Commission of France, Senior Research Fellow at CERJ and a UN Commissioner for the disarmament of Iraq. She has served as a consultant to the French government and written three books and numerous articles.*

nuclear power, is a major threat to world peace.

Russia: Russia is now at its lowest point on the geopolitical scene. Although there was great hope of heightened political cooperation with Europe 10 years ago, it has not really come about. Today, Russia's political direction is diverging from Europe's.

Africa: Africa continues to be embroiled in ongoing conflicts because of serious governance problems. Cancelling the debt of African countries without providing additional solutions, as the G8 did, is not good politics. Bad money management and government corruption are Africa's central problems. Money needs to be used to develop civilian health, education and women's empowerment programmes, which would help reduce corruption and enhance economic progress in the region.

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The UN should take
a more proactive role
in ensuring peace
and security

Delpuch also spoke about the United Nations. The major risk for the UN if it does not adopt a more proactive role in ensuring peace and security would be a decline in its credibility, she said, stressing that the UN is in bad shape because of its inability to give legitimacy to the Security Council.

She would like to see it not only stick to its peacekeeping missions – which are becoming increasingly difficult to manage in faraway countries – but also to take a more proactive role in defending countries and their civilians, and to stop making empty threats.

The year 2005 has not been a good one for the organization: at the last UN Summit, agreement could not even be reached on a sentence regarding non-proliferation and disarmament, described by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as a "*real disgrace*". ■

3:15 P.M.

BRIEFING SESSION IN PARALLEL IV - SOCIETIES UPDATE

Saskia Sassen, Catherine Hakim

MORE CHOICES, NEW ROLES

Has life changed for women in recent decades? The answer is definitely yes, according to two prominent sociologists who shared their findings during the Women's Forum *Societies Update* session.

Women have now become active agents in fields that were once reserved for men, noted Saskia Sassen, while men are often taking on what were once women's roles.

Sassen, the Ralph Lewis Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago and Centennial Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics, cited an example from her research on immigrants from Latin America living in New York City, where the women play an active part in local life, dealing with the local administration on matters of housing, taxes and children's schooling.

Since they are the ones who interact with the state, *"even if it is with a micro-aspect of the state at a local level,"* they end up learning

the language and integrating into society more quickly, while their husbands work on production lines in factories with little possibility of interaction. It is no surprise, then, that these men often want to move back to their country of origin, while their spouses prefer to stay in the United States.

According to Sassen, these *"reversals"* of gender roles are happening in many sectors of society, including finance. On Wall Street, brokers selling new financial products are very often women. Their acceptance rate is three times higher in new markets, where they are seen as being trustworthy, allowing them to increase their sales.

Sassen notes that she has been seeing a new kind of poverty recently. *"Many poor people do not even have housing – many of them women and children – which was not the case 30 years ago,"* she says. She cites neo-liberalism and the restructuring of the labour market, especially in urban settings, as causes.

“These *"reversals"* of gender roles are happening in many sectors of society, including finance

Another eminent sociologist, Catherine Hakim, Senior Research Fellow in the London School of Economics' Department of Sociology, noted a well-documented trend of growing inequality between nations and within nations.

"Policies that counter inequality won't stop the process," she says, "only slow it down".

She believes that five fundamental changes have finally given women in some modern societies a genuine choice in how they live their lives: the contraceptive revolution, which gave women reliable control over their fertility; the equal opportunity revolution in the labour market; the expansion of white-collar occupations, which are more attractive to women than blue-collar jobs; the creation of jobs for secondary earners; and the increased importance of attitudes, values and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent societies.

About 60% of women she has studied are what she calls "*adaptive*", women who want to work but are not totally committed to it. On either ends of the spectrum are the 20% who are "*home-centred*" and the 20% who are "*work-centred*" (and often childless).

"When women get a choice," asked Hakim, "what choices do they

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Women in some
modern societies
now have
genuine choices

make?" The adaptive women find a multitude of solutions, including part-time work. Others stop working to raise children and then make a career later in life. "I think this is a perfectly feasible option. The idea that we have to follow the male pattern

might be a poor solution."

On the policymaking level, governments and employers need to create policies for women and families that treat the three groups equally, unlike the current system, which tends to favour work-centred women.

Hakim pointed out that women participating in the Women's Forum are more likely to belong to the work-centred group. "We, who are the opinion leaders, who analyze the issues, who write about them, tend to think that all women are in the same format," she warns. « It is very easy for us to forget the family-centred group, an important part of society."

She recommends gender-neutral policies that would enable men to assume more responsibility for raising children. On a broader level, destigmatizing workforce absences would allow people to continue their studies, raise children, or – also important in a mobile society – reconnect with their country of origin. ■

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Women are now
active in fields
once reserved for men

4:30 P.M.

PLENARY SESSION - WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS?

Rola Dashti, Josephine Effah Chukwuma, Fadela Amara

A FEW STEPS FORWARD FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

While the situation is still grim for women in many countries, one of the speakers at the Women's Forum plenary session "What About My Rights?" had a resounding success story to tell: on 16 May, women finally got the right to vote in Kuwait.

That may not seem revolutionary to everyone, but it is a triumph for Rola Dashti, a campaigner for women's rights in Kuwait.

Fifteen years ago, Dashti, faced with the dismal situation for women in her country, said to herself, "I don't want to be a number. I want to have a voice," and became an activist.

Women who fight for their rights in Kuwait are advised not to "rock the boat," even by those who sympathize with them, while Islamic extremists accuse women who speak out of being anti-patriotic or agents from

the West. Some people believe that if women get into politics, says Dashti, divorce rates will rise because they will disagree with their husbands more often. Families fear that their reputations will be harmed if a female relative fights for women's rights.

In spite of all these obstacles, a historic event took place in Kuwait on 7 March when the country's largest rally for women's rights took place, stunning the entire nation as men and women from all walks of life and

WHO IS?

Rola Dashti is Chairwoman of the Kuwait Economic Society, a body charged with promoting economic growth and reform in Kuwait, and holds a Ph.D. in population economics from Johns Hopkins University. As a women's rights activist, she was instrumental in the struggle to win the right to vote for women in Kuwait, which was finally achieved in May 2005.



I don't want to be
a number.

I want to have a voice

of all ages joined together to support the right to vote for women.

The resulting international media attention brought the issue to the forefront, and on 16 May 2005, women won the right to vote in Kuwait. "*Dreams come true*," says Dashti, "*we just have to work on it*".

Another speaker, Josephine Effah Chukwuma, Executive Director for Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria, had a triumph of her own to report. She proudly announced that her state was the first in Nigeria to pass a bill against domestic violence, on 10 June 2005. Although rape is a criminal offence in her country, women are doubly abused, first by the abuser, then by the police system, which requires them to prove that they didn't deserve to be raped. "*There are girls in Nigeria between the ages of two and 10 years being raped, and the police say that it was 'provocation'*," says Chukwuma.

Progress will come in ending the vicious cycle of violence, she added, when men get involved in fighting violence against women, the private sector returns something to the societies they operate in, and the

WHO IS?

Josephine Effah Chukwuma *is the Founder and Executive Director for Project Alert on Violence Against Women in Nigeria, which provides counselling, legal assistance and temporary housing for female victims of domestic abuse. She is currently working on the launch in every Nigerian city of similar initiatives, while she hopes will provide a model for other developing countries.*

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Dreams come true;
we just have
to work on it

police provide security and comfort to rape victims.

A third speaker, Fadela Amara, President of *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* ("*Neither Whores nor Submissive*") in France, noted the irony of the need for an organization like hers in the country that defined human rights.

WHO IS?

Fadela Amara *is the President of Ni Putes Ni Soumises, a French women's rights organization. The daughter of immigrants from Algeria, she began working with civic and human rights organizations at the age of 14 to fight all types of discrimination. She was appointed to the French government's Human Rights Consulting Commission in 2004.*

She sees just the opposite of progress in the tough French suburbs she grew up in. Women in many of the suburban *cités* still can't dress the way they want, can't study what they want or choose their own life partners.

Young girls are still being forced to accept arranged marriages and to remain virgins until married. These archaic traditions are being reinforced by the young men in the *cités*, says Amara, and girls tolerate them so they will not be considered racist or different from others.

Amara places the fault with the French state, which has not integrated all its people. Lack of employment and affordable housing makes them feel that they don't have a place in society. She also feels that emerging extremist Islamic practices in the *cités* are playing a role in perpetuating these traditions. ■

DISCOVERY MOMENTS



*Listen to your Voice:
Thomas Murry*



*Writer's Corner:
Anissa Boumediene*

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

Ayouch Siham

Age: 25, Morocco

Studies/work experience: Completing a Master in Communication and Management in Paris. Works for the Zakoura Foundation, a Moroccan NGO that assists women, and is a trainee for ADIE, a French microcredit provider.

Comments: *"The speakers at the Women's Forum taught us that everything is possible if we believe in it, work hard and have ambition, while never forgetting our values and principles. The 'What About My Rights?' session and Taslima Nasreen's speech had a strong impact on me."*

Alexia Schmitt

Age: 25, Argentina

Studies: Studying Philosophy at Salvador University in Buenos Aires.

Comments: *"The Women's Forum showed me how decisive women's contribution can be to the economy and society, and highlighted the hidden dilemmas created by technology and globalization, which might lead us either to a cooperative or a confrontational scenario. What struck me most was meeting courageous and assertive women like Rola Dashti and Taslima Nasreen. As I heard them speak about the changes they had helped bring about, I realized that each of us has a responsibility to turn our dream of a better world into reality."*

Veerle Sloopmaekers

Age: 24, Belgium

Studies: Working on a Ph.D. in Economics at the Catholic University of Leuven.

Comments: *"The Women's Forum is an excellent way to exchange ideas and best practices and to stimulate women in attaining their goals. Although most of the participants were in some way or another already familiar with the issues, each person went home with additional information. The forum is also an excellent way to stimulate networking.*

Concrete actions and solutions came forward during some sessions, such as the very interesting 'Leveraging Diversity: Best Practices for Integrating Women.'"

7:30 P.M.

OPENING DINNER: KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Carole Bellamy

THE 21ST CENTURY: MAKE A DREAM A REALITY

Carole Bellamy, former Executive Director of UNICEF and President and CEO of World Learning, gave a powerful keynote address at the opening dinner of the Women's Forum, reminding participants that half the world's population (3 billion people) lives on less than \$2 a day. For these people – half of them children – life is an ongoing nightmare. *"Their lives are so dominated by suffering and want that it's indescribable. The most basic things in life are unavailable to them."*

Perhaps even more shocking is the fact that 11 million children under the age of five die each year from preventable illnesses like diarrhea. The dire problems caused by poverty are now being further exacerbated by the spread of HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts and instability.

"I say that the persistence of this level of poverty

is grotesque," said Bellamy. *"We have never before seen inequality like this."*

What's the answer? Education, education, education. *"Women have to be educated to know how to protect themselves better and have fewer children. If women are not strong, families are not strong, and children are not strong."*

Women mustn't be cowed in their efforts to create change, she continued. *"I have been called a radical feminist many times,"* she said, *"but let us be clear about who is singling out girls and women, and using rape and sexual power as a deliberate tool of war. When labels like 'radical feminist' are tossed about disparagingly, people become afraid of speaking. We must speak out on behalf of people who are marginalised and abused."*

Although the same problems come up over and over again, Bellamy hasn't lost hope. *"We can accomplish nearly anything,"* she said. *"I have seen so many opportunities missed. Despite steady progress, the state of children is not what it ought to be."*

Warning that recent acts of terrorism should not distract attention and funding from these basic problems, Bellamy concluded by expressing her dream of a world in which every child can thrive and grow to adulthood in peace. *"Together, we can make that dream a reality,"* she said. ■



Béatrice Augier, Hubert Zieseniss,
Carole Bellamy, Véronique Morali,
Pascal Roché

Opening Dinner





FRID



WOMEN'S FORUM REPORT
YEAR 1

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8:30 A.M.

PLENARY SESSION IN PARALLEL I - TELL ME HOW YOU CREATE

*Monika Mulder, Rebecca Allen, Jane Fulton Suri, Lauralee Alben*TAPPING OUR
ENDLESS CREATIVITY

|| *Creativity is a life force, an energy of pure potential that flows through all of us. All that is needed is for us to allow it, focus it, direct it, harness it and be grateful for it,"* said Lauralee Alben, founder of Alben Design and the Sea Change Design Consortium, at the opening of *Tell Me How You Create* session.

A panel of three talented artists then offered insights on how their creative processes work.

Monika Mulder, a rising design star who works for IKEA, believes that every human being creates, even if just to survive by building a shelter or forming a bowl with his or her own hands to drink water. The next step is to invent a cup or glass to make drinking easier. But why make more than one type of glass? *"If you add aesthetics, you have a choice, and choice makes you unique,"* she said.

Mulder noted that *"good design demands creativity, and creativity demands that the creator be able to step away from existing solutions, not be focused on the end result, and be open to including*

influences from sources that are not connected to the work subject."

She likes to use what is available, to see possibilities, to create from scratch and to come up with good results using minimal means. She also feels that it's important to dare to fail. Asked how she stimulates creativity, she said: *"Everybody has a personal archive with knowledge and talent. When we meet a problem, we first use this to find solutions. But we also need other input!"* She believes that *"creativity is endless, as long as you supply yourself with resources."*

Working with form, function and people's needs is the starting point for every designer, she said, but what makes a designer's creation unique is how she uses her opinions, intuition and experience, and how she reflects upon the world around her. *"When it comes to myself, I think that a huge source of creativity is actually me! Because I am the receiver and carrier of anything that can help me create."*

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A web of connection
enables us to design
and create



But I have to keep my archive filled. Therefore I work on the factory floor, listen, observe, live!"

Mulder is convinced that the restrictions she has to comply with in terms of designing space-saving objects in her job actually stimulate her creativity. Her daily work requires her to find new solutions for everyday products, such as a water can that can be stacked for easier transport by the distributor.

But Mulder is also an acute observer who integrates her observations into her designs. She might even find inspiration right on the factory floor: *"When I was at the factory in Vietnam, I saw workers carrying heavy pots of clay in and out of the oven and into the drying chamber. They were very heavy on their backs, so I decided right away to design handles for the pots."* The resulting pot was not only good for people in the factory, but also for the store and for people at home when they have to move heavy pots.

Another panellist, Rebecca Allen, an artist who uses advanced technologies in her work, started thinking about the computer's potential importance to society as early as 1974. *"It seemed important as an artist that I start to work with computers and understand them and, in a way, help to form their personalities."*

This brought her into the world of technology where – as an artist and a woman – she felt like something of an intruder, a feeling she still occasionally experiences. But she is convinced that if women had been more involved in digital technology, our relationship to the machines we use and the technology that is part of our daily lives would be very different. Inspired by the potential of advanced technology, she tries to find novel ways to use it and make it accessible to the public.

She is also interested in the role of the human body and movement. What role does the body play in the Information Age? Exploring the aesthetics of motion, especially human motion, and the study of behaviour, she conceived *"The Catherine Wheel"* project in 1982 in collaboration with choreographer Twyla Tharp, with a computer-animated female figure dancing

WHO IS?

Rebecca Allen, *who has the rare talent of integrating art and advanced technologies, was a pioneer in many areas of computer art. Currently Professor in the Design/Media Arts Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, she has spent the last two years working at MIT's Media Lab in Dublin, where she directed the \$100 Laptop Design Project and she's of Director of HDL Next Generation Design Project.*



Lauralee Alben

alongside a live performer. Combining her research work and art led her to another project: a computer-animated music video, "*Musique Non Stop*", made for the German band Kraftwerk in 1986, featuring the digitalized heads of the band members.

From 2003 to 2005, as the Director of the Liminal Devices Research group in MIT's Media Lab in Dublin, Ireland, she worked on intimate interfaces, examining ways in which to use discreet, subtle interactions like body movements in mobile technology. The resulting MyoPhone technology uses LED-equipped glasses with integrated caller display and an EMG muscle sensor to accept or

refuse a phone call, therefore causing minimal disruption to the environment.

Rebecca Allen, who is also a Professor in the Design/Media Arts Department at the University of California, Los Angeles, is currently working on the development of a simple \$100 laptop for schoolchildren in developing countries as part of the HDL Next Generation Design Project.

Her advice to potential creators: "*Look at things from an unusual perspective. Break the rules. Take risks. Don't try to be like others. Exploit your differences. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Find a mentor. Go Girl!*". She added with a smile: "*I always want to go where I'm not supposed to be.*"

Jane Fulton Suri, Global Head of Human Factors Design and Research for IDEO, showed the session's participants photos of what she calls "*thoughtless acts*": people sitting on a bench evenly distanced

WHO IS?

