

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**



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STATEMENT BY

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**on the occasion of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly
Third Committee
agenda item "Advancement of Women"**

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President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen...

Butterfly effect

Are you familiar with the butterfly effect? Basically, it explains how something small can change it all. According to the laws of chaos, a butterfly flapping its wings can cause a hurricane. But then again, it could also prevent it. Being an eternal optimist, I like to focus on the latter. How can something small change it all for the better?

Last summer, a friend of mine forwarded me an e-mail: "will you be our woman in New York?" I read the subject line. It turned out to be a job announcement from the Netherlands women's Council, who were looking for the next UN representative. I had always dreamt of representing my country to address the General Assembly of the United Nations, so I wrote back in an interview and here I am.

Women's voices

Over the past months, I have met with hundreds of women. Elderly women, girls, doctors, politicians, lawyers, housewives, hairdressers, migrant women, rural women, business women, name it.

I asked all of these women two simple questions:

-what do you think is the biggest issue for women these days?

And, most importantly:

-what could be a solution to solve that issue?

They mentioned a myriad of issues, including equal pay, women in positions of power, child care, financial literacy, sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBT rights, access to education and life-long learning, insubility, discrimination of women. Some men were worried about the lack of clarity among women, others about the increasing sexualisation of society. Some talked about lack of rolemodels in politics, but in general, they all agreed that the world for women is still a "man's world". One thing they all agreed on: it's still a "man's world". "We live in a patriarchal society" as one of them put it.

Women's participation

And they're right. Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property. In other words: there's still a lot to be done! Take my country, the Netherlands. Two years ago, we ranked 9th in the world in the Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report, but now, we rank 17, right after Switzerland. Our current administration has made no progress: a mere 17% of our ministers are female and only 8.1% of all corporate board seats are held by women.

Quite a shame, really. Cause there is a direct link between increased female participation and economic growth: it is estimated that if women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, America's GDP would be 9 percent higher, the euro zone's would be 14 percent higher, and Japan's would be boosted by 10 percent.

Diversity works

It's a fact: diversity works. Classes with an equal amount of male and female students achieve better results. Companies with more women on their boards and in senior management perform better. It's not surprising, in a world where women account for 85% of all consumer purchases. Diversity and inclusion are the keys to the top. It's not just about the bottom line, it's about the people. You wouldn't sign up for that? Take football for example: would there be any coach that would keep a talented, motivated player on the bench, while having time and again top strikers on the field? I don't think so. But like our famous former football player Johan Cruyff once said: you only see it when you get it.

We've come a long way since the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979. My grandmother never had a chance to finish school. My mother did, and inspired me to do more. But there are still so many women who do not have that chance. Those who don't have equal access nor equal opportunities. Their voices deserve to be heard.

So what if you are a woman who has heard this speech and you have a few moments to think what YOU can do to be that butterfly flapping its wings for women? That's all you need. And it's not thousands of all: just do it. "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world," said Margaret Mead. I say: Viva la she!

Kirsten van den Hul, UN Women Representative on Behalf of the Netherlands

We've come a long way since the [insert] on the [insert] of [insert] against Women was signed 25 years ago. My grandmother never had a chance to [insert] matter did, and inspired me to do the same. But there are still too many women who do not have that chance, who don't have equal access to [insert] that's why we're here.

So what I ask of you today is when you leave this room, please take a few moments to think what YOU can do to be that butler. [insert] of all, just the [insert] that's why we're here.

Thank you for the [insert] on behalf of the [insert] Women's Council.