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Foreword by Baroness Sandip Verma

Department for International Development's Spokesperson in the Lords and
Lords Spokesperson for Cabinet Office and for Women & Equalities



I am delighted to introduce the latest edition of the Women's Engagement Newsletter from the Government Equalities Office.

In March we launched our consultation document, *Strengthening Women's Voices in Government*, in which we set out our plans for a new approach to the way Government engages with women. In that document, we made clear our commitment to bring women's voices much closer to Government, to ensure a more effective dialogue about the key issues of concern to women of all ages and all backgrounds in the UK today.

As part of the consultation process, I've had the opportunity to sit down with women from many different walks of life from across the country. I listened to their views. I heard them talk about the different roadblocks and obstacles they see standing in the way of their success, and I discussed with them the areas they think Government should most be focusing on.

It has been a truly humbling, but enlightening experience. I have been overwhelmed by the numbers that have taken part and struck by the enormous enthusiasm participants have shown to really wanting to make a difference to Government policy. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed in making the consultation an enormous success.

We are now in the process of reviewing all the responses we have received, and will be publishing the results of the consultation, together with our plans for how we intend to implement the new approach later in the year.

What I can tell you is that this area of work is exceptionally important to us.

We came to Government with an ambition to change this country for the better and key to that is empowering women and transforming the opportunities available to them. We can't achieve this on our own. In order to understand the real-life challenges and issues this country's 31 million women face, we need your input and your support. Our policies will only succeed if they address your needs.

So do continue to let us know what you think and please circulate this newsletter to your networks, colleagues and friends. We want to make sure everyone is given the opportunity to have their say.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you all, and especially to meeting many more of you in the future.

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Hello and welcome to the fourth edition of the engagement newsletter. For this edition, there's a special spotlight on the international gender agenda, updating you on recent government activity and looking ahead to future activity. And there is an update on body confidence, support for voluntary groups working with women offenders and women on company boards.

The results of the consultation will be published later this year. In the meantime, we will be keeping you up to date with policy developments relevant to women through our regular newsletter.

We hope you enjoy this edition and find it informative.

Thank you

Women's Engagement Team, Government Equalities Office.

Special Spotlight on International Activity

UN Women

The UK has pledged to provide £10 million each year to UN Women over the next two years. This will place the UK as the second largest donor to the new agency, allowing the UK to show clear leadership in this field, while ensuring that there is a fair burden share amongst contributing nations.

The UK's own rigorous review of UN and other aid agencies found that there was a chronic gap in the UN's ability to tackle poverty amongst girls and women. Girls and women still make up six out of ten of the world's poorest people, while two thirds of people who cannot read or write are women. Only 40 per cent of people in paid employment are women and they are typically paid less and have less secure employment than men.

Announcing the UK's support to UN Women, International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell said: 'Investing in girls and women can help to stop poverty in its tracks. We have high expectations that UN Women can drastically improve the lives of millions of the poorest girls across the world. UN Women must now demonstrate it can deliver results where it matters most'.

Michelle Bachelet, UN Women Under-Secretary General & Executive Director said: 'The UK has been a true champion of gender equality, and a continuous supporter of UN Women. We heartily welcome the UK's announcement today pledging a multi-year financial contribution to the organisation. It is a vote of confidence in our new organisation, UN Women, and will enable us to work steadily towards the implementation of the organisation's just-approved strategic plan'.

Link to DFID press release: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2011/Mitchell-Investing-in-girls-can-stop-poverty/>

Links to UN Women UK and UN Women:

<http://www.unwomenuk.org/>
<http://www.unwomen.org/>

UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Government submitted the 7th periodic report on the implementation of the UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on the 10 June 2011.

This report set out the Government's overarching approach to advancing gender equality and our determination to eliminate discrimination as set out in the first ever cross-government equality strategy, *Building a Fairer Britain*, published in December last year.

In particular, the report highlights the Government's ambition to end violence against women and girls both domestically and internationally. The report also explains the changes

introduced by the Equality Act 2010 in Great Britain, which brought together nine separate pieces of legislation into one single Act simplifying the law and reducing the administrative burden on business by making it easier to comply with discrimination law.