*The Global Head of Human Factors Design and Research for IDEO, a leading design consultancy based in California, **Jane Fulton Suri** was the brain behind its people-centred approach to design. Her designs have won numerous awards and have been produced by many of the world's leading manufacturers, from Kodak to Nokia.*

from each other, for example, or a couple sitting on a sidewalk watching a street artist perform as if they were in a theatre. Her fascination with people led her to wonder what makes them do the things they do. Why have the people on the bench left a certain distance between them, for example? Who told people to put their empty cups on the wall in the subway station? Why do they do this every day?

Her work involves creating an atmosphere that allows designers and engineers to understand the needs of their customers and improve everyday products or work flows. A good example is the collaboration between designers and engineers on a new mask for people with sleep apnoea. The old masks were held on to the face with two strong elastic bands. While users didn't care about its aesthetic aspects as much as its benefits – restful and uninterrupted sleep – they were pleased that the improved version, attached at the front and back of the head, was more comfortable.

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Creativity is endless
when you have
the resources

Another project Fulton Suri has worked on involves developing empathy with others by looking at things from their point of view. To improve a patient's hospital stay, she filmed nurses and doctors from the position of patients and their

families. The result conveyed a feeling of being lost caused by a lack of communication. Solving the organizational problems identified in the film inspired the whole team and created an empathic connection with the patients and their families.

"All people are in some way connected," said Fulton Suri. "There is a web of connection that enables us to design and create; it involves all kinds of individuals, and it's all about people. But we haven't really extended our empathic connection to the whole supply chain and a whole new cycle of products. By building on this, can we imagine and create together? Can we actually develop a more conscious, more connected and more empathic economy?" ■

8:30 A.M.

PLENARY SESSION IN PARALLEL II - WHAT NEW POLICIES ARE NEEDED TO STEP UP THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

*Mame Bassine Niang, Nicole Ameline, Amanda Ellis*MOVING
WOMEN UP

This plenary session focused on a vital question: what new policies are needed to step up the empowerment of women in the economy and society?

The first guest introduced was Mame Bassine Niang, Minister and Commissioner for Human Rights and Peace of Senegal. Niang, known as the "*Lady of Human Rights*" in Africa, was the first female lawyer to join the Dakar bar, in 1975.

As a promoter of women's rights in Africa, Niang believes there are still basic universal values that need to be met in terms of equality, parity, gender and political power. Another pressing problem is the feminization of poverty in Africa. She believes women need to have an autonomous economic existence before they can have a powerful impact on the well being of their families and children, and they need to have a voice in order to have political power.

Speaking from an African standpoint on gender inequality, she said, "*We need to cut the chains*". She believes that Africans should look for examples in other coun-

tries where a framework has been created for policies like microcredit providers and other NGO's with structures that make real opportunities available. Locally based community NGO's like microcredit organizations give women space to breathe so that they can have an economic life, she said.

Niang added that women in Africa could benefit from the positive effects of globalization if they had the "*power, knowledge and means*".

Nicole Ameline, former Minister for Parity and Professional Equality in France, stressed the importance of women as "actors", not just beneficiaries, in the realm of politics.

As she sees it, the law plays an important role in helping to modernize society in such areas as the protection of women from violence. She also advocates policies that advance the education of young women in the fields of math and science (and quotas for them in the professional world) and that create networks of women so they can build solidarity amongst themselves.

Ameline would like to see more

“ Dialogue is an instrument of change



solidarity amongst women and men in strengthening the positive role of women in the cultural environment, and more interest from corporations in modernizing their corporate cultures to create more equality for women. She also touched on the specific role of women in politics. She believes that women need to invest in themselves and must constantly put themselves forward in both the professional and political worlds. "Dialogue is an instrument of change", she said, and pointed to Simone Veil as an exemplary model of a woman with a political voice who has brought the cause of women to the forefront.

Women need to be in the avant-garde, she continued, and be aware of what is happening in politics on the local and regional levels. They should also be presenting themselves for legislative positions, which is key to building the future. She concluded by saying, "What happens tomorrow is a direct result of what we do today."

Amanda Ellis, Head of Gender-Entrepreneurship-Markets (GEM) for the International Finance Corporation, provided concrete examples of actions being taken by her organization that are showing the way for the creation of policies that empower women.

GEM, she said, helps raise awareness on three levels: macro, meso and micro. On a macro level, it encourages governments to link economic development with gender equality by raising awareness of legal and regulatory issues. A recent gender growth assessment

study undertaken in Uganda found that approximately 0.2% growth per annum was lost as a result of legislated gender inequalities.

Another example is Kenya, where women make up 49% of small- and medium-sized enterprises but own only 1% of the land. The constitution prevents women from inheriting land, which makes it almost impossible for them to get loans in a collateral-based banking system, thus explaining the growth of microcredit providers.

On a meso level, gaining access to finance and to markets are two major issues for women in emerging markets. GEM works with organisations like the Global Alliance for Women to incorporate « *best practices* » into developed country banks that see an interest in women beyond microcredit and who may not understand how to make this sustainable. She cited the example of ECCO bank in Ghana, which has a large number of women in senior management positions. They encouraged the bank to move beyond microcredit and reach out to women in the informal economy who don't have access to a formal banking system.

The micro level involves the issue of education, not only formal education but also education in financial literacy and business. She believes women are good at what they do but have difficulty articulating it in a business plan.

Ellis concluded by expressing her hopes that in 10 years' time, the "incredible power" of women starting businesses will be unleashed. ■

10:15^{A.M.}**WORKSHOP I - PEOPLE IN POWER: MALE OR FEMALE, DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?***Herminia Ibarra, Laure Veyradier, Mei Yan, Christina Carvalho-Pinto*

CORPORATE POWER: WHO'S ON TOP AND WHY?

That was the question put to four high-powered managers at the "People in Power" workshop: Herminia Ibarra, INSEAD Chaired Professor of Organizational Behaviour; Laure Veyradier, Head of Site, Southern Congo, Total E&P; Mei Yan, Chief Corporate Alliance Officer, News Corp. China and STAR

China; and Christina Carvalho-Pinto, President and Partner, Group Full Jazz de Comunicação. The issue of roadblocks faced by women en route to the top was also on the agenda.

Ibarra discussed what it takes to reach a position of power and what difference gender makes in that trajectory. She feels that career success can be defined in various ways, but most studies use such traditional measures as position in the hierarchy, power and prestige.

In an aside, she reflected upon the definition of ambition. A recent study published in the Harvard Business Review asked, "Do women lack ambition?" Ambition was found to be a combination of the desire to achieve and the desire for recognition. The second factor is what causes problems for women, since studies have repeatedly shown that women get less encouragement and recognition early on in their career.

She identified three elements that force women to take a different path to the top than men: their skills and experience, or "human capital", which

WHO IS?

INSEAD Chaired Professor of Organizational Behaviour **Herminia Ibarra** *is an expert on talent management, leadership development and women's careers. An international consultant and lecturer, she is the author of Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career (Harvard Business School Press).*

includes education and credentials; networks, or "social capital"; and style or image, which determines how they are perceived.

Ibarra feels that women have made enormous strides in achieving the same level of professional skills as men. Today, women and men have the same level of education and competencies at the beginning of their career; the divergence that leads to unequal numbers at higher levels crops up later. She believes that this divergence comes from underestimating the power of networking: "*Networking and relations are critical for everybody*," she said. "*They are your source of information, of intelligence, of mentoring, of career support, of people who open doors.*"

Elite business circles do not expressly exclude women but are built on affinity and similarity. She expects gatherings like the Women's Forum to become more and more popular, since women who actively network with other women do better in their careers.

She sees a lack of self-promotion and image-building as a major roadblock standing in the way of women in careers that are still male-dominated. Women resist self-promotion because "*it feels like fundamentally changing who we are*". She suggests that women make an effort to promote their own accomplishments, while keeping in mind that they are often judged more harshly than men when they behave in a similar way.

Veyradier, an oil-drilling platform manager, used her personal experience to describe the differences between men and women in powerful positions. She explained that while her job is open to persons of both sexes, she is only the second female drilling platform

“A lack of self-promotion and image-building can stand in the way of a woman's career

manager in her company because it requires working four weeks on site, followed by four weeks off, a schedule many women cannot reconcile with their family life. Since this position is a necessary step on the company's promotional ladder, women are effectively blocked from advancement to higher levels.

She believes that women have a different way of solving problems, which is not necessarily better than men's but complementary to it; for example, she has noticed that she puts much more emphasis on safety and human well-being than her male replacement does.

She has also noticed that men don't usually attack women on their competency but on cultural issues: instead of being asked if she is fit for her work, she is often asked why she chose it. Now that the company has seen that women can handle such jobs, however, it is starting to promote other women and is especially looking for local female engineers.

Mei, from the People's Republic of China, chose to approach the duality between emancipation and femininity by looking at her country's history. Until the Revolution, women were subservient to men. Then Mao Zedong, in an effort to unite the entire country, placed women on the same level as men. Women were to hold the same jobs and share the same responsibilities, but were also required to dress like men. Mei regrets that women's new power was acquired at the expense of their womanhood – they were actually asked to look like men in a male-centred society. Today, the consumer society that developed with economic growth has turned women into human commodities – she observed that women seem to be reverting to their traditional role.

WHO IS?

*In her role as Chief Corporate Alliance Officer for News Corporation China and Star China, **Mei Yan** is responsible for legislative developments and helping to strengthen government and industry partnerships. She has over 16 years of broadcasting experience, part of it with CNN, in Europe, the United States and Asia.*

Only a minority of Chinese women are successful, and they are more likely to live in urban areas and work in the private sector. For Mei, women still haven't found their true place in social structures. She warned that the Chinese government should pay close attention to the potential social problems caused by women's position in society.

Carvalho-Pinto looked at the question of leadership, noting that Brazilians' multicultural background has always helped them be creative enough to overcome obstacles. In her country, she feels decisions are not made based on gender but on culture. Although sentiment and sensitivity are supposedly female traits, while men are considered to be tough and dry, she believes that both men and women show a combination of various degrees of these characteristics, and that a specific combination of them allows an individual, whether male or female, to get to the top.

She defines leadership as the art of understanding

processes, of serving and thinking of the other. The female role needs to be redefined, as does the meaning of success. "I do not like the word 'career,'" said Carvalho-Pinto. "I like the word 'vocation!'"

In response to a question from the audience on whether leadership is perceived differently for men and women and whether charisma plays a role, Ibarra noted that people are perceived as charismatic if they have a clear goal that they believe in deeply and that they are able to describe simply and clearly. Behind all this is a sense of something being "for the good of the people", a connection with some fundamental human need. She believes this is true for both men and women.

To sum up the main points raised during the session: men and women exercise leadership differently because they take a different approach to people and problems. Some rules are valid for both genders, however, and women must learn to use these tools properly if they want to climb the corporate ladder. ■

WHO IS?

Laure Veyradier, *Head of Site in Southern Congo for Total E&P, the world's fourth-largest oil and gas company and a leading chemicals manufacturer, is only the second woman to hold the position of drilling platform manager in the company, which is now promoting more women to such jobs.*

10:15^{A.M.}

WORKSHOP II - THE ART OF INNOVATION: NURTURING IT IN THE COMPANY

Armelle Carminati-Rabasse, Lauralee Alben, Bola Olabisi

DARING TO INNOVATE

Three talented women attempted to demystify the idea of innovation at the workshop entitled "*The Art of Innovation: Nurturing It in the Company*" by examining its social dimension and how to create a propitious environment for it.

WHO IS?

*A strong believer in innovation as the key to growth in the retail industry, **Laurence Danon** is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Printemps in France and a member of the PPR Executive Committee. She began her career as an engineer and has held a number of responsible positions in industry and government.*

Moderator Laurence Danon, Chairman and CEO of Printemps department store, threw out three topics for discussion: product innovation, retail innovation and social innovation. She opened the debate by saying that innovation is key to the retail industry. Studies have shown that the introduction of an innovative product can increase growth by 20% over forecasts and double share prices in less than five years.

Armelle Carminati-Rabasse, Managing Partner Retail Europe, Accenture, pointed out that innovation can be appreciated by everyone, not just by more sophisticated consumers. Over the past 10 years, the retail business had been fairly simple, the only requirement being to get the right product on the shelf in the right place and sell it. Today, however, many more criteria come into play, creating unpredictability. Products are expected to create a feeling of value, be authentic and provide consumers with a certain level of well-being. Some products create a feeling of belonging to a certain social category. In this new world, retailers need to rethink products and store design to better respond to complicated new customer needs.

She used the example of Accenture's total redesign of a Sainsbury supermarket located in a middle-class suburb near Manchester, England. The market, which was losing market share, was broken up into segments for three categories of people: single, well-off urbanites who are always in a rush; people who feel they need to be valued (the "inspire-me" people); and families.

For the first group, a mini-convenience store was opened within the supermarket, with a vending machine selling 200 different products, including fresh bread. The people who wanted to be cared for got a "customer ambassador" service to carry their shopping and load it into their cars. Families were offered an Internet café, TV sets, a play area and a bar for the husbands. The store's entire internal processing system was revised, with electronic shelves that allow for

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Innovators should
welcome uncertainty
and luck

price discounts at any time during the day. A new circulation system was also created, with three alleys to spread out traffic (75% of customers normally head straight for the side alley on the right).

Carminati noted that many lessons have been learned from such innovative projects, including the importance of "thinking big" when undertaking them. Innovation is not about creating laboratory products in secrecy or winning a Nobel Prize but about getting results. Emotion was key to the success of the supermarket project; in their new role as customer ambassadors, employees felt valued, and, at the end of the day, that is what matters, since teamwork is essential to innovation. Although it feels counterintuitive, innovators should welcome uncertainty and luck, since risk drives value and makes one reach for more. Finally, she said, innovation creates value.

Lauralee Alben, Founder of Alben Design and the Sea Change Consortium, advised organizations to transform inertia into innovation and described how to design strategic continuum innovation within an organization so that it fits in a global setting, with the intention of innovating indefinitely and building momentum.

The innovation continuum process is composed of four steps, she said. The first step is to "intend to innovate indefinitely", which builds momentum. Organizations need to transform inertia into innovation. The second step is to encourage employees to grow by bridging different departments and skills, and keeping communication channels open. It is critical that employees feel valued for their contribution. The third step involves creating an optimal innovation environment in which the company is really connec-

WHO IS?

Armelle Carminati-Rabasse, *an expert in strategy and large-scale transformation programmes, especially in the realm of retailing, was recently appointed European Leadership and Diversity Programme Leader for Accenture France. An accomplished speaker, she is also the head of Accenture's "Accent sur Elles" women's programme.*

ted to all functions and broader issues in the outside world. In the fourth step, the company taps into the source of innovation, which is composed of four layers: physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual (in the sense of creativity and caring). Again, employees need to feel engaged in a meaningful way so that they can engage in innovative processes.

Innovation should be seen as a constant circular flow, moving back and forth between the organization and customers. Organizations should process customer feedback and feed it back into the outflow towards the market and customers. *"When innovation flows, it creates powerful energy,"* said Alben. *"Innovation happens when an organizations intends to care about the future; it needs to be responsive to the world context and provide meaning and purpose to customers' and employees' lives".* Alben concluded by saying that

"infinite innovation happens when organizations go with the flow".

Bola Olabisi, Founder and CEO of the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network, credits women with coming up with brilliant ideas for many new ventures. She feels that it is essential for women to bring innovation out into the open, using the example of a woman working at a multinational who had an idea for an innovative, cost-effective non-toxic paint product, which would benefit both the company and the community. Her company's reaction was, *"If it's not broken, don't fix it,"* so she quit. Olabisi sees this as just one example of why it is important to build in strategies that allow employees, especially women, to create and innovate within organizations without other people feeling threatened by it.

Olabisi added that having an idea and actually creating a new venture is often a very difficult process that involves many elements, including intellectual property rights, equity, branding and packaging norms. Again, a strategy is needed to accompany innovative projects so that they can become a reality.

Finally, she said that innovation is not just about cutting-edge products – all new ideas should be brought out into the open and pursued, especially if they are good for the community as a whole.

The consensus of the workshop was that innovation is closely related to freedom – the freedom women need to dare to present their ideas. ■

WHO IS?

Christina Carvalho-Pinto, *President and Partner of Group Full Jazze de Comunicação, is one of Brazil's top advertising executives. In 2004, Forbes magazine named her Brazil's most influential woman in her sector. She was the first woman in South America to head an international advertising group, Young & Rubicam, where she worked for seven years.*

10:15^{A.M.}

WORKSHOP III - CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: BEYOND THE POLITICALLY CORRECT

Jos Nijhuis, Frank Welvaert, Carolyne Coquet, Paola Ghillani, Geneviève Ferone

IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY HERE TO STAY?

