

The Netherlands and the United States Work Together to Expand Women's Political and Economic Participation

On September 24, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched the **Equal Futures Partnership** on behalf of the United States along with the Netherlands and 11 other founding members (Australia, Benin, Bangladesh, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, Peru, Senegal, and Tunisia; as well as the European Union). The goal of the Equal Futures Partnership is for women to participate fully in public life and to lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth. Multilateral stakeholders including UN Women and the World Bank, and leading businesses and non-profit institutions also pledged support for the partnership.

In New York, the founding members committed to new actions including legal, regulatory and policy reforms to advance this goal. **The Netherlands** will encourage employers to commit to increase their present ratio from 9% of women on boards of directors and supervisory boards to 30%. The Netherlands will set up programs to encourage more girls to choose technical education programs and more boys to go into the primary education sector. Internationally, the Netherlands is establishing a fund to strengthen the financial and organizational management of women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa.

Recognizing the important role the Netherlands will play in this initiative, Melanne Verveer, the Department of State's Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, said:

“The United States welcomes the Dutch government's pledge as part of the Equal Futures Partnership to support women's political and economic participation, particularly in the Middle East North Africa region. This is another iteration of the joint agreement between Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Rosenthal and we look forward to collaborating with the Dutch government on this important initiative.”



Fact Sheet: The Equal Futures Partnership to Expand Women's Political and Economic Participation

"This week, the United States signed a new Declaration on Women's Participation. Next year, we should each announce the steps we are taking to break down economic and political barriers that stand in the way of women and girls. That is what our commitment to human progress demands."

President Obama's Address to the United Nations General Assembly, September 21, 2011

The Challenge

While the world has seen important progress in expanding opportunity for women and girls, significant gaps remain in the areas of political participation and economic opportunity. A growing body of evidence shows that women's political and economic empowerment are critical to fostering international peace and security, growing vibrant market economies, and supporting open and accountable governance. Recognizing that no country can realize its potential if half its population cannot reach theirs, President Obama issued a challenge before the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011 to break down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment.

Answering the Call

In response to this challenge, on September 24, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched the Equal Futures Partnership on behalf of the United States along with 12 other founding members (Australia, Benin, Bangladesh, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, and Tunisia; as well as the European Union). Multilateral stakeholders including UN Women and the World Bank, and leading businesses and non-profit institutions also pledged support for the partnership.

The goal of the Equal Futures Partnership is for women to participate fully in public life and to lead and benefit from inclusive economic growth. Today, founding members are committing to new actions including legal, regulatory and policy reforms to advance this goal. Partners are also reaffirming at the highest levels of government their obligations and commitments to promote and protect women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. Following the launch of this initiative, founding partners will continue consultations with their national stakeholders, including civil society, to translate commitments into action. In April 2013, we will reconvene at the World Bank Spring Meetings to share progress reports and welcome new member countries.

Commitments to Action

As a founding member of the Equal Futures Partnership, the United States is making new commitments, building on existing efforts, including:

Opening doors to quality education and high-paying career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields: The Administration will embark on a new collaboration with private and non-profit stakeholders to reverse women's historic underrepresentation in STEM education and careers.

Promoting civic education and public leadership for girls: In an effort to inspire girls to serve as leaders in our democracy, the Administration, along with leaders from the private and non-profit

sectors, is announcing new efforts to highlight women in public leadership as role models, encourage research on girls and leadership, and spark the development of online tools to interest girls in becoming public leaders.

Ensuring economic security for survivors of violence: Federal agencies are launching new efforts to empower domestic violence survivors by helping them achieve financial independence through credit counseling, microfinance support, and education on financial literacy and employment rights.

Strengthening support for women entrepreneurs: The Small Business Administration, along with other federal agency partners, will expand entrepreneurship training programs for women veterans, youth, and older women, as well as focus new efforts around encouraging women innovators.

In response to the President's call to action, several leading U.S. businesses, academic institutions and non-profit organizations have also made commitments to advance women and girls' economic and political empowerment at home and abroad. They are dedicating themselves to launching new and innovative programs to support women and girls in STEM fields, connecting women entrepreneurs to markets and supply chains, and supporting research to advance girls' leadership. These private sector supporters include: CauseCast, CGI America, Creative Commons, Discovery Communications, Dove, Goldman Sachs, Harvey Mudd College, Intel Corporation, Mary Kay Inc., OpenCourseWare Consortium, Piazza, and Rutgers University.