You can access the report and information about next steps here:

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/media/press_releases/uk_demonstrates_progress_on_el.aspx

Violence against Women and Girls

Lynne Featherstone, Home Office Minister and Ministerial Champion for tackling violence against women and girls overseas, visited India and Nepal in June. The choice of Nepal was in part due to its efforts, supported by the UK, to address widespread violations of women's rights, including alarming levels of violence against women and girls.

She found the visit very useful and there were productive discussions of women's and LGB&T rights and violence against women, with a broad range of people. This included Nepal's former Prime Minister; the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister and in India the Secretary for the Ministry of Women and Child Development; the National Women's Commission; civil society activists on women's empowerment; local community members and adolescent girls in Kasturba Gandhi residential schools. The Minister gave an interview to the Kathmandu Post, which you can read here:

<http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/06/14/nation/nepal-stepping-out-of-its-feudal-past/222871.html>

Looking ahead: future international activity

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

Every two years, Commonwealth leaders meet at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The next meeting is being held from 28 to 30 October 2011 in Perth, Australia. The theme for Commonwealth Day this year was 'women as agents of change' so we expect some focus on gender issues at CHOGM.

The Commonwealth People's Forum, organised by the Commonwealth Foundation, takes place from 25 to 27 October. This is an opportunity for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to meet and exchange views on a range of international development issues. One workshop will focus on gender. Inputs from the forum will be presented for discussion with Foreign Ministers. More information about CHOGM and the People's Forum (including registration) can be found here: <http://www.chogm2011.org/home> and <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/>

Other News

Body Confidence

The Government's work on Body Confidence is about creating a society where people feel valued not because of what they look like, but for what they can contribute and achieve. And

if we are to achieve this, we need to take action. To tackle this issue, Lynne Featherstone MP, Minister for Equalities, is leading an expert group to identify non-legislative solutions to tackling low levels of body confidence.

A young person today is thought to be exposed to more images of physical perfection in one day than a young woman one or two generations ago would have seen through her entire adolescence. And we cannot deny that this is having an effect. A 2010 survey by found that 47% of school girls believe that the pressure to look attractive is the most negative part of being female and half consider having surgery to change the way they look.

The Campaign for Real Beauty has a short, but powerful video on its website. It features a young girl being assailed with hundreds of adverts, all showing images of female perfection and idealised beauty. All the images seem to suggest to her that if she buys a particular product, she could soon look as perfect as the models she sees. Then the tag line appears on the screen: "Talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does." If you know of any other examples of good practice in this area, please email womensengagement@geo.gsi.gov.uk with **body confidence** as the subject heading.

Working with organisations in the private and voluntary sector, the Minister and her expert group are looking at how we can widen the definition of beauty to include all ages, shapes, sizes and ethnicities. We also want to encourage a more open and public conversation on body shape and ensure that we start supporting young people to healthier and happy futures where a wider spectrum of body shapes is represented. It's time that as a society we instigated the culture change we need to enable people to recognise that their value is worth so much more than just their physical appearance.

<http://girlsattitudes.girlguiding.org.uk/home.aspx>
<http://www.dove.co.uk/campaign-for-real-beauty.html>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-a00quoTD8>

Women's Breakout

Women's Breakout is the representative body for community-based women's projects delivering integrated, effective women-centred services to women who are known to, or at risk of becoming known to, the Criminal Justice System.

Launched in February this year, Women's Breakout has now embarked on an ambitious work plan. It aims to contribute to the development of a criminal justice system that: addresses women's offending behaviour and its causes.

In doing this, Women's Breakout will reflect the experiences of women accessing services and the expertise of those delivering those services. It will also contribute to the development of criminal justice services that take into account the different risk and needs of women offenders. Women's Breakout has been awarded funding from Ministry of Justice and Government Equalities Office to support this work.

Later this month Women's Breakout will launch its new website which contains a national directory of all Women's Breakout services across England and Wales.
www.womensbreakout.org.uk

For more information about becoming a member or supporter of Women's Breakout contact jackie.russell@womensbreakout.org.uk or info@womensbreakout.org.uk

The 30% Club

Increasing female representation on company boards

On 4 July, Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities Theresa May MP spoke at the 30% Club seminar, 'Action Beyond Words'. The seminar was aimed at developing a concerted action plan to increase the number of women on UK boards.