Corporate Social Responsibility is the new buzzword in international business, but what does it actually mean for companies and society? Is it compatible with profitability?

WHO IS?

***Jos Nijhuis**, Chairman of the Management Board of PricewaterhouseCoopers in the Netherlands, is also President of the Dutch Ambassadors Network. He joined his firm in 1980, starting as a trainee in the Mergers & Acquisitions department in New York, and quickly rose through the ranks, holding various positions of responsibility.*

The five panellists at the workshop entitled "Corporate Responsibility: Beyond the Politically Correct" discussed the meaning of CSR and how they try to put it into practice.

According to Jos Nijhuis, CEO of PricewaterhouseCoopers Netherlands, the growth of CSR was clearly a reaction to the development of consumer and environmental movements and the boycotts of some companies. It became popular mainly as part of a public relations marketing strategy, he said, but examples of genuine involvement do exist. Some companies share their expertise with charities or programmes helping developing countries. It has also had a tremendous effect on employees of these companies, who have become much more involved in their jobs. In this sense, CSR links core competencies and involves long-term business, ethics and social engagements.

Frank Welvaert, Chairman CSR Europe and Corporate Social Responsibility Director for

Johnson & Johnson, adds that the real question is, "How do we put CSR into practice?" He stressed the importance of management, which has to be proactive, since CSR is a people issue and must involve dialogue, commitments and goals. "CSR has to be ingrained in people," he said, with every management board and employee aware of what it involves.

In March 2005, five goals were identified by 65 global businesses that are part of CSR Europe at Johnson & Johnson: innovation and entrepreneurship, skills and competence building, equal opportunity and diversity, health and safety, and environmental protection.

WHO IS?

*As Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for Johnson & Johnson Europe, **Frank Welvaert** is in charge of helping the giant international healthcare-product corporation implement CSR in 65 global businesses. He is also Chairman of the Board of Corporate Social Responsibility Europe, a business-led CSR network.*

“**CSR has to be ingrained in people.**”

For Carolyne Coquet, Cabinet Director to the President and CEO of Cartier International, CSR has to be more than a company responsibility; since it is closely related to a company's culture, it should be considered a company philosophy and not just a project with no long-term impact.

For Cartier, the need for a CSR policy is obvious for a company that plans to last for hundreds of years. Together with other jewellers and manufacturers, Cartier founded the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices, whose goal is excellence all along the line, from mining to the end product.

"I say yes to CSR from a company perspective," said Coquet, "and definitely from an industry perspective, but we also need to look at CSR from a social perspective, because it affects our products as well as the world we live in and what we leave to our children in the future."

Paola Ghillani, founder and president of Paola Ghillani and Friends Ltd, described her company as a group of people working to "improve life on the planet through the economy" and dealing with corporate responsibility in trade, environment and daily business strategy. Their mission is to assist companies in integrating corporate responsibility so that it will be a key success factor and not an expensive, difficult-to-implement burden.

As the former CEO of the Max Havelaar Foundation, a fair-trade organization, she helped to popularize the idea of consumers' responsibility in daily life.

WHO IS?

Carolyn Coquet *is Cabinet Director to the President and Chief Executive Officer of Cartier International, where she is in charge of developing the company's fine jewellery strategy. A UK Certified Accountant, she has worked as an auditor for Deloitte & Touche in Malawi and for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Switzerland.*

She feels that economic responsibility cannot be separated from corporate responsibility – a separate philanthropic foundation is not enough. Customers must be aware of the social and environmental origins of the products they buy, she said, adding that many big challenges still lie ahead, such as creating a code of conduct for raw-material production in developing countries so that CSR will have genuine objectives and to demonstrate that it can be an economic success.

She concluded by saying that if people, especially women, were more aware of the production process behind what they buy, they would recognise how much power they have and take more responsibility as consumers and individuals.

The last speaker, Geneviève Ferone, Managing Director of BMJ Core Ratings, offered an independent point of view on CSR practices and future issues. CSR is really taking off, she said, but to be taken seriously by companies, it should be based more on financial criteria than on charity. She feels that companies have CSR policies to help them deal with risks, rather than seeing it as an opportunity. The risks are related to image and collateral damage, and with complex, long-term CSR issues like environmental pressures, which will require new management and logistics models.

She added that all this means that companies, institutions and government must invest more in CRS to ensure that it has an impact on culture,

WHO IS?

Paola Ghillani, *a pharmacist by profession, is the founder of the consulting company Paola Ghillani & Friends Ltd., Switzerland, and a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The former Chief Executive Officer of the Max Havelaar Foundation, she helps her clients integrate social, economic and environmental responsibility into their strategies.*



CSR should be considered
a company philosophy with
long-term impact

politics, education and human rights, especially in emerging countries.

During the animated discussion that followed, the panellists noted that criticism will help CSR evolve in a positive way and that it must be the concern of top management. Governments and the international community must also take the risk of tackling such issues as raw-material production in Africa and the development of these countries (with fair practices in trade) to prevent social bombs like the clandestine immigration of Africans to Europe. It was pointed out that two-thirds of ethical fund investors are women. ■

WHO IS?

*The Managing Director of BMJ Core Ratings in France, **Geneviève Ferone** has worked for the UN and the OECD. An expert in socially responsible investments, she founded ARESE, the first French firm to rate listed companies on social and environmental criteria, in 1997 and acted as its president until 2002.*

10:15 A.M.

WORKSHOP IV - LEVERAGING DIVERSITY: BEST PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING WOMEN

Josefine van Zanten, Maud Pagel, Hema Ravichandar, Monique Simon

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Who wouldn't agree that gender diversity is a desirable goal that helps create a smoothly functioning, enjoyable work environment? But what's the best way to go about accomplishing it, and how can we get the most out of it? Four high-powered women talked about their

corporate experiences at the Women's Forum workshop entitled "*Leveraging Diversity: Best Practices for Integrating Women*".

Josefine van Zanten, long-time EMEA Diversity & Inclusion Director for Hewlett Packard Europe, Middle East and Africa, was in a unique position to speak on the subject. She began by saying that since a company must be able to relate to its customers, it is essential to have a management team that best reflects the target market. "*You need people with different opinions and varied perspectives for looking at issues and opportunities*," she said. The broader knowledge and wider experience of a diversified management team is better able to analyze today's business opportunities and solve problems.

Van Zanten advises approaching diversity and inclusion like a business case by defining a plan with a strategy, with a vision focusing on getting the best people in the right positions, not promoting a woman just because she is a woman. A broader pool of candidates that includes women offers a better assurance of finding the best person for the job.

WHO IS?

*A Senior Executive Vice President at Deutsche Telekom, **Maud Pagel** has been in charge of Diversity in the company's Human Resources Department since 1998. She belongs to several professional organizations, including Women in the Information Society, Women in Industry and Women Give New Impetus to Technology (member of the Managing Board).*

The entire senior management team must not only embrace and support a gender diversity programme, but must also communicate effectively to ensure that everyone in the company is aware of it. This is also crucial for eliminating fears that only women will be hired and promoted – a concern that often arises when diversity programmes are introduced. Van Zanten recommends talking about the diversity objective and embedding it in internal and external communications, newsletters, senior conversations and interviews. And all leaders must be trained so they can successfully recognize, develop and mentor top talent and encourage career advancement.

Senior management should also ensure that women gain visibility through mentoring and by being inclu-

“Diversity can and should be treated as a business case with its own strategy

ded in the organization's "invisible networks". Companies could, for example, invite female employees to cocktail parties, dinners and luncheons that include senior executives.

The work environment should also be conducive to diversity. Schedules could be arranged to accommodate personal and professional needs, since more talented women might stay on the job if they were offered on-site day-care centres, support from nutritionists, etc.

As with any business case, van Zanten said, "it's essential to review the results of your diversity programme. Setting up a team to review and discuss results is crucial." Communicating statistical results is also imperative for continued internal support.

All that is not enough, however. Once senior management has been convinced of the value of a diversity programme, the management layers below must also be convinced. While it is time-consuming to speak with each manager or hold meetings, it is important because they are the ones who are identifying talented women and helping them advance.

Maud Pagel, Vice President, Human Resources and Diversity, Deutsche Telekom Germany, believes that in order for any diversity programme to be successful "we must start the conversation in our private lives by discussing gender diversity with our fathers, husbands, sons, etc., not just at conferences."

Women have to adapt and make use of new technologies, she continued. Since economic growth is technology-driven, they must choose their educational paths and career accordingly. Success

WHO IS?

*As former Senior Vice President and Group Head for Human Resources at Infosys in India, **Hema Ravichandar** oversaw the growth of the company's workforce from only 250 to 40,000 employees. In 2004, Dataquest named her one of six "IT Superwomen" and Business Today selected her as one of the 25 most powerful women in Indian business.*

WHO IS?

*As Diversity and Inclusion Director for Hewlett Packard in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, **Josefine van Zanten** is charged with developing and implementing diversity and work-life programmes to create an inclusive work environment. The multilingual van Zanten joined the company in 1996 and has worked in a variety of positions.*

requires breaking down barriers – in their own minds, in business and in other people's minds.

Pagel characterizes the situation in Germany, which has Europe's lowest rate of female employment, as bleak. People still feel that a woman is not a good mother if she doesn't stay at home with her children, and that a man who stays home is not smart enough to work. Deutsche Telekom is making serious efforts to combat this attitude by developing mentoring programmes, school programmes that encourage pre-teen girls to learn about technology, and family programmes that not only involve in-house day-care centres but also address care of the elderly – in Germany, 30 million people are over 50.

Another perspective on diversity was provided by Hema Ravichandar, former Senior Vice President and Group Head for Human Resources at Infosys, India. Ravichandar started her career at Bosch, an

engineering company, where she was one of the youngest employees in the company and one of the very few women in management. As the IT sector boomed, Ravichandar joined Infosys, which had only 250 employees; today, it has an international workforce of 40,000. Ravichandar led their HR initiative and is proud to say that the gender diversity ratio, originally less than 10%, is now 24%, with entry-level positions as high as 35%.

India still has many gender issues to address. Ravichandar noted that while girls do better than boys in school examinations across the country, employment of women in the organized sector is as low as 18%. Women make up only 1% of senior management in India's top 25 companies, and they spend 10 times more time on housework than men, even in families where both husband and wife work. In the workplace, surveys show that 50% of women have experienced gender discrimination or physical and mental harassment, while 85% of women have never even heard of the Indian Supreme Court's landmark judgement declaring that every organization must have an anti-sexual harassment policy led by a woman who is not employed by the company.

On a positive note, India has made great strides in educating women. Literacy rates are rising, unemployment is dropping, and birth control and health education programmes are in place in various states. Job opportunities are plentiful – the Times of India in Bangalore often has 18 pages a week of job advertisements!

Ravichandar noted that the growth of the service sector has definitely helped women advance in India – in the software industry alone, the percentage of females has grown from under 10% to 23%. She added that business, not government, has been the

driving factor in increasing women's employment.

She believes that it is up to top management to set the agenda for getting more women in mid-level to senior positions.

Infosys's IWIN (Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network) was sponsored by the company's chairman himself, which strengthened the message. Senior management must create an open culture that embraces diversity so all employees can see that it is helping business.

Ravichandar then talked about her research on successful initiatives undertaken by leading global companies. The chairman of Royal Dutch Group, for example, has a diversity council comprised of the managers in the 120 countries in which RDG operates. They are held responsible for implementing diversity in the local organization. Ravichandar also mentioned the importance of role models, pointing to the creative approach taken by GE India, which scours newspapers for female success stories and puts them online for their employees.

Companies can also retain talent by creating outlets for women to share their thoughts or problems. Monique Simon, HR Director for Total France, said, "*Total has created a meeting-less debate via intranet whereby women can comment online and debate gender issues and initiatives together.*" The issues discussed in this forum are reviewed by a Total diversity council, which develops programmes to address them.

“Women must also break down internal barriers

Simon believes that companies need to set diversity objectives beginning at the recruitment level. Total's goal is to match the percentage of female graduates; if 50% of business school graduates are women,

for example, the company tries to recruit a minimum of 50% women.

Total's Diversity Council, staffed by male and female employees around the world and chaired by a member of the executive committee, has raised awareness of the issue in a short period of time. One programme is designed to ensure that women on maternity leave are not left behind in terms of salary increases. Total also organises luncheons with the CEO for selected female employees to discuss issues that might be blocking their advancement in the company, such as mobility.

All these initiatives are only part of the success equation, however. Women must also break down internal barriers. Many women qualified for career advancement lack the self-confidence and support systems they need. If women would adopt new technologies and dare to take risks, they could improve their chances of success. Another factor is that many women don't feel comfortable about expressing their desire for power.

Once women are prepared to remove these and other self-inhibitors, the equation for success will be complete, and diversity will become a firmly embedded reality in companies. ■

10:15 A.M.

WORKSHOP V - HEALTH IS EVEN MORE THAN WHAT YOU THINK

Charlyn Belluzzo, Françoise Forette

LIVE WELL LIVE LONGER

Ever-increasing human life spans are raising new questions about health and health care. How can we preserve our physical and mental health in such stressful times and environments? What personal responsibilities and influence do we have?

Two prominent speakers at the workshop "*Health Is Even More Than What You Think*" shed some light on these questions.

Charlyn Belluzzo, a scientist and Managing Partner at Corso Partners, defined the practice of medicine as the art and science of maintaining and restoring a perfect balance of health. Our health depends on a delicate equilibrium between various systems, she said, from the smallest molecules in our body to the global environment, which impacts our well-being.

These carefully balanced internal factors can be threatened by any number of outside forces. Domestic violence, for example, affects 10% to 15% of women in the United States alone, and 50% of women experience domestic and family

violence some time in their life. The effects of such problems on health aren't always discussed publicly. Depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder have all increased after such major disasters as the September 11 attacks in New York City, the bombings in Madrid and London, the tsunami in Southeast Asia and the recent hurricanes. Their toll in terms of trauma and death has been scientifically documented.

High-stress jobs can increase the risk of heart attacks, affecting women almost as much as men. Of women aged 45 to 65, one out of six suffers from a form of heart disease. On a wider scale, pollution affects the food we eat (fish, for example), malaria is expanding into new areas and threatening the lives of children, and smoke in cities is leading to increased lung inflammation and higher rates of asthma.

“When we help developing countries with healthcare, we promote prosperity

"What a gloomy picture of our life, you might say!" said Belluzzo. But she then went on to add that all of us can make choices that affect our own lives and the lives of others by, for example, eating right and doing



regular exercise, and reducing the risk of mental anguish and heart disease by adopting stress-management strategies. *"We can advocate for all citizens to have access to health care at all times. In our companies and organizations, we as a group of highly capable and influential women can initiate plans for healthier and safer work environments. We can encourage corporate responsibility. We can lobby and regulate policies that impact the conditions of health, and as opinion leaders, we can shape the interest and values of those who follow our lead."*

Belluzzo concluded with a reminder to consider the delicate balance of health each time we evaluate our choices, adding that we have an opportunity to collectively set change into motion.

Françoise Forette, president of the International Longevity Centre in France, began by noting that the increase of longevity is a *"great privilege enjoyed by developed countries"*.

Health is a highly heterogeneous process, she said, which is affected by both genetic and environmental factors. Among the latter are one's socio-economic level and access to medical care and prevention.

Access to preventive medical care is extremely unequal around the world: life expectancy is over 80 years in Japan, 69 in Brazil and only 37 in Zimbabwe. Forette noted that there is a positive correlation between

health (as measured by life expectancy) and income per capita. A higher economic level provides access to goods and services that promote health, and the indicator also works the other way around: a high life-expectancy in a country is automatically a predictor for economic wealth. A *"virtuous circle"* links health and income.

What this means, said Forette, is that when we help developing countries with health care, we promote prosperity – the economic boom in Asia was closely related to the improvement of health there – and it is important that these countries understand this.

What are the priorities? We need to work on age-related diseases to modify risk factors, since such problems as cardiovascular disease, strokes, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, diminished hearing and vision, teeth and gum problems, and cancers are all susceptible to such preventive actions as fighting childhood obesity and teenage smoking, and encouraging the use of sun protection. Studies have shown that the education of young mothers is vital in encouraging prevention.

Forette's advice to the audience was to stay in good health and remain active, since some stress is stimulating. She noted that in France, only 7% of men over 60 are still working. ■

11:40 A.M.

PLENARY SESSION - HOW DO YOU SPELL LEADERSHIP?

Barbara Jeremiah, Anne Lauvergeon, Laura Liswood

ATTAINING LEADERSHIP: A SISYPHEAN TASK?

Is there such a thing as a "natural born leader"? What characteristics does a person have to have to become a real leader?