Highlights from the commitments made by founding partners include:

Australia: Australia will work to improve women's representation and leadership in male-dominated industries such as mining, utilities, and construction. Australia is also committing to achieve gender balance on Australian Government Boards by 2015 and establish a National Center of Excellence (NCE) to reduce sexual assault and family and domestic violence.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh will develop a National Action Plan to implement its 2011 Women Development Policy to ensure acceleration of women's political, social and economic empowerment. Bangladesh will expand its investments in women's economic prosperity to the district and village level with the goal of achieving a workforce that is 50 percent women by 2021. Bangladesh will also develop a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women to strengthen enforcement of its 2010 Domestic Violence Act.

Benin: Benin will seek to address laws, policies and regulations that restrict women's participation in the economy and in public life, including reviewing and amending discriminatory nationality laws, as well as strengthening outreach around its current gender-based violence law. Benin will introduce a new electoral law to strengthen women's candidacies and increase women's political participation at all levels.

Denmark: Denmark will assess possibilities for improving the gender balance in Danish companies. Denmark will also implement new measures to reduce gender-based violence, focusing on increasing the awareness on violence in the family and capacity-building among municipal authorities and front line staff. In addition, Denmark will work to enhance political and civic participation of ethnic minority women in Denmark through mentorship programs and support for ethnic minority women's entrepreneurship and businesses.

European Union: The European Union will implement programs to advance women's political participation and economic empowerment through targeted campaigns in countries in transition. As

violence is one of the factors preventing women from political participation, the EU will commit to support initiatives against gender-based violence and femicide. The EU will also finance information campaigns on female genital mutilation in its Member States and support initiatives against this practice elsewhere in the world.

Finland: Finland commits to mainstream gender equality in its democracy and citizen participation policies, with a focus on ensuring women in immigrant communities can access economic opportunity. Finland will also review the impact of tax policies and income transfers on economic equality, as well as prevent gender segregation and promote gender sensitivity in education and training.

Indonesia: In line with its strategic vision of sustainable growth with equity, Indonesia will begin new efforts to expand financial access and develop capacity for women in micro, small, and medium businesses, and will reform specific laws and policies to expand women's equal economic opportunity. Indonesia will also implement new approaches to promote women in decision making positions in executive bodies and increase participation in legislative bodies.

Jordan: Jordan will set specific goals and undertake new efforts to advance participation in political life, particularly in decision-making positions, including in the judiciary, government and elected bodies. To address relatively low rates of women in the workforce, Jordan will work to increase the percentage of women workers, particularly university graduates, from 14.7% to 25% of the workforce, in the next three years.

The Netherlands: The Netherlands will encourage employers to commit to increase their present ratio from 9% of women on boards of directors and supervisory boards to 30%. The Netherlands will set up programs to encourage more girls to choose technical education programs and more boys to go into the primary education sector. Internationally, the Netherlands is establishing a fund to strengthen the financial and organizational management of women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa.

Peru: Peru will enhance women's participation in the political system by modifying election and political party laws to more effectively implement its quota system for female candidates and by working to give women more opportunities for political leadership. Peru will also promote the financial inclusion of women through rural and urban financial education schemes, as well as through enhanced access to additional financial services and instruments for women using existing social programs.

Senegal: Senegal will implement a comprehensive program to operationalize its gender parity law on women's political participation in advance of local elections in 2014. This will include an initiative to build the capacity of women leaders, such as new members of Parliament, and facilitate citizen participation at the community level.

Tunisia: Tunisia reaffirms, in this crucial stage of building its republic, the principles of equality between the sexes and the fundamental rights of women and the rejection of all forms of discrimination. Tunisia will promote women's participation in public and political life and decision-making. Tunisia will also focus on the reactivation of the national strategy to combat violence in the family and against women.

Support from UN Women and the World Bank:

UN Women will work with the Equal Futures Partnership in the areas of economic and political empowerment and ending violence against women, through technical advice, knowledge and capacity development, facilitating and sharing of best practices, and supporting implementation of commitments at the country level. UN Women will also use its knowledge networks to disseminate experience coming from the Equal Futures Partnership, to benefit those working for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The World Bank will work with Equal Futures partners to identify opportunities for collaboration to promote women's rights in each country and support implementation of country commitments. To support the scaling up of Equal Futures activities, the World Bank will help synthesize lessons from the partnership, and disseminate them in a flagship report on Voice, Agency and Participation. Together with UN Women, the World Bank will also create and disseminate knowledge around the Equal Futures themes. The World Bank will host the next high-level Equal Futures meeting, planned for the Bank's Washington, D.C. headquarters in April 2013.

Joining the Partnership

We welcome additional countries joining the Equal Futures Partnership. Government representatives and other interested stakeholders may email EqualFutures@state.gov for more information.