In 2010, women made up just 12.5 per cent of board members in FTSE 100 companies. The Minister for Women and Equalities explained: 'This government's priority is to get our economy back in shape. To do that we need to give all women the opportunity to achieve their full potential – from proper careers advice in schools, to making sure talented women reach the very top.'

'That also means getting more women onto the boards of the UK's biggest companies. There's growing evidence that more diverse boards are better boards. They make better decisions, know their customers better and out-perform their male-dominated rivals.'

Lord Davies recommended in his review on women on boards that UK-listed companies in the FTSE 100 should aim for a minimum of 25 per cent female board member representation by 2015. The 30% Club is a group of chairmen who have committed themselves to exceeding that.

Link to speech: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/thirty-per-cent>

Women on Boards Report:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-law/docs/w/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf>

Human Trafficking

The Government's new human trafficking strategy puts support for victims at its core, alongside better intelligence and enforcement in the UK and abroad to prevent people being trafficked to the UK. Already a world leader in the fight against trafficking, the UK is seeking to strengthen its approach by stopping people from becoming victims in the first place. We will do this by: working with international partners to stop the harm before it reaches the UK; smarter action at the border; and better coordination of our law enforcement efforts in the UK. Where trafficking victims are identified the Government will deliver care and support tailored to their specific needs through a range of specialist providers.

We know that many victims of sexual exploitation are women and so we will strengthen support for adult victims of human trafficking in England and Wales to provide care tailored to their particular needs. The Government has protected funding at £2 million per year for the next two years to fund adult victim care, despite the challenging financial climate.

The Salvation Army has been awarded the contract to coordinate and case-manage victim care for human trafficking victims, which will see, for example women victims of sexual exploitation getting the tailored care they need and deserve. The Salvation Army will sub-

contract with a range of specialist providers to access the relevant care package for each victim rather than providing a “one size fits all” approach ensuring the available funding is maximised.

The strategy also sets out how the Government will consider new and emerging threats by better gathering and using intelligence. The proposed establishment of the National Crime Agency in 2013 will also bring even greater focus to this work, as a central hub of intelligence in the fight against organised crime.

Further information is available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/press-releases/human-trafficking-accord>

Forced Marriage

The Government response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on Forced Marriage, is now available at <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm81/8151/8151.pdf>

Have your say – consultations open now

Appointments to Public Bodies

The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Sir David Normington, is seeking public views on a package of reforms to improve the process for making Ministerial appointments to the Boards of Public Bodies. This is particularly relevant to women and people from other underrepresented groups who want to participate in public life and reflects the government's aspiration that by the end of the current Parliament (May 2015), women will comprise at least 50per cent of new such appointments.

This is an ideal opportunity to contribute your views on this topic. The consultation, which closes on 28 September 2011, can be viewed at:

<http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk>

Current vacancies can be viewed at: <http://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

Consultation on Modern Workplaces

Our last newsletter highlighted the Government's consultation on plans to modernise Britain's workplace laws. Proposals cover extending the right to request flexible working, introducing a new system of flexible parental leave, equal pay and working time regulations.

The consultation is available [here](#) and we encourage you all to respond and have your say. The closing date for responses is the 8 August 2011.

Pass on our newsletter & sign up

Please pass on our newsletter to anyone you think will be interested. We want to ensure that as wide a range of women and organisations have the chance to receive it.

If you aren't already signed up to receive copies of our regular Women's Engagement newsletter, and would like to get them, please email womensengagement@geo.gsi.gov.uk with **subscribe to newsletter** as the subject heading. For more details about proposals for a new approach for how Government communicates and listens to women, set out in the Strengthening Women's Voices consultation, and to view past newsletters click [here](#)

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please email womensengagement@geo.gsi.gov.uk and put unsubscribe as the subject.

Other useful links

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/women/women-engagement/>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/equality-duty/>

<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/>
womensengagement@geo.gsi.gov.uk