Three women in powerful leadership positions tried to answer these questions at the entitled session "How Do You Spell Leadership?" Anne Lauvergeon, Chairman of the Executive Board of Areva, France; Laura Liswood, Special Advisor for Goldman Sachs and Secretary-General of the Council of Women World Leaders; and Barbara Jeremiah, Executive Vice President of Alcoa, shared their own experiences with an intrigued audience.

According to Lauvergeon, there is no one leadership style, since no two individuals have the same ability to lead. She believes that it is fundamental for women to be true to their own nature. If they are authentic, their employees will also be more inclined to be true to themselves, which makes leading much easier.

Lauvergeon noted that the question of gender does not come when you

are a young girl or boy, learning mathematics, physics or science at school – what counts are your grades. Yet when women first arrive in the workforce, things change. They are in a double bind, being both young and female.

Liswood mentioned a study she did eight years ago, for which she interviewed 15 women world leaders and prime ministers in an effort to find shared traits that contributed to making them leaders. Certain universal traits were revealed, such as being a good communicator and listener, having ideas, encouraging others, having energy and – most importantly – being passionate.

Unfortunately, when they act on these characteristics, women sometimes suffer from gender-related troubles. Liswood gave the example of a male leader being considered "assertive" when he bombs a small country, while a woman leader is considered assertive if she puts you on hold on the phone.

Being on top can be not only

“Being on top
can be lonely
for female leaders

difficult for female leaders but also lonely. Liswood mentioned that one-third of the women she surveyed came to power by legacy or because the former leader – a relative – died or was assassinated. When these women "*leap to the top*", they find themselves feeling alone and isolated.

What are the differences in leadership from country to country? On her travels around the world, Jeremiah

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Even in Australia,
it is still difficult
for women to obtain
leadership status

has noticed that, even in such egalitarian countries as Australia, it is still difficult for women to obtain leadership status.

Where do we stand in the year 2005 in terms of female leadership? Do we need to continue defining leadership? Liswood responded by citing the myth of Sisyphus. Women are on the hillside, the rock is there, and it is now their turn to have enough vision to get the rock to the top. ■



Anne Lauvergeon, Barbara Jeremiah, Hilary Bowker

1:00 P.M.

KEYNOTE LUNCHEON - CREATING A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Cherie Booth

CHERIE BOOTH ON THE PARADOXES OF MODERN WOMEN'S LIVES

Cherie Booth, Queen's Counsel, Matrix Chambers UK, the keynote speaker at luncheon, spoke openly about her personal life while taking a serious look at the advances women have made and the challenges they still face. Her honest, witty and

pertinent presentation on the topic "*Creating a Level Playing Field for Women's Empowerment*" charmed the standing-room-only audience.

"I don't want set myself up as an example for others to follow!" she said modestly, speaking of how she manages to balance the various elements of her supercharged life. Not only is she a leading barrister, a founding member of Matrix Chambers and a member of the Queen's Counsel, but she is also the mother of four children and happens to be married to a "husband with a challenging job of his own".

She began by pointing out one of the "*paradoxes of modern life*": women have made many gains in terms of health, freedom, capacity to travel and more, but many new stresses have also been added. "I feel every day like one of those jugglers who has a line of plates spinning on the end of poles," she said, "except pretty well every day one or more of those plates crashes down to earth. I suspect many of you know that sound."

She spoke candidly about her own modest background as the daughter of a working mother who brought up two daughters after her husband

Cherie Booth



left her without financial support.

Booth's marriage to Tony Blair might have turned her into a victim of the "allerednic" syndrome, she said, explaining that the word stood for "Cinderella"

in reverse: *"the prince marries the princess and turns her into a scullery maid."* Instead, she was able to successfully combine work and family in part because her husband chose to give up his lucrative legal career when their first child was born and he was elected a Labour Member of Parliament, which allowed him to spend more time on childcare. Blair even took a week's paternity leave from his job as Prime Minister of the UK five years ago when the couple's youngest son was born.

Turning to the lives of other women, Booth cited a few facts from a World Economic Forum report, *"Women's Empowerment, Measuring the Global Gender Gap"*, which assessed the position of women in 58 countries. The report showed that not a single country has achieved true gender equality by comparable quality of life, equal opportunity for education and advancement.

The main obstacle to gender equality, said Booth, remains the lack of educational opportunities. Of the 130 million children not in school, for example, two out of every three are girls. While these issues are mostly relevant in the developing world, women in developed

“ I feel every day like one of those jugglers who has a line of plates spinning on the end of poles

countries are also victims of economic discrimination, especially working mothers. She cited research by Oxford Brooke's University (2001) demonstrating that in the UK most women fail to combine a full-time career with raising a child.

Decrying the increasing pressures on working mothers, she noted the negative effect on their health, relationships and the quality of time spent with family, friends and outside interests. In the UK, she said, many mothers work part time, which means lower pay in less-important positions. As a remedy, she called for increased flexibility in the workplace. *"An imaginative approach, combined with dialogue and partnership at every level of an organization, means a win-win situation for everyone."*

She also lauded the benefits of mentoring and the growth of female professional networks, which help to *"change attitudes by creating a culture of high aspiration in which success is the norm"*.

Booth concluded by stressing the fact that women need to come together to ensure that a good work-life balance *"is truly a reality, not just for the privileged few like me, but for everyone. Meetings like this are helping to do just that."*

While she may not consider herself a model for other women, the audience's warm reaction expressed their admiration for the example she set. ■

2:45 P.M.

PLENARY SESSION - CHANGING SOCIETIES, CHANGING BUSINESS

Marie-Jeanne Chèvremont-Lorenzini, Diane Graham, Françoise Gri, Sheikha Lubna al Qasimi

TOKEN WOMEN OR VITAL RESOURCES

What impact will women's growing role have on societies and business in the year ahead? That was the challenging question facing a diverse panel of four successful businesswomen in the afternoon plenary session entitled "*Changing Societies, Changing Business: how will women's increasing role impact on societies and business in the years ahead?*".

After 10 years of diversity policy and an equal number of women and men hired by her company, Marie-Jeanne Chèvremont-Lorenzini, Managing Partner and Global Human Capital Co-Leader, PwC Luxembourg, still finds herself working mainly with male managers at the European level.

"*We are talking long-term survival of our companies!*" she said. "*How can we retain the best talent in the company?*" She believes that managers have an important role to play in promoting the "*best brains*", whether male or female.

Diane Graham, Chairman and CEO of STRATCO Global, was one of the first women to become president of an engineering company.

She is also the chair emeritus of "*The Committee of 200*", whose initial goal was to reunite 200 female CEOs in a supportive network. Now the group numbers over 500 women from all over the world. Two topics close to her heart are mentoring women and girls, and encouraging girls to opt for science studies.

The Committee of 200's annual business leadership index shows the relative influence of women in business. "*We have made much progress in just four years,*" she said. "*Now the overall index is at 5.06 on a scale of 10.*"

The results are less encouraging for the venture capital funding index and Fortune 500 board positions. Venture capital is typically earmarked for technology companies, and if a woman does not have a background in science and math, the chances of getting such funding are very low – less than 1 on the scale. Graham thinks it might take 30 to 50 years to reach parity with men in Fortune 500 board positions.

Graham added that promoting women to senior positions helps companies to outperform others.

Leadership models might differ, but if they are efficient, they need to be accepted. "What we are now looking for is critical mass," she said.

Françoise Gri, Country General Manager of IBM France, feels that progress has been made in the past 50 years. IBM was one of the first global companies to establish an equality charter, in 1953. "An essential element of an organization is its capacity to face challenges," Gri said. "We all know instinctively that an organization rich in different points of view, culture and know-

“It might take 30 to 50 years to reach parity with men in Fortune 500 board positions

how is infinitely more dynamic and reactive to its environment." When diversity is integrated into the company culture, it confers a competitive advantage.

But diversity does not happen by chance, she said; it needs to be nurtured. IBM has set a goal of recruiting more women and helping them develop their careers. "If you aren't careful, a white male will recruit a white male in his image. We are automatically asking the question, 'Why not promote a woman?'" A training programme has also been set up to promote a new company culture that accepts differences



Marie-Jeanne Chèvremont-Lorenzini,
Françoise Gri, Diane Graham,
Sheikha Lubna al Qasimi, Véronique Morali

and recognizes their value as a source of enrichment.

Her Excellency, Sheika Lubna al Qasimi, the United Arab Emirates' Minister for Economy and Planning, appointed in November 2004, has become a role model in the Middle East as the first woman to hold a cabinet position in the country's history, an event that drew the attention of the international media. She feels that her appointment as Minister of Economy and Planning, rather than in a traditional women's sphere like education or health, is helping to spearhead the advancement of women in business and the economy.

Compared to other countries in the area, women's education is well advanced in the UAE, she said, with more women than men in technology and business colleges, and women being sought after in the labour market because of their excellent performance. She added that women participate in almost all types of work in the Gulf area. Segregated male-female colleges have encouraged more women to pursue a higher education, especially in technology and science.

She pointed to other encouraging signs of improvement in the Middle East, with women in Kuwait recently winning the right to vote for Parliament, a breakthrough for women's rights in the Gulf region, and the appointment of the first female minister.

One of the challenges faced by Arab women is overcoming what al Qasimi dubs "*political Islam*", which wants to turn back the clock and not give women their full freedom. She noted that the



Promoting women to senior positions helps companies outperform others

Koran gave women property ownership, marriage and work rights.

Another challenge involves creating a more female-friendly society in Arab countries by finding a balance between tradition and

women's needs. "*One of my favourite subjects – and you can't blame me for saying it because I am actually a technology person – is that the Internet has become a gender equalizer.*" She believes that it is giving more women the chance to become entrepreneurs thanks to the increased access to information and possibility of non-standard working conditions it offers.

In the end, added al Qasimi, whether women stay at home or make a career is their personal choice. "*Education is mandatory,*" she said, since it confers strength and power on women, even if it only allows them to raise their children as influential members of society. It is important that women hold important, highly visible posts, but they must be able to deliver.

During the question period, an audience member, Monique Pelletier, former French Minister for Women's and Family Affairs, noted that women are given consideration in companies, but not in politics. She sees token women in high positions as necessary examples that attract attention and believes that all tools should be put to use to further women's position in society.

Another audience member, who admitted that she held a token position, said, "*We need power if we want to change things. Even token women have power, and it is their responsibility to help promote other women into the circle so they are no longer just tokens.*" ■

4:15 P.M.

WORKSHOP I - YOU ARE THE NETWORKS YOU BELONG TO

*Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, Yan Lan*STRENGTH IN
NETWORKS

How can women decide which networks to join? How can they maintain the networks they have created? And, most importantly, how can they balance family, personal life, work and networking?

These questions and many others were answered today at the workshop "You Are The Networks You

Belong To" by networking experts Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, a partner in Diafora and founder of the European Professional Women's Network (EPWN), and Yan Lan, partner at the Gide Loyrette Nouel law firm in Beijing.

For Wittenberg-Cox, "*networks are the route to empowerment, and tools for the empowered*". She

*Yan Lan, Avivah Wittenberg-Cox*

founded EPWN, one of the most important women's business networks in Europe, to promote women's professional progress, and the results have started to show as European companies slowly begin to balance their leadership teams.

When a woman is trying to decide which networks to join, Wittenberg-Cox advises that she ask herself what she needs and expects from the network and what she can bring to it. The success of a network depends on what the members can do for each other, which means that they must be eager to support each other. When selecting a network, it's helpful to understand the goals of the association and the language and tone they use online or in their published materials, and to examine the members' biographies.

Yan Lan explained that in China, networks are based on relationships, connections and most importantly, trust. Existing relationships don't count in the network; what matters is establishing and cultivating the trust of its members, which takes a great deal of effort. The three most important networking arenas in China are family and friends, government organizations, and professional business networks and conferences.

Yan added that the same is true for business interactions: "*When you want to do business in China, become a friend before doing business,*" she said.

Being a member of one or more networks can be rewarding and inspiring, yet continuously reaping the benefits requires efficient contact and event management. As Wittenberg-Cox put it, "*Technology*

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Networks are the route
to empowerment
and tools for
the empowered

is a girl's best friend."

Databases offer an efficient way of maintaining contacts and may also provide important relationship-building details. Users can note how they met another person, how the relationship

could be mutually beneficial, the frequency of required contact and perhaps a point or topic to follow up on. All this could lead to an enduring relationship. Allocating a certain amount of time each day, perhaps 20 minutes, to send off an e-mail or make a 10-minute phone call to touch base, could lead to a big payoff in the long run.

Besides generating contacts, networks can be great places to find mentors in a given field. Defining expectations and discussing them with a potential mentor is crucial if disappointments and strained emotions are to be avoided. And networkers should remember that there can be strength in what Wittenberg-Cox called "*weak links*".

By that, she meant that a recent acquaintance might make a bigger-than-expected contribution, and new mentors might open doors to new environments or enlarge current networking experiences.

During the lively discussion amongst all the participants, everyone agreed that a network is a living thing that must be fed and nurtured by its members, and that should benefit as many people as possible. There is no point in staying in a network that isn't serving its purpose. And if the right one doesn't exist, one participant said, "*Why not create your own?*" ■

4:15 P.M.

WORKSHOP II - MICROCREDIT: EXPANDING A NEW WAY TO CREATE WEALTH AND GROWTH

Seida Saric, Muhammad Yunus

MICROCREDIT:

A FORCE FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

Microcredit, or very small loans usually made to individuals for specific projects, is a revolutionary banking concept that is often responsible for profound change at the lowest levels of society, especially among women.

WHO IS ?

*Professor **Muhammad Yunus**, founder and Managing Director of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, invented the concept of microcredit over 30 years ago and opened his bank in 1973 to help the very poorest people, especially women, earn a living by offering them small loans. He has received numerous international awards and honours for his work.*

Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder and Managing Director of Grameen Bank, the pioneering micro-credit bank in Bangladesh, and Seida Saric, Director of Women for Women International in Bosnia and Herzegovina, spoke at the workshop entitled "Microcredit: Expanding a New Way to Create Wealth and Growth". They explained microcredit's powerful potential for changing societies and economies, and the key benefits it offers to women and society as a whole.

Yunus told the audience how he came to invent the concept of microcredit. In the mid-1970's, he was teaching economics in Bangladesh while people were dying of hunger all around him. The situation was so bad that he decided to get out of the classroom and see what he could do to help others. Noticing that the poorest of the poor were borrowing from loan sharks, he asked his students to find out how many people in the village were borrowing from them and how much they owed. He was astounded by the result: the list had 42 names on it, for a total amount of \$27 – so many people suffering for so little. He decided to pay off their debts himself to free them from the loan

sharks and have them pay him back directly. He didn't ask for collateral or credit history from these people who couldn't even read or write, but made his loans on trust, in the belief that he could encourage them to find ways to pay him back. One by one, they did.

Yunus then began to experiment with the idea, going from one village to another and offering himself as a guarantor. "*People were so happy with so little,*" he said. "*Isn't that worth something?*" He had created a new concept of banking: at a conventional bank, the more you have, the more you get. His bank's philosophy is "*the less you have, the higher your priority*".

He then realized that the money he lent to women helped families more. "*This is something you can't miss,*" he said. "*The immediate change is in the children.*" As soon as a woman receives money, the first thing she does is feed her children. With a little money, the children don't have to work and can start going to school. This observation inspired Yunus to focus on women by ensuring that 50% of his bank's borrowers were female.

When he went to the women in the villages, however, they pleaded with him to give the money to their husbands. Some women even took fright and ran a way when they saw him because they had never even touched money before. Reaching these women and persuading them to take the money was a difficult process. It actually took six years to reach a balance in the number of women and men borrowing money from Grameen Bank.

Yunus found that the most difficult task was overcoming the fear that had been instilled in the

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The less money
you have,
the higher
your priority

women, who were always being told that they were stupid, unskilled, lazy and good for nothing. Once a woman is able to overcome the fear and starts to earn money for the first time in her life, he said,

she finds it a thrilling experience. Every day that she makes money, she gets more and more excited. When she finally makes her first loan payment, she is overjoyed. This is how microcredit is changing people's lives and attitudes, said Yunus. These women need to change the way they see themselves, and this process of self-discovery is what transformation is all about. Microcredit lets people solve their own problems of poverty.

He expressed his deep conviction that poverty is unnecessary, and that poor people are poor because

WHO IS ?

Seida Saric has been Country Director in Bosnia-Herzegovina for Women for Women International, an NGO that provides developmental opportunities to women, since 1998. During that time, the organization, which also provides microcredit, has helped over 5,700 women. Saric previously worked for Save the Children and Care International.

they have not been granted the space to grow. He believes that they have unlimited potential, and he once tried to prove it by conducting an experiment with beggars, people on the lowest rung of society. He offered them tiny loans so that when they went from house to house, they could sell something instead of just begging. They asked for no more than \$3 to \$10 each, and in time many of them stopped begging. Instead, with that small amount of money, they tried to find new ways to increase their income. One female beggar started her own food delivery business, bringing groceries to people's homes instead of begging door to door.

Today, his bank has a staff of 15,000 and lends to over 5 million borrowers, 96% of whom are women. Grameen Bank is owned by its borrowers, and its profits are used to set up scholarships for children.

Seida Saric then described the devastation in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the four-year civil war (1992 to 1996), during which over 1 million people fled their homes, women were raped and houses were burned. During and after the war, women suffered the most and were the main victims of poverty. When the war ended in 1996, people needed help, but all they could get at first was humanitarian aid, which was not enough.

That's when Women for Women International was founded, with the goal of offering developmental opportunities to help women rebuild their lives. Saric credited Yunus and Grameen Bank for providing the model on which she based her organization, which started out with 40 women. They immediately opened a centre where meetings could be held, which played an important social role. Women went there

“Of 5 million borrowers,
96 % are women

not only to repay their loans, but also to gather and discuss issues and ideas for improving their situation.

Most women began investing in agriculture, since that was what they knew best, and food shortages left them little other choice. Today, Women for Women International has 5,000 active clients and has helped thousands of people to create their own businesses.

Saric believes that microcredit has made a major contribution to her society by introducing the concept of entrepreneurship, which was new to these women, who had grown up in a socialist state. With the help of microcredit, the women became entrepreneurs themselves and were able to contribute income to their families. Microcredit also had a big impact on widows, who were terribly frightened after the war, since they had never worked before and had been financially dependent on their husbands.

Microcredit also provided an opportunity for ethnic reconciliation in centres with different ethnic groups and even played a role in reducing domestic violence. Saric told the story of a woman from one of her centres who was being abused by her husband. All the women from the centre got together and marched to the woman's house to confront her husband, who no longer beats his wife.

But microcredit can have an even wider social impact, according to Saric. It is a real tool that can help to rebuild a society. Today there are 15 microcredit institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, all of them NGOs. Unfortunately, they can't accept deposits because savings accounts are not allowed. This issue is being faced by many microcredit institutions across the world. ■

4:15 P.M.

WORKSHOP III - CORPORATE CULTURE: MAKING IT THE KEY ASSET OF THE COMPANY

Mercedes Erra, Fons Trompenaars

CORPORATE CULTURE: ASSET OR FAD?

A strong corporate culture that stresses sound, resilient values is now generally recognized as a genuine corporate asset.

During the workshop "*Corporate Culture Making It the Key Asset of the Company*", Mercedes Erra, Co-Chairman of EuroRSCG Worldwide and Director-General of Havas, and Fons Trompenaars, Managing Director of the Trompenaars-Hampden-Turner consul-

tancy, discussed the importance of corporate culture from two very different points of view.

Erra noted that there has been a huge evolution in corporate communication. Consumers used to be concerned about the product and the brand, but now they pay more attention to the company itself, holding it accountable for its actions and marketing promises.

As consumers grow increasingly sophisticated, they are getting better at managing their consumption and are even capable of explaining organizations' strategies, which may lead to a love affair with a product, brand or company – or just the opposite. And, since consumers are worried about the future and feel that politicians aren't directly addressing their fears, they have been redirecting their expectations and pressuring companies to improve their performance and take a stand on issues such as sustainable development.

Consumers are now buying products from organizations they "*respect*" and demanding that corporations make their corporate governance and strategic policies public – and they are monitoring the results. These new consumer expectations have changed the

Mercedes Erra, Fons Trompenaars





corporate "discourse". Today, 75% of a corporation's value comes from its reputation. This new corporate discourse means that companies can no longer rely solely on their financial results but must also look at their impact on society.

A similar societal change can be seen among today's young people, who are looking for a higher purpose in their work and are interested in more than just their salaries. This is another sign that people today are looking for that extra « *soul supplement* » through enriching work. The future will belong to companies that offer employees a higher purpose and moral values.

Trompenaars focused on the dilemmas inherent in corporate culture management, an approach he is not fond of. He has seen shifts in corporate culture management ranging from science-oriented to human-oriented to client-oriented to shareholder-value-oriented. *"All of those corporate culture management practices got killed by themselves,"* he said, adding, *"The next one over will probably be corporate social responsibility."*

How organizations score on those dilemmas is directly related

to performance. The better organizations are at managing them, the better their results. Organizations are constantly dealing with internal and external dilemmas such as reducing costs while putting programmes in place to develop employees professionally. The question then becomes « *how do you manage to achieve both when the two goals are contradictory?* »

Efficient organizations can be seen as dilemma-crushing machines, and sound leadership as the capacity to reconcile dilemmas. Trompenaars gave the following example: *"Should we go global or local vs. what kind of local resources could be used to go global?"*

Men and women have very different value systems, he said, with men being much more individualistic than women. Since women seem to be better than men at compromising, it is easier for them to integrate opposites and reconcile corporate dilemmas. International dilemmas stemming from diverse cultural visions also seem to be better understood by women, he added.

Trompenaars concluded by saying that organizations should take advantage of the different qualities women offer, and warned women to avoid copying men, as is sometimes the case today. ■

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New consumer expectations have changed the corporate discourse

4:15 P.M.

WORKSHOP IV - THE COMPETITIVENESS IMPERATIVE: TAPPING TALENT AROUND THE WORLD

Nancy J. Adler, Sakie T. Fukushima

TAPPING TALENT AROUND THE WORLD

Talent has become one of the most sought-after assets in the world, whether in the realm of culture, business, science or technology. The societies and corporations that attract and retain the best talent have the best chance of thriving in the future and staying at the top of the class.

In the workshop entitled "*The Competitiveness Imperative: Tapping Talent Around the World*", Sakie T. Fukushima, Regional Managing Director for Korn/Ferry International Japan (Executive Recruitment), and Nancy J. Adler, Professor of International Management at McGill University in Canada, discussed what it takes to attract and keep talented people.

Fukushima, who was recently voted one of the top 10 women leaders in Japan and serves on the Board of Directors of Sony, Kao and Benesse Corp., focused on the Japanese market, noting that during the country's economic slowdown, the idea of changing jobs was introduced, a new alternative to the traditional expectation of life-time employment. At the same time, Japanese companies started looking for global change agents who could help revitalize their business, hiring foreign executives and making

a point of asking for female candidates for general management positions.

The attitude towards women in management positions has evolved, she said, citing statistics showing that the inclusion of women improved a company's performance. While 70% of the human resources professionals of the companies interviewed for one study agreed that there is no gender difference in terms of skills, 79% of these companies have no female executives at the division management level. And, while most of the graduates of top Japanese universities are female, they face the "*glass-ceiling*" effect once they're on the job market. Some large Japanese companies that were on the verge of bankruptcy, however, have hired women CEOs to help bring them back to life.

The "*war for talent*" rages on, she said, since "*there is a mismatch between supply and demand*". While domestic executives are available on the job market, companies are really looking for professional global change agents, which forces them to make themselves more attractive to potential employees. Japanese companies, she noted, have a hard time recruiting top talent because they are perceived as slow in promoting employees and as having non-competitive salary policies.



In her experience, people are first attracted by a company's strategy, financial performance and, most importantly, reputation. Then come factors related to financial and other packages, career advancement and working environment.

Fukushima observed that *"women tend to be more interested in the job content and what they can learn from it rather than the title or position itself"*.

She concluded by saying that women can represent a real plus as possible change agents, since they are not as protective of their vested interests as men are.

Adler, well known for her research on global leadership, cross-cultural management and women as global leaders and managers, talked about why there are still so few women working as international managers and what can be done to attract and retain the best women executives.

She quoted what she jokingly called her *"favourite feminist journal"*, Fortune, which wrote a decade ago: *"The best reason for believing that more women will be in charge before long is that in a ferociously competitive global economy, no company can afford to waste valuable brain power simply because it's wearing a skirt."*

But in a world where global competitiveness is vital, women will not advance in their careers if they lack international experience that gives them a global perspective.

In the early 1980's, Adler's research on women's international experience showed that in North American

companies, women represented about 45%-50% of managers, but only 3% of them were expatriates. More recent research, which included European and Asian companies, showed an increase to 15%. Why are the numbers still so low? she asked. Not because women don't want to live abroad: 80% of respondents said yes when asked if they wanted to go abroad, but only one-third of both men and women said they were ready to go the next day. Adler added that women are slightly better prepared than men because they have studied more international topics, languages, etc.

Companies still hesitate to send women abroad for cultural reasons, she said. In the United States, expatriate women find it much harder to win the trust of their colleagues than local people do. She feels it is up to the company to ensure that a woman is accepted abroad by giving her a suitable position, introducing her appropriately and providing her with what she needs to succeed. Material advantages should relate to women's personal lives (whether they are single, in a couple, or have children) and offer more flexible packages, with such options as work permits for spouses, and domestic assistance so a woman can be *"a good wife, a good mother and a good professional"*.

Finally, the real issue seems to be not *"how can as many women as possible get access to global working experience?"* but *"how can we improve the quality of senior leadership?"* The idea is not to replace bad men with bad women, but to have good female and male leaders. ■

5:15 P.M.

PLENARY SESSION - MAKING GOOD ON THE PROMISE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Gérard Mestrallet, William O'Rourke, Julia Harrison*SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
OTHER PRESSING ISSUES

Although the topic of this session was "*Making Good on the Promise of Sustainable Development*", the presence of two men with powerful positions in multinational companies – Gérard Mestrallet, Chairman and CEO of Groupe Suez, and William O'Rourke, President of Alcoa Russia – inspired the audience to ask about other issues as well.

After a brief presentation of the two companies by the speakers, a debate took place on the questions of advancement of women in business and the contribution of the two companies to safeguarding the environment.

The first question dealt with how Suez intends to raise the number of women it employs and whether a quota policy is relevant. Mestrallet said that quotas would have a reverse effect: since women have to be twice as competent as men to reach the positions they want, serving up quotas on a silver platter would undermine the value of the women holding such positions. He added that he had asked the only female member of his board

to define a company policy for the advancement of women.

Another participant asked how the two men accommodate their personal lives with their careers. Mestrallet answered that he forces himself to take breaks, during which he puts business aside to spend quality time with his children, but he admitted that this is harder for a woman.

On what needs to be done to have more women in leadership roles, Mestrallet responded that companies must understand that by promoting women to management positions, they are actually creating added value. "*You cannot be satisfied with the fact that 85% of your staff is men,*" he said. "*A company must truly reflect its environment, especially if its activities serve a public purpose.*" He added that the solution to this problem must also come from women themselves. For O'Rourke, the answer lies in education.

When asked about Suez's contribution to the development of hydraulic systems in villages in developing countries, Mestrallet said that Suez does have experience in this field, but only in the

development of networks for large cities. Admitting that his company has less experience on smaller-scale projects, he said he is willing to study the possibility, but also needs the go-ahead from local governments before he can undertake any projects. He noted that this is an urgent matter, since water resources are shrinking while consumption is rising rapidly.

O'Rourke was questioned about the large amounts of energy required for aluminium production, which drives up energy costs for local populations and especially hurts developing countries. O'Rourke reminded the audience that Alcoa tries to recycle as

“
You cannot be satisfied
with the fact that
85% of your staff is men

much as possible to keep the price of energy down, and that wherever it produces, it also provides jobs and wages to the local population.

The final question concerned Suez's contribution to providing water to the needy. Mestrallet pointed out that 1 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water and that 2 billion people have no sewage facilities, even though the Johannesburg summit a few years ago made this a top priority. Once again, Mestrallet reminded the audience that as a private utility, his company cannot set foot on a market unless it has been officially called in by the local government. ■



*Gérard Mestrallet, William O'Rourke,
Julia Harrison*

DISCOVERY MOMENTS



Writer's Corner:
Taslina Nasreen and Irène Frain



Writer's Corner:
**Georges Emmanuel Morali and
Dayle Haddon**

STUDENTS
SPEAK OUT**Laura Agosta**

Age: 22, Argentina

Studies/work experience: Studying Political Science and plans to specialize in Public Policies. Works for a company that develops corporate social responsibility strategies.

Comments: *"One of the sessions I liked the most was the workshop on microcredit. In a world where the gap between rich and poor is getting bigger every day, having people who help others to progress and regain their dignity is a real blessing. The Forum provides an excellent space to reflect on the challenges that face us in every job and on the contribution that we can make as women. As Rola Dashti said: 'Dreams come true; we just have to work on it'"*

Ying Bai

Age: 23, China

Studies: Currently studying financial mathematics at a leading engineering school in Paris, plans to continue to doctoral level.

Comments: *"Most of my friends, including girls and boys, oppose [my getting a higher degree]. They think it will be difficult for a girl with a Master's degree to find a good husband. I was sad about their feudal conception, but I won't change my mind. I totally agree with Baroness Susan Greenfield [neuroscientist Susan Greenfield, one of the Forum's speakers]; her speech reinforced my willingness to achieve my study and professional objectives. Life is beautiful, and it deserves striving!"*

Juanita Goebertus Estrada

Age: 21, Colombia

Studies: Studying Political Science and Law at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá.

Comments: *"What struck me most about the Forum was the fact that it was neither a reunion of radical feminists nor a congress of wealthy executives. The forum was a meeting of intelligent and successful women, rich and poor, from all over the world who recognize that there is still much to be done regarding women's rights and opportunities.*

The most important things I learned concerned best practices that I'm committed to implementing in my personal life and my community: finding mentors and protégés, creating and maintaining visible and invisible networks, applying the 80-20 rule and sharing everything I learned with young women, especially those who are convinced that women no longer have to fight for their rights."

GALA DINNER



Muhammad Yunus



*Aude Zieseniss de Thuin,
Nathalie Vranken*



*Bernard Fornas,
Anne d'Ornano*



*Aude Zieseniss de Thuin,
Laurence Laurentin, Olivier Marchal*



*Dayle Haddon,
Claude Smadja, Carolyne Coquet*



*Hung Huang, Muhammad Yunus,
Gilberte Beaux*



*Dominique Hériard Dubreuil,
Mercedes Erra*



*Nelly Kiwewa,
Véronique Paulus de Châtelet*



SATURD



WOMEN'S FORUM REPORT
YEAR 1

AY 15 OCTOBER

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8:30 A.M.

PLENARY SESSION - CREATING NEW BUSINESS MODELS: WHAT IMPACT AND VISION CAN WOMEN BRING?

*Patricia Barbizet, Hung Huang, Wendy Luhabe, Zhang Xin*NEW WAYS OF DOING
BUSINESS

The old ways aren't always the best ways. That was amply demonstrated by the personal stories of four innovative businesswomen who participated in the plenary session "Creating New Business Models".

Zhang Xin, Co-Chairperson of Soho China, explained that she had been fortunate to meet someone who shared her business vision: her husband. Together they founded a property company that provides innovative living spaces and aims to reinvent aesthetics.

A former investment banker, Zhang was used to disagreeing with men in her work environment. She had plenty of business-related arguments with her husband as well, but she has learned from experience how to embrace and leverage differing male-female perspectives when working on projects. She wanted to do business differently: rather than focusing primarily on financing and location like most real estate developers, she added emotion to the equation through art, architecture and lifestyle choices. She also markets her products differently, through PR events with luxury brand partners.

Hung Huang, CEO of China Interactive Media Group, discovered that if you want to join the club, *"you have to change the rules of the game"*. When she entered the media business, she learned that her competitors, the leading media outlets, were exaggerating their circulation results to make business look better than it really was. Hung did not want her company to follow this custom, a relic of a dying old boys' network, so she changed the rules and developed a database-driven distribution model to avoid any fudging of circulation results.

Wendy Luhabe, Chairperson of the Industrial Development Corp. and Founder and Chairperson of the Women's Private Equity Fund of South Africa, was inspired to start her own business when she was overlooked for a position she was well qualified for. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise, since it gave her the courage to start her first business.

Then, in 1993, Luhabe, inspired by the microcredit initiatives, started an investment company with three other women. *"Women do not have enough access to education, knowledge or even credit,"* she

said, "so society is unable to see their capabilities." By creating a venture capital fund, Luhabe was able to experiment with a model that would allow women to learn how to invest – a revolutionary concept in South Africa. She and her colleagues spent two years travelling around the country educating women about how the economy works and what opportunities were available to them. They then made a public offering, which brought in subscriptions from women worth €3 million euros. They had mobilised 18,000 women – a feat never achieved before in the country – and possibly the world, showing that *"it is possible for*

“ If you want to join the club, you have to change the rules of the game

women to invent things and to be completely radical in the way we approach the challenges that we experience as women".

Patricia Barbizet, CEO of Artémis France, was propelled to success in a different way. Starting out with a diploma from a business school, she landed a job as Finance Director of Renault, but then she had the luck to meet François Pinault, who offered her a more challenging opportunity. Her career has taught her the importance of understanding the different communication methods used by men and women, and she believes that women can offer a new balance and harmony, especially in more traditional, male-



Zhang Xin, Patricia Barbizet,
Maria Livanos Cattau, Hung Huang, Wendy Luhabe

dominated organizations. When conceptualizing products, Barbizet sees a good mix of male and female representation on the product team as essential.

Luhabe pointed out that what women bring to the workforce is "*everything men bring, plus emotional intelligence*." She defined emotional intelligence as having the courage to rely on your intuition, to bring your experience into play and to create links. The panellists and most participants agreed that a high level of emotional intelligence makes a great leader, whether male or female. They also felt strongly that if women could apply their emotional intelligence and complement it with their breadth of experience – including personal experiences like raising children and managing a home – they could advance even further in the workplace.

New business ideas and models can be generated by inspiration combined with female intuition and

“It is possible for women to invent things and to be completely radical

emotional intelligence. Zhang added that women have high levels of intuition and that she often relies on her own intuition rather than statistics to guide her business decisions.

It was pointed out that role models are needed to help build one's emotional intelligence and for help in decision-making and developing new business models. All the speakers agreed that female role models are important for any society and very important for mentoring younger female generations. Women's voices must continue to be heard in the media and their perspectives published as often as possible.

Luhabe added a word for future generations: "*Women leaders today need to become a catalyst for other women to continue behind us.*" ■

DISCOVERY
MOMENTS



*Writer's Corner:
Françoise Héritier*



*Creator's Corner:
Aude Zieseniss de Thuin, Barbara Hendricks
and Claudia Andujar*

10:30 A.M.

PLENARY BRAINSTORMING - WHAT FUTURE FOR GLOBALIZATION? HOW CAN WE IMPACT ON IT?

Jeffrey E. Garten, Agnès Touraine, Monique Canto-Sperber, Dominique Moisi, Véronique Morali, Maria Livanos Cattai

GLOBALIZATION

THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

Part I: Introduction

The first of a three-part session entitled "*What Is the Future for Globalization and How Can We Impact on It?*" began with an introduction by two pioneering global thinkers, Professor Jeffrey E. Garten of the Yale School of Management, and Agnès Touraine, managing partner of Act III Consultants in France.

Garten discussed what he believes are the three themes shaping the problematic issue of globalization. Firstly, the world is becoming smaller and much more integrated, with increasing international trade and capital flows. This is an inevitable trend. Secondly, the closer we get as countries and societies, the stronger the backlash to globalization will be. He referred to two books that sum up this point of view: *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (Balantine Books, New York), by Benjamin Barber, and *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (Anchor Books,

New York), by Thomas L. Friedman. Thirdly, the problematic nature of globalization is multifaceted and includes the threat of six common problems that will affect the world as a whole and will



Agnès Touraine



require a massive, organized worldwide response.

The six common problems are: 1) the environment, 2) the increased volatility of the financial system (Garten sees a global financial crisis looming in the foreground), 3) the spread of natural disasters (our world is so small now that these disasters require a global response), 4) the spread of global health problems such as HIV and influenza, 5) poverty (which creates a breeding ground for the other five problems), and 6) terrorism.

For her part, Touraine sees the impact of globalization on women as twofold. On a positive note, globalization provides jobs and improved economic conditions for women in developing countries, but she believes this economic growth has to be supported by appropriate social improvements to ensure that women and children are protected from exploitation.

“The closer countries and societies become, the stronger the backlash to globalisation will be.

Following the introduction of the topic to the participants, four possible scenarios for the future of globalization were described, and the audience members were asked to attend one of four workshops to discuss them and then come back together in a larger group to present their findings. The scenarios were: 1) muddling through globalization, 2) confrontational globalization, 3) globalization dominated by the United States and China, and 4) multifaceted globalization.

Part II: The Workshop reports

Scenario 1: Muddling through globalization

A failure in the regulation system of the existing supranational institutions is obvious, which means that companies must take responsibility for globalization.

The group saw it as a positive development that citizens were organizing themselves as a counterweight against big institutions, giving globalization a more human face.

The emergence of countries like China offers hope to other developing countries, especially in Africa. China might pull African economies along with it. The new challenge for today's politicians is to prepare citizens to adapt to globalization through the creation of structures.

If women play a multifaceted role in globalization, they can add elements of harmony and solidarity. Women also have a role to play on the economic scene and should not only be relegated to social

issues. In terms of sustainable development, women could offer a new matrix by analyzing the whole picture rather than one aspect after another.

Scenario 2: Confrontation

To help manage confrontation, Europe should exercise greater influence outside its borders and play a major balancing role by imposing its most important ideals. Women can offer entirely new perspectives on such confrontational gaps as polarization issues.

Better education is central to a less confrontational world, and models of democratization can help

“Women have a role to play on the economic scene and should not be relegated to social issues

defeat terrorism.

Scenario 3: Globalization dominated by the United States and China

Any confrontation would probably occur at the levels of the economy, finance, sustainable development and military (the extension of each country's influence to specific geographic zones). The fact that the United States and China are increasingly dependent on each other as their economies become more and more intertwined could help calm this confrontation.

Value system confrontations between the two countries could arise. The United States, for example, has been very fierce in defending such Western values as freedom. Concerns are growing about identity crises and the rise of nationalism.

Cooperation between China and the United States is also a strong possibility as international standards increase in importance. With more environmental crises and increasing population transfers, there will be room for more cooperation on a worldwide level.

Europe represents a model of peace on its territories and should be held up as an example for worldwide cooperation.

Scenario 4: A multifaceted model

Europe should make a comeback on the international scene, which would allow for a more humanized form of globalization, but this is not very probable since it is in the midst of an identity crisis exacerbated by a

Jeffrey E. Garten





a combination of the muddling through and multifaceted scenarios. He doesn't expect a confrontation to occur between China and the United States. Current trends that will probably continue are: an increased willingness to use military force, huge scepticism towards worldwide institutions and a return to religion. Ever-greater worldwide concerns about such issues as health will give rise to an increased need for multilateral cooperation. He concluded by saying that countries would be foolish to oppose globalization, since it is the way of the future. ■

number of concerns, including the massive transfer of poor populations and terrorism.

Europe should stop worrying and take pride in such past accomplishments as the invention of reconciliation. It should stop ignoring Africa, and should find real leaders who are able to act on needed structural reforms. Finally, it should copy the model of Northern European countries' treatment of women to give globalization a more human face.

Part III: Conclusion

Summing up, Touraine observed that no anti-global or pro-global viewpoints had been expressed and that the solutions offered all lie in the middle. She added that associations have a role to play in places where major institutions have failed to reduce poverty.

Garten firmly believes humility is in order when predicting globalization trends, since it is a nearly impossible task. In the next 10 years, he foresees

1:30 P.M.

KEYNOTE LUNCHEON

Taslima Nasreen

TASLIMA NASREEN: WRITING WOMEN'S UNTOLD STORY

Taslima Nasreen's powerful and moving keynote address at the Women's Forum luncheon elicited a standing ovation and an emotional response from the audience.

The journalist and human rights activist, born in 1962 in what is now Bangladesh, described the path she had taken from obedient young Muslim girl to an exile from her own country who has been living under a constant threat of death since two fatwas were issued against her in 1993 and '94 in retaliation for her criticisms of Islam.

As a child, Nasreen was required to read the Koran in Arabic and wondered what the words meant. When she finally got her hands on a Bengali translation, she was disturbed to discover that according to the holy book of Islam, women were creatures without rights, created solely to serve and please men. "*In our minds, oppression is called tradition,*" she said, giving graphic examples of the many ways in which women are harmed physically, mentally and socially – from everyday submission to men to the extremes of rape, beating, stoning and disfiguring by acid.

Feeling that she must act, she began to write books and articles criticizing the Koran and advocating the separation of religion and state, and freedom and equal rights for women. Her publications provoked massive demonstrations by fundamentalists, the banning and burning of her books, and calls for her to be hanged. Her government charged her with blasphemy, and the fatwas were pronounced. She was forced into exile to protect her life and avoid possible imprisonment.

None of this has stopped her from writing "*against oppression in the name of religion, and barbarism in the name of culture*". "*I'm writing many women's untold story,*" she added. "*It is the same story that thousands of women know about.*"

Nasreen still hopes to be able to return to her country one day, although she feels like a foreigner there and in the Western country where she lives today. "*I'm not crying anymore,*" she said. Her "*home is love, the love I receive from women all over the world*" and from the support she receives. She does not regret any of her actions and sees her challenge as educating people

on women's human rights. *"It is not enough to have the 8th of March," she said, "the challenge is to make every day of the year Women's Day."*

In conclusion, she spoke of her dream of a *"beautiful world where no woman is oppressed"*, where sexual and physical abuse against women have disappea-

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Two fatwas have
been issued against her

red and their human rights are respected.

Hilary Bowker of Bowker Media + Communications, who had introduced Nasreen, decided not to take questions from the audience, saying that they would dilute the force of the speaker's presentation. For the full text of Nasreen's speech, see page 102. ■



FULL TEXT OF TASLIMA NASREEN'S KEYNOTE SPEECH

“

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for having been invited to the first International Conference of the Women's Forum. Today I would tell you a little bit about my life.

I was born in 1962 to a Muslim family in a small town called Mymensingh in what then was East Pakistan. Now, after it gained its independence in 1971, the country is called Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, where I was born, is a nation of more than 140 million people, one of the most populous countries in the world. It is a country where 70 per cent of the people live below the poverty line, where more than half the population cannot read and write, a country where there is insufficient health care, and where infant mortality is high. Nearly 40 million women have no access to education nor do they have the possibility of becoming independent.

In my country, my childhood was not much different from that of other girls of my generation. Like other girls of a middle-class family, I was sent to a school. Girls frequently dropped out of school when they were 15 or 16, ages at which they often were given into marriage by their parents. Few girls had a chance to continue their studies, for after an arranged marriage, they were not allowed to continue studying in school or college or university nor could they take a job. They became totally dependent upon their husbands, in other words.

It was usual for us children, in the early morning, to read the Koran in Arabic, and like all other children in Bangladesh I did this. But I found myself asking questions. I wanted to know what I was reading, what the meaning of the Koranic verses was. Our language is Bengali, not Arabic, and it was impossible to know the meaning of the verses that we read.

We just read, that's all. When I asked Mother to tell me the meaning of what I was reading, she explained that the meaning is not important, that what is important is that Allah will be happy that I am reading the Koran in its original language.

When I was 13 or 14, however, I found a book that translated the Koran into Bengali. To my surprise, I found Allah saying that men are superior, that women are inferior. Men can have four wives. Men can divorce their wives any time they want. Men are allowed to beat women.

I found that Islam does not consider woman a separate human being. Man was the original creation and womankind was created secondarily for the pleasure of man. Islam considers a woman as a slave or sexual object, nothing more. A woman's role is to stay at home and to obey her husband, for this is her religious duty. Women are considered weak, so they should be taken care of, their body and mind, their desire and wishes, their rights and freedom must be controlled by men. Islam treats women as intellectually, morally and physically inferior. In marriage, Islam protects the rights of men and men only. Once the marriage is consummated, women have no rights whatsoever in this field. The Koran gave total freedom to men saying, "Your women are as your field, go unto them as you will" (2.223).

Women are told to run to their husbands wherever they are, whatever they do. It is their duty. The hadith says that two prayers that never reach the heavens are 1) those of escaping slaves and 2) those of the reluctant women who frustrate their husbands at night.

Islam considers women psychologically inferior.

“
Today, many women
are being beaten, raped,
and murdered
as I speak.

Women's testimony is not allowed in cases of marriage, divorce and hudud. Hudud are the punishment of Islamic law for adultery, fornication, adultery against a married person, apostasy, theft, robbery and so

forth. If any woman is raped, she has to produce four male witnesses to the court. If she cannot, there is no charge against the rapist. In Islamic law, the testimony of two women is worth that of one man. In a case in which a man suspects his wife of adultery or denies the legitimacy of the offspring, his testimony is worth that of four witnesses. A woman does not have the right to charge her husband in a similar manner.

Women are not allowed to inherit property equally with their brothers. In the case of inheritance, Allah says, "A male shall inherit twice as much as a female"(4.11-12).

And after all the rights and freedom, after getting all the sexual pleasure and pleasure of being the master, Allah will reward the men with wine, food and 72 virgins in Paradise, including their wives of the earth. And what is the reward for the pious woman? Nothing. Nothing but the same old husband, the same man who caused her suffering while they were on earth. It became clear to me that men had written the Koran for their own interest, for their own comfort, for their own fun. So I stopped believing in Islam. When I studied other religions, I found they, too, oppressed women.

My father, a physician, had a scientific outlook but was very domineering. He did not allow me the freedom to play, to go outside whenever I wanted, to meet friends, to go to the cinema or theatre, or to read any book that was not in a syllabus. He wanted me to earn a medical degree so he could say that one of

his children followed his path. On the one hand, he wanted me to be independent, but on the other hand he wanted to find a good match for me inasmuch as educated men often desire an educated wife.

As I grew up, I kept observing the condition of women in our society. My mother, for example, was a perfect example of a woman oppressed. She had been given into marriage when she was a child; she was a good student in school, but she was not allowed to continue her studies. My grandfather and my father did not want her to study, for what they wanted was for her to be a good housewife, a good mother, a good caretaker.

In our house, I grew up with much fear, having to keep inside my heart all my desire for freedom and curiosity for the outside world. Growing up, I naturally had the belief that girls surely must be inferior to boys, for boys could play in a big field whereas girls had to play with their dolls in a corner of the house. My brothers could go anywhere they wanted, could watch any games, could play anything they wanted to play. I could not. My sister could not. I was told that girls were not made for such, that their role was to stay home, learn how to cook, make beds, clean the house. My mother was not the only woman who was oppressed, for I saw my aunts, my neighbours and other acquaintances who were playing the same roles, that of being oppressed. In our minds, torture of women is not oppression, but, rather, is tradition. We become accustomed to tradition. As I grew, I realized that I was a part of the tradition but also that I was being oppressed the same as other women. I realized that whether women are poor or rich, beautiful or ugly, have blue or black or brown eyes, have white, black or brown skin, are unmarried or married, illiterate or literate, believer or non-believer, coward or courageous, all are oppressed. Everywhere women are oppressed.

And all because of male-devised patriarchy, religion, tradition, culture and customs.

Because of my country's strong patriarchal tradition, supported by religious law, women suffer unbearable inequalities and injustices. They suffer from malnutrition and from anaemia as well as from physical and psychological problems that are not treated. Women normally remain untreated because they are not taken to hospitals until they reach terminal stages. Women are not supposed to become sick, because they must remain busy with household chores, bear and rear children, take care of the family, and make sure that the male members of the family are happy. Women, therefore, are condemned to a lifetime of servitude.

For a married couple, the most unwanted thing is a female baby. If a female baby is born, it is not uncommon that either the wife is divorced for her crime of having given birth to a female or the wife must spend her life in disgrace. A woman's destiny is to be ruled by the father in childhood, by the husband when she is young, and by her son when she is old.

Now, far too many women suffer from trafficking, from slavery, from all kinds of discrimination. Men throw acid on women's bodies, burn their faces, smash their noses, melt their eyes and walk away as happy men. Women are beaten, are flogged and are stoned to death. Women are raped, are accused of having allowed the rape, and the rapists are set free. Violence against women is not considered a crime in my country.

For example, let me tell you about Yasmin, a 15-year-old girl. Employed as a maid, she was raped by her master. She fled from the master's home, and she was observed by the police as she walked toward her parents' house. The police told her it was not safe for

a girl to be walking on the road at night; they offered her a ride home in their van, and what happened? Six policemen raped her, killed her and then threw her body into the bushes. When news of her murder broke out, villagers demonstrated against the police. The police shot at the protesters, killed seven. The government then issued a statement the following day that Yasmin was a girl of bad character, she was a prostitute, and the police had every right to treat her as they did. Such is not a rarity in Bangladesh. I know that it happens in other countries, also.

Nobody told me to protest, but from an early age I developed strong feelings about the importance of fighting against oppression. Nobody asked me to shed a tear, but I did. Nobody suggested that I could help bring about any changes, but by writing books I wanted to do something constructive. I wrote about the need for women to understand why they are oppressed and why they should fight against their oppression. For centuries, women have been taught that they are slaves of men, that they are not supposed to protest against the patriarchal system, that they must remain silent against their abusers. As a result, it has been difficult for women to accept the idea that they are, in fact, human beings and have the right to live as independent and equal human beings.

Through my writing, I tried to encourage women to fight for their rights and freedom. My voice gave women the chance to think differently. That did not make the religious fundamentalists and male chauvinists happy. They refused to tolerate any of my views. They objected to a woman's breaking the chains and becoming free. They could not tolerate my saying that the religious scriptures are out of time and out of place. They were angry at my saying that religious law, which discriminates against women, needs to be replaced by secular law with a uniform civil code. Before long, hundreds of thousands of extremists

appeared on the streets and demanded my execution by hanging. A fatwa was issued against me, setting a price on my head. The Government, instead of taking action against the fundamentalists, took action against me. The Government filed a case against me on the charges of blasphemy. An arrest warrant was issued. I had no other alternative but to go into hiding. After bail was granted, I was forced to leave my country. Since then, I have been trying to go back to my country, but it is impossible. I am not allowed to return to my country. But despite all the pressure, I continued writing. In my poetry, prose, essays and novels, I have defended the people who are oppressed. I have cried loudly for equality and justice, justice for all people whatever their religion and gender. I have spoken loudly for the separation of religion and state, for secular law, for secular education.

During my struggle for secular and ethical humanism, I have tried to defend the poor and also the ethnic and religious minority communities that were being oppressed. It was impossible for me to accept the idea that people living miserable lives did so because they had a different faith, or spoke a different language, or had a different culture. I believe that the diversity of our world's many languages, cultures and ethnicities is not a pretext for conflict, but is a treasure that enriches us all. Diversity is a treasure to be appreciated. There is no superior, no inferior, culture in this world, only various cultural patterns that make up our beautiful multicoloured mosaic. But humans should not allow oppression in the name of religion or culture. Humans should not allow torture such as female genital mutilation. Humans should not allow barbarism, humiliation, inequality or injustice in the name of culture. Culture should not be and must not be used against humanity.

Because of blind faith in religion, humans are suffering bloodshed, hatred, ignorance, illiteracy, injustice and

poverty. But if we on Earth sincerely wanted to replace injustice with justice, we could eliminate all the problems of humanity, which are caused by a blind faith in religion. Both the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Koran clearly accept and condone slavery. Jesus explicitly tells slaves to accept their roles and obey their masters. No one in this world today would defend chattel slavery in any public forum or allow it under any legal code. Neither fundamentalist Christians nor Orthodox Jews talk about animal sacrifice or slavery. In those countries in which sharia, or Islamic law, exists, where stoning for adultery and amputation for stealing are legalized, no legitimization of slavery is ever mentioned. Polygamy and the use of concubines are clearly accepted in the Old Testament, but nowhere in the Judeo-Christian world are either of these practices legalized. Thus, insistence upon continuing those practices that denigrate, oppress and suppress women under the guise of scriptural reference is a sham. Such practices could and should be de-legitimized, just as chattel slavery has been de-legitimized.

I have been writing against all kinds of physical and sexual violence, religious terrorism and patriarchal discrimination against women. Meanwhile, I do have a dream: I dream of a beautiful world, where no woman will be oppressed, will not be a victim of trafficking, acid-throwing, rape and sexual assault. I dream of a world where human beings will respect each other, a respect that would not give way to war, bloodshed or violence. I have been writing to make my dream come true: an ethical world in which humanity will flourish with humans full of love, not with humans full of hatred.

My pen is my weapon in such a fight for a secular humanism, but the religionists have come to kill

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My home is love,
the love I receive
from women all
over the world

me with their swords. They have burned my books, sued my publishers for publishing my books and attacked the bookshops where my books are kept. My freedom of expression has constantly been violated by government-

tal authority. I have written 28 books, five of which are banned by the government of Bangladesh – additional cases have been filed against me to ban my other books. One Bangladesh court sentenced me to one year in prison for what I have written. In recent years, the government banned all four books of my autobiographical memoirs.

In my memoir, what I have written is not just my life story. It is the same story that thousands of women know about, how women live in a patriarchal society that has hundreds of traditions that allow them to suffer. I have looked back into my childhood days and described the life of being a female child. I have told how I was brought up and have explained that I had privileges that many others did not have. I was able to study and become a medical doctor, something that thousands of girls cannot even dream about. I wanted to show where and how I grew up and what made me think differently, what made me do things differently. It is important to give other women some inspiration to revolt against the oppressive system that I grew up under and which still continues for them. I told the truth. I expressed everything that happened in my life. Normally it is taboo to reveal rape or attempted rape by male members of one's family. Girls shut their mouths, because they are terribly ashamed. But I did not shut my mouth. I did not care what people would say to me or to my family. I know well that many women feel that I am telling their untold stories, too. We, the victims, should shout loudly. We need to be heard. We must protest loudly and demand our

freedom and rights. We must refuse to be shackled, chained, beaten and threatened.

If women do not fight to stop being oppressed by a shameful patriarchal and oppressive religious system, then shame on women! Shame on us for not protesting, for not fighting, for allowing a system to continue that will affect our children as well as our children's children.

My story is not a unique one. My experiences, unfortunately, have been shared by millions of fellow sufferers. In my books, I cried for myself. I also cried for all the others who have not been able to enjoy the productive life of which they are capable and which they most assuredly deserve. We who are women no longer must remain solitary, crying softly in lonely places. I do not cry alone anymore, and because of that I have been suffering. I was thrown out of my own country. Instead of being able to live in the area of the world in which I was born and brought up, I was given the alternative of living in the West, where I am forced to feel like an outsider.

I am, in other words, a stranger in my own country and a stranger here in the West, where I now am living. Where can I go? Nowhere. Exile, for me, is a bus stop, one where I am waiting for a bus to go home. Well, now I have been waiting in exile for more than 10 years. Still, I do not feel that any home is my home, any country my country. Mine is a hopeless, helpless feeling. Sometimes I ask myself, is this true, do I really have no home? One part of me says yes. Another, however, says it's not true. I do have a home. My home is love, the love I receive from women all over

the world. That is my home, the love I receive from rationalists, free thinkers, secularists and humanists is my home. The love I receive from you, that is my home.

I regret nothing that I have done or for what I have ever written. Come what may, I will continue my fight against all the extremist, fundamentalist, intolerant forces without any compromise until my death.

Today, women gathered here to talk about power in the economy and society. Today, I know, many women are being beaten, raped and murdered as I speak. Today, I know, many girls are being abused. Today, I know, many women died because of not having food or drinking water or the treatment for their diseases. The challenge is to educate the world's peoples about women's rights as human rights. Not only the 8th of March, not only one day in 365 days; the challenge is to make every day of the year a Women's Day.

I am delighted to be able to speak at the Women's Forum. I love to see that women are united, nothing is better than this. If women get united, all the problems of inequalities and injustices against women will be solved. If women are united, it would be easy for them to get political, societal and economic power.

I am grateful for the sympathy, support and solidarity that the Women's Forum has shown to me. This support has made me all the more committed and all the more determined to continue my struggle. Thank you all. Merci beaucoup. ■

THE WOMEN'S FORUM

GIVES BIRTH TO

The Women's Forum for the Economy and Society, an annual three-day conference on issues concerning women all over the world, is also the umbrella organization for an ongoing research and support organism, provisionally called the Women's Institute.

Before the afternoon plenary session on 15 October, Olivier Marchal, Managing Partner of Bain & Co., told the audience about the *raison d'être* and the structure of this new institute.

"Why is there a need for a Women's Institute?" he asked. "Because we don't think you can really change things in three days." With the help of teams from the Essec & Mannheim Executive MBA programme, led by Viviane de Beaufort, Professor and Academic Director, Bain has been doing some "serious homework": interviewing some 40 executives from large international corporations, mostly

women, and benchmarking about 60 international corporations that take an interest in diversity. "We identified a need for an organization with real power and influence to promote the role of women in corporations," Marchal said, "but also to promote the voice of women on social matters."

The new institute will be given direction by high-profile board members and partners. Ongoing exchanges will take place throughout the year through benchmarking, roundtable discussions and experience sharing.

Talk is fine, but there is also "an unmet need for very pragmatic and actionable solutions," said Marchal.

"That's going to be one of the essential roles of the institute: to provide recommendations, solutions and best practices to its members.

Concretely, that means doing "intelligence" work throu-

“The Institute will be 'an organization with real power and influence'”

THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

gh high-level studies conducted with the help of ESSEC and other universities, and consultancies like McKinsey & Co. and Bain. One of the first studies will look at the link between a company's competitiveness and the number of women it has in high positions. "*This is essential to accelerating progress*," said Marchal. Another will compare regulations in Europe, while a third looks at the complementarity of men and women in the top levels of large organizations: "*When leadership is shared by men and women, why do you have a 'one plus one equals three' equation?*", asked Marchal.

The second step will be to seek solutions by sharing best practices internationally, benchmarking the best organizations and understanding what they are doing right. Marchal described the Institute as a "*barometer*" whose detailed benchmarking will make it possible to track progress and understand what actions are feasible.

Those actions will include creating the International Women's Employer of the Year Award and experience-

sharing sessions called "*Learning from the Leaders*". One very practical initiative will help women in their 40s and 50s who have left the workforce to return to high levels of responsibility in organizations.

The Institute will be politically and financially independent, the "*master of its own destiny*". To be financed by annual membership fees and public and institutional funding, it will benefit from research of high-level think tanks and other organizations throughout the world. Its core team will be composed of international academics and professionals. While it will be headquartered in Paris, its aim is to be a truly international organization.

Naturally, the Women's Forum and the Women's Institute will be closely interlinked. Each Forum will set the work agenda for the coming year, while the Institute will generate insights that will enrich Forum debates. ■

3:15 P.M.

PLENARY SESSION - LOOKING FOR THE WOMEN: PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR AN INTEGRATION AT THE TOP

Anne-Marie Idrac, Denis Olivennes, Alain-Dominique Perrin, Didier Quillot, Philippe Wahl

WOMEN WANTED AT THE TOP

Although great strides have been made in France when it comes to the participation of women in the workforce (80% of women now work), the number of women in executive and political positions is much less impressive.

Was the makeup of the panel at the plenary session entitled "*Looking for Women: Priority Actions for an Integration at the Top*" indicative of the overall situation? The speakers – four men but only one woman in top leadership positions – were Alain-Dominique Perrin, Executive Director of Richemont International; Denis Olivennes, Chairman and CEO of FNAC; Didier Quillot, CEO of Orange France; Anne-Marie Idrac, President of the RATP (the Parisian transport authority); and Philippe Wahl, CEO of Havas. The debate focused on the obstacles that bar women from top positions and what can be done to promote their advancement into the higher echelons of companies.

Perrin pointed a finger at the country's politicians, saying that it is up to the political world to set an example. "*We have to start by educating*

our politicians," he said. He went on to argue that the overall issue is not a question of quotas but of industries – the luxury goods industry, for instance, employs many more women than men. "*We should study why this is so, and apply the model to other industries,*" he said.

While admitting that it is difficult to accommodate both professional and family life, Quillot urged women to network much more than they do, since this is one of the most effective ways to get to the top. He added that one of the greatest obstacles to the advancement of women is the way their success is perceived by society. "*I think women who succeed are still considered a bit strange by society,*" he said, "*and even by their own husbands.*" The audience applauded his call for a change in this mentality.

Olivennes called for better training of job recruiters. He pointed out that while men have one major responsibility in life – their career – women have three: marriage, motherhood and career. "*Women who work not only have to be managers in their professional lives, but also in their private lives.*" This has a great impact on their

ability to relocate to a foreign country and may force them to pass up opportunities for advancement. He also mentioned that systems should be created to help women re-enter the workforce after a gap in their careers.

Idrac commented on the improvements she has seen with each new generation. *"I'm from the Baby Boom generation,"* she said. *"We were the pioneers."* She noted, however, that many French companies are run by engineers and expressed regret that so few young women choose to study engineering. Many

“Women who succeed are still considered a bit strange

women also take a break in their careers in their 30s and 40s, just when companies are beginning to identify employees with high potential for advancement. She has also noticed that men are increasingly choosing to change the balance in their lives in favour of their families.

Wahl said that the ferocious competition for the top positions in companies is a factor that works against women, since the men at the top often don't want to share their power, along with the fact that recruiters are usually governed by stereotypes. *"Our society and companies are not organized to facilitate*



Brigitte Jeanperrin, Philippe Wahl, Anne-Marie Idrac, Denis Olivennes, Didier Quillot, Alain-Dominique Perrin, Anne Méaux

the promotion of women to positions of responsibility," he said.

In answer to a question about what priority actions should be taken, Wahl replied that, since the subject is such an important one, the media should give it much more attention. He also suggested establishing a rating system to measure companies' success in promoting women to pressure them into making changes in recruitment and training, and setting up systems to manage day care and international mobility for women.

Another question concerned whether or not promoting women is truly a priority given the many other issues a company must deal with at the same time.

Olivennes insisted that a quota policy for top positions and board members is necessary. *"Otherwise, things change too slowly,"* he said. Idrac and Quillot disagreed, saying that such a policy would actually work against women's credibility, with Idrac noting that she was more in favour of

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Let's forget the word
'quota' and instead set
quantifiable goals

"positive actions" and a system of verification to ensure that promotions were made fairly and without discrimination. Perrin declared that quotas were *"ridiculous"*. Olivennes responded that people in the

English-speaking world are less shy about setting diversity goals and implementing them than the French. *"Let's forget the word 'quota' and instead set quantifiable goals,"* he said. *"Then we'll see results."*

A member of the audience, Margaret Milan, president of the European Professional Women's Network, noted that of a total of 86 board members in the panellists' companies, only six are women. She challenged them to improve the numbers before next year's Women's Forum. In response, Wahl promised that he would double the number by next year – meaning that he would have at least two women on his board. All the panellists later made a commitment to take concrete actions to improve the status of women in their companies. ■

4:45 P.M.

PLENARY SESSION - RESTORING VALUES AND TRUST IN SOCIETY

Jean-Paul Bailly, Riane Eisler, Barbara Hendricks, Simone Veil

VALUES IN AN 'AGE OF CONFUSION'

“I don't share the general pessimism,” said Simone Veil at the plenary session entitled “*Restoring Values and Trust in Society*”. Veil, a highly respected lawyer, politician (she was the first female cabinet minister in France), Holocaust survivor and advocate of women's rights, offered the audience a rare vision of hope.

She noted that the Women's Forum provided an exceptional opportunity to analyze the current situation. In spite of changes in traditional values, the worshipping of money and the disillusion with politics, she said, we have gained in other ways: we live longer, for example, and family life has changed, with more involvement on the part of fathers. In



Riane Eisler, Simone Veil, Barbara Hendricks, Paul Hermelin, Jean-Paul Bailly



France, the social system is making an effort to reduce poverty, and democracy is "on the right track".

If we compare the 20th and the 21st centuries, she continued, we can see that our values have truly progressed. To keep them moving forward, she advised that we be "more pragmatic than ideological and take contingencies into account". In this context, she paid tribute to the intelligence and humanity of Nelson Mandela, who succeeded in peacefully putting an end to apartheid.

"Since we live in a global village," she said, "values of justice, fraternity and tolerance must be strengthened" to make it possible to fight poverty, narrow the gap between the southern and northern hemispheres, and continue to encourage the development of education, culture and peace. She made a plea to company heads and politicians to think about how they can help people from the southern hemisphere to live better lives in their own countries.

She finished by insisting on her optimistic outlook. "Looking at the world today, I see a genuine wish

to progress." Women tend to act discreetly, she added, but they have a key role to play in ensuring progress in conflicts, peace and respect for the values we all share.

Opera singer Barbara Hendricks, who founded the Barbara Hendricks Foundation for Peace and Reconciliation in 1998, agreed that we have not lost all our values, but feels that we don't talk enough about them. Her definition of values is based on the first article of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

"We have been lucky to live in peace for 50 years," she concluded. "Now that we are facing crises and a lot of conflicts, we have an opportunity to think, to be careful and to have courage to search for the truth."

She called on men and women to work together in spite of their differences and show more respect for each other in order to create harmony in life.

Riane Eisler, President of the Centre for Partnership Studies, which conducts research in a number of fields, from history and sociology to economics and education, said that we live "*in an age of confusion*" and added that the word "*values*" has been "*terribly misused*". She advocated the constant questioning of accepted values as a way of moving forward.

Noting that our current values and institutions have been built without the contribution of women, she said that she tries in her work – which looks at the past, the present and the future – to promote the shift from a domination to a partnership model.

To explain what she meant by a "*domination*" model, she said, "*The economy is supposed to support life, but it also includes activities that destroy life, like making weapons or cigarettes.*" The core components of the domination model are the ranking of men over women and "*the devaluation of anything that is stereotypically associated with women.*" In the United States, for example, plumbers are better paid far better than women working in the caring professions. She is convinced that women can make a critical contribution

“To move forward,
we must constantly
question accepted values

to designing a new economic model, humanizing the workplace and solving global problems to produce high-quality human capital.

Jean-Paul Bailly, Chairman and CEO of Groupe La Poste, described his plan to build a system based on trust in the French postal system he runs. Public service has to adapt to customers' needs, he said, and dialogue with employees, politicians and unions is the only way to find acceptable solutions for everyone.

He sees trust as being based on two conditions: a real project shared by everyone and the definition of a system of values. He believes that women have a competitive advantage thanks to their concrete approach; their panoramic, long-term view; and their ability to deal with complexity and simultaneity. "*They have a sense of dialogue and tolerance, and their presence creates a climate of respect. A mix of men and women changes everything in customer relationships.*" Since women represent a real asset, they must have confidence in their skills, and companies must develop policies that support them. ■

6:00 P.M.

FINAL CLOSING - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Maria Cattai-Livanos, Sandrine Devillard, Constance Hope, Gemma Hart, Aude Zieseniss de Thuin

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE ?

Participants and speakers at the first Women's Forum for the Economy and Society gathered at the closing plenary session on Saturday evening to reflect on what they had learned during the Forum and what steps should be taken next to advance women's rights.

Gemma Hart, a representative of the student delegates who had attended the Forum, offered insights from the perspective of the younger generation. She said that, as a group, the student delegates are determined to work to further the cause of women and are committed to taking such concrete actions as finding a mentor, disseminating what they have learned at the Forum to other students through a TV programme, seeking out talented young women to participate in next year's Women's Forum, and writing a summary of what they have learned to try to develop a vision of what it means to be a young woman today.

Concluding her contribution, Hart quoted Helen Keller: "I am

only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."

Sandrine Devillard, a Partner at McKinsey & Company, then took the floor. She began by saying that while it is clear that women can create as much value as men in society and the economy, many inequalities still exist, and women need to have the right to be in control of their future. The solutions are not obvious, but she feels that a number of actions are possible. "We must teach our daughters to have courage and to take the initiative in life, and we must also educate our sons, so that they will encourage women to follow their path."

Devillard called on women to lobby for equal-opportunity laws, to set an example for other women, to establish male/female mentoring programmes, and to encourage sympathetic men to promote women's causes on the political scene.

Speaking of the Forum, she

“I cannot do everything,
but still I can
do something

said, *"I feel my energy levels have been renewed through this Forum, and I believe in our capacity to accelerate change."* She concluded on an emotional note: *"We must dare to go after our dreams and our aspirations."*

Constance Hope, Manager of the Programme of Seminars in the World Bank's Policy Support Division, speculated on what her granddaughter, who will be born in December, would like to see happen for women before she reaches adulthood in 2025.

Her own hopes for the future focus on ensuring that by 2025, all humans will feel valued and have the same rights. That will be accomplished by insisting on the creation of institutions and mechanisms that truly serve society. She feels that there is a need for more leadership, which should be ruled by emotional intelligence and intuition so that more flexible corporate environments (with a better work/life balance) can emerge.

"No woman is an island," she said, adding that women need powerful partnerships if change is to occur. *"We all need to connect"* to understand and communicate



We must teach our daughters to have courage and to take the initiative

our ideas through today's technologies so that networks can be created.

Maria Cattai-Livanos, Vice Chairman of the International Crisis Group and former

Secretary-General of the International Chamber of Commerce, called for more actions and initiatives and increased engagement on the part of influential people in the world, who should take a closer look at the indecency of certain women's living conditions and engage in closing confrontational gaps. She added that all of the women present at the Forum felt this kind of event was deeply needed.

Aude Zieseniss de Thuin, president of the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society, closed the Forum by thanking all the people who had made it possible and noting how impressed she was by the high quality and spontaneity of the discussions. She said that a new optimism and a concerted will to take action seemed to have come out of the Forum.

The next Women's Forum for the Economy and Society will take place in Deauville, France, on 5-7 October 2006. ■

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

Ansfried Hoydonckx

Age: 26, Belgium

Els Eerdekens

Age: 22, Belgium

Studies: Master's in Psychology, University of Leuven

Comments: *"At the 'Reconnecting Politics with the People' plenary session, many questions were asked but not enough answers were given, and the debate was too France-oriented.*

The plenary session 'What About My Rights?' was very impressive! It made us realize that women's problems in developed countries are different from those in developing countries, many of whom have to fight for basic rights (e.g., the right to vote).

The speakers showed us that women can attain a lot when they have enough courage and conviction. In general, in future Forums it may be interesting to put more emphasis on concrete actions that can be taken to ameliorate the position of women."

You Wu

Age: 25, China

Studies: BA degree in English and International Business Communication from Nanjing University. Currently working on a Master's in English literature and civilization at the University of Paris VII, with a focus on women's issues.

Comments: *"A diversity of women and some men participated in the Forum, providing communication opportunities and a good opportunity for every participant to establish a new network.*

It was an innovative idea to ask students to participate. This gives the younger generation opportunities to learn more and establish our vision at an earlier age.

In my mind, this forum is a milestone to stimulate us to act and react for women's rights."



CONCLUSION

Claude Smadja, President of Smadja & Associates

Looking towards October

2006 in Deauville

The inaugural Women's Forum for the Economy and Society was a discovery in many ways. The discussions showed a surprising intensity of interactions and led to some sharp analyses and sometimes unusual perspectives. It also illustrated the convergence of concerns, priorities and perspectives from participants coming from very different parts of the world interacting informally and exploring ideas that are not necessarily part of the conventional wisdom. Beyond a three-day event, it was the start of a process, genuinely global in its nature, leading to concrete initiatives and international networking.

The next Women's Forum will be devoted to the central challenge of sustaining our societies in view of the tremendous pressures and contradicting forces that are today stressing each of our existing systems: the global demographic challenge; the need to manage huge migration flows in a socially and politically sustainable way; the issue of sustainable development; the implications of emerging megalopolises, mostly in Asia, with drastic consequences on global resources; the urgent need to overhaul our education systems to produce the kind of abilities needed to sustain not only our economies but also our social systems in a context where the concept of lifelong employment is replaced by lifelong employability; the tensions between the need to seek diversity and leverage it; and the exacerbated thirst for asserting one's identity.

These are just some examples of the kind of issues on which the next edition of the Women's Forum intends to stimulate innovative thinking, illustrating again the heightened contribution that women can provide, in full partnership and complementarity with their male counterparts, in making our economies and our societies more dynamic and more inclusive.

In the following White Paper, the young student delegates invited to attend the first Women's Forum talk about what they learned there and how they plan to put it into practice to make the world a better place for all women.

YOUNG WOMEN'S VISION ON THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for being given the opportunity to participate in the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society. It was an honour for us to be part of this worldwide network of dedicated women and to actively participate in the debates on constructing a better society.

We were truly inspired and motivated by the other delegates. While they came from diverse fields and countries, all of them were actively involved in improving the position of women. Our attendance at the Forum has had an invaluable impact on our lives!

In her closing summary, Constance Hope said, «We are the changes we want to see in the world». In the spirit of those words, we have made a commitment to establish a Young Women's Forum. This network will provide an excellent discussion platform for the young generation of female delegates, and by integrating it into the Women's Forum for the Economy and

Society, we hope to play an active role in the wider debate.

The establishment of a Young Women's Forum was only the first step in our active involvement. As Gemma Hart said during the closing plenary forum, we have also made a commitment to spreading the messages and sharing in our home countries the inspiration we took away from the Forum. To that end, we have all made a commitment to actively search for both a mentor and young female protégés so that we can pass on the benefit of our experiences.

Finally, we also made a commitment to write a report based on our experiences on what it means to be a woman in today's society. We have now assembled our thoughts and concerns about tomorrow's world in this White Paper. The themes we have selected directly address the questions young women ask themselves in today's society. What do you dream about? What should the world look like? What role



We are the changes
we want to see
in the world

do you see yourself playing in improving women's position in society?

We hope to bring an inter-generational dimension to the wider debate and to provide a broad platform for discussion.

HARMONIOUS FUTURE WORLD

We envision a harmonious future world, characterised by parity and equal opportunity for women and men. For this dream to come true, we believe that we women need to pool our efforts to make change not only at the political and economic levels, but also in our immediate social environment.

Such changes need to take place all around the world, in both developed and developing countries, and they should include all women, from all walks of life. Our vision is to see changes that affect both wealthy and poor women at all levels of society.

Rather than opposing women's and men's views, we believe that exploiting their complementary expertise and distinct qualities is fundamental to the realisation of our dream.

We believe that building this young women's network is the first step in making our vision a reality. We commit ourselves to promoting our vision of tomorrow's world and making the rest of our generation more conscious of the gender-based problems women still have to face.

✓ SOCIETY

We dream of a society in which:

Women are aware of their rights (fundamental human rights, as well as social, economic and political rights)

and, more importantly, have the power and means to enforce their rights if they are infringed.

Women and men have equal access to power, not only as a legal requirement, but also because society recognises women as capable political citizens.

Globalisation enhances the distribution of best practices around the world through shared learning from different local cultures.

Differences are respected and appreciated: the diversity of religions, races, traditions, gender and age groups are all part of the rich pattern of life.

Differences among gender identities are not only attributed to nature and biology, but also to valuable personal preferences and interests.

Each gender's virtues and capacities are valued, and no person is denigrated on the basis of his/her sexual orientation or gender.

✓ PROFESSIONAL LIFE

We envision a world in which:

Women's representation in top management positions, on boards of directors and in elected political position increases significantly, to the point where they represent the proportion of women in the corresponding entities.

Women are better represented in traditionally "male" areas of study, such as mathematics, engineering and the sciences, extending the reach of the feminine voice.

Women and men have equal opportunities and equal remuneration when climbing the professional ladder.

Women are no longer discriminated against, either

explicitly or silently.

Women are given the opportunity to combine a career and family, and are not blamed for being bad mothers when they do so.

Female politicians, regardless of their ideology or political agenda, recognise that they have a responsibility towards their sex and make an effort to represent and fight for women's interests and rights.

Women who have reached the top (either politically, economically or socially) assume their responsibility as female role models and help other women to reach their dream (this does not mean positive discrimination towards women).

✓ **WOMEN AND MEN WORKING TOGETHER**

We envisage a society in which:

Instead of competing with each other for a dominant position, women and men operate in harmony through an increasing number of political, social and economic initiatives jointly organised by mixed teams.

Women choose not to perpetuate gender segregation and actively encourage and welcome men into female-intensive activities, including non-profit initiatives and community work, such as health, education and childcare.

Women and men have access to organizational solutions and financial support that enable them to share the responsibility of private commitments through a creative set of family and parental schemes (parental leave, part-

“
Exploiting women and men's distinct qualities is fundamental to the realisation of our dream

time and flexible employment, promotion of responsible and involved fatherhood, etc.).

Girls and boys are raised with equal yet complementary responsibilities within the

household, emphasising the importance of both sexes becoming committed parents, family members, partners and professionals.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Despite our clear vision of how the world should look, we are often confronted with discrepancies between this vision and our daily professional and social lives. To stimulate discussion and the exchange of ideas and best practices, we have pooled the topics that concern us. The issues mentioned below reflect the many, varied and often very personal questions posed by today's younger generation.

✓ **PERSONAL CONCERNS**

They say that behind every successful man is a strong woman. What happens when the roles are reversed? How can a strong woman, while staying true to herself, find a partner who is not intimidated by her ambitions?

How do we overcome the double disadvantage of being young and female: how do we become part of a male-dominated, technology-driven world without compromising our own integrity?

After graduating from university, should I do postgraduate work or should I enter professional life,

so that I gain the professional experience I know I will need in my career before motherhood?

Will I be able to put what I have learned at university into practice to improve my country's situation?

Can women choose a field of professional activity that is not necessarily considered a "feminine" domain?

How do we change people's perceptions, especially those of men, towards successful women?

✓ **COMBINING A PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE**

How do we balance our work and personal lives?

Should women force themselves to work even if their partners make enough money to support the whole family? Is having a professional life a fundamental part of being a free and equal woman? Shouldn't a woman's decision not to work also be respected?

What are the best practices for raising boys so that they become men who are more conscious of gender equality, more interested in becoming involved fathers, and more willing to make active participation in their family a high priority?

How do we educate young girls so that they also understand the importance of the principles explained in the preceding point?

✓ **CONCERNS ABOUT SOCIETY**

What are the so-called "feminine values"? Are they biologically or historically based? Should women try to help men, corporations and governments to preserve and embrace these values, or should we broaden our views to include other types of values?

What role have women played in history and what place will they hold in society and the economy in the future?

Globalization: how can we profit from it while reducing the threat it often poses?

To what extent can developed countries help developing countries?

How can we actively create sustainable business practices rather than reacting to external forces (activism vs. determinism)?

Do female politicians have a responsibility to defend women's rights and interests regardless of their political agenda or ideology?

Is there a feminine conception of power? What would it look like?

We believe that we all have a role to play in addressing these questions and concerns. We would once again like to quote Helen Keller, as we did in our closing address at the Forum: *"Though I am just one, I am still one. Though I cannot do everything, I can still do something."*

Laura Maria AGOSTA ♦ Alexia SCHMITT ♦ Veerle SLOOTMAEKERS ♦ Els EERDEKENS ♦
Ansfried HOYDONCKX ♦ Ying BAI ♦ Wu YOU ♦ Juanita GOEBERTUS ESTRADA ♦ Veronica PUECH GIRALDO ♦
Ivane PAWLIEZ ♦ Mirka C. WILDERER ♦ Tanja FASSNACHT ♦ Irina MATEI CODRUTA ♦ Ayouch SIHAM ♦
Dasa LUKAS ♦ Gemma HART ♦ Regina SULLIVAN

“ Empowering women is
reinventing the world!

Christina Carvalho-Pinto, *Founder and President, Full Jazz
Communication Group, Brazil*

“Vive la Différence !

Joyce Ventura, *Film Producer, Colombia.*

“ I feel home to
be with like-
minded people.
Love is my
home. Freedom
is my home.

Taslima Nasreen, *Journalist,
Novelist & Poet, Bangladesh*

“ Everybody is changed
by this (not just the
people who attended
but the people they
work with, live with,
play with...).

Jane Fulton Suri, *Global
Head, Ideo, USA*

“ I hope that the opportunity to hear each
other's challenges will inspire women in
positions of power and influence to find
the courage to make a difference.

Wendy Luhabe, *Chairman, Industrial Development Corporation,
South Africa*

“ Pour sortir des logiques de conflit et pour entrer dans des logiques de paix

Laurence Parisot, *Présidente du Medef, France*

“ Avec toutes mes félicitations pour cet extraordinaire Forum. Quelle démonstration de force collective, de détermination et de puissance.

Gérard Mestrallet, *Président de Suez, France*

“ Le Forum est l'avenir de l'homme ! car l'avenir de l'homme passe, bien sûr, par la cause des femmes.

Denis Olivennes, *Président de la Fnac, France*

“ Bravo pour cette formidable initiative qui servira si bien la cause des femmes

Simone Veil, *ancien ministre, France*

“ Merci pour ces rencontres et ce climat de dialogue si nécessaire pour construire une société fondée sur l'égalité des chances, moteur d'un développement harmonieux.

Jean-Paul Bailly,
Président du Groupe La Poste, France

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***"It's time for women
to think about how
to exercise their responsibility,
a responsibility that generations
of women have dreamed of "***

Aude Zieseniss de Thuin,
President and Founder of the Women's Forum
for the Economy and Society,
welcome address, Thursday October 13th, 9am

The first meeting of the annual Women's Forum for the Economy and Society took place in Deauville, France, on 13, 14 and 15 October 2005. Its work will be complemented and informed by the permanent Women's Institute, which will conduct research and implement new projects based on the issues raised during the Forum.

Why is there a need for such an initiative? While women have made great strides in the last few decades, especially in developed countries, there is still a need to promote women's vision on all the major economic and social issues that concern us today and in the future.

The Forum and its Institute aim to bring together the world's best and brightest women and men in a private, non-partisan setting where they can express themselves freely and independently and form a mutually beneficial global network that can lead to concrete, long-term action.

The 2005 Women's Forum welcomed 80 prestigious speakers from around the world and more than 500 participants from every country (almost 45 countries represented) and every walk of life, among which 100 guests, most of them from emerging markets and developing countries.

Find out what they had to say in this Report, which not only offers summaries of every plenary session, workshop and brainstorming session, but also biographies of and statements from many of the distinguished participants of the first Women's Forum for the Economy and Society.



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