



News Release

New Virtual Network Unites Women in Politics Around the Globe

Date: 26 February 2007

Embargoed for 27 February 2007

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New York, 27 February 2007 — The first virtual network linking women in politics throughout the world was launched today at the United Nations: the **International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics)**. This ground-breaking initiative was founded in partnership by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

This innovative global platform—www.iKNOWPolitics.org—is specifically designed to promote gender-sensitive governance and advance the role and number of women in political and public life. iKNOW Politics connects parliamentarians, representatives, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, academia and practitioners across borders, generations and faiths, equipping them with the materials, expertise and best practices to make their political mark.

The need for this resource is clear. Though the number of women in politics has grown in recent years, they are still under-represented and face innumerable obstacles to full participation. In 2006, less than 17 percent of parliamentarians were women, according to IPU, and elected women head only 13 of the world's 194 states and governments, as reported by the *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership*.

Welcoming the launch of iKNOW Politics, Liberian President Madame Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said: “While the winds of change have begun to blow, women remain on the fringes of political power. That is why the creation of iKNOW Politics, the premier network for women in politics, will provide women with the tools necessary to participate meaningfully in every facet of political life.”

Drawing on a database of over 100 experts on women in politics, iKNOW Politics allows users to access an online library with more than 400 reports, handbooks and training materials in English, French and Spanish from leading international agencies, research institutions, academia and civil society groups. Other highlights include a virtual forum for mediated discussions, high-profile interviews, member-created sites and a variety of resources on campaigns, elections and quotas, political parties, parliaments and representatives, advocacy and lobbying, skills building, budgets and legislation and post-conflict and transitional participation.

Media Alert

The iKNOW Politics website becomes active at midnight on 26 February 2007. On 27 February, policymakers, elected officials, government representatives, civil society groups and activists will gather at the United Nations for the official launch ceremony.

A panel of experts will consider women's progress in politics and how the iKNOW Politics network can address the ongoing challenges faced by women leaders.

Speakers will include **Geraldine Ferraro**, Principal of Blank Rome Government Relations LLC and former Congresswoman of the United States House of Representatives; **Anne Marie Goetz**, Chief Adviser of UNIFEM's Governance, Peace and Security Programme; **Syringa Marshall-Burnett**, President of the Senate of Jamaica; **Margareth Mensah-Williams**, Vice Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia; and **Pippa Norris**, Director of UNDP's Democratic Governance Group.

Date and Time: 27 February 2007, 1:15pm—2:45pm

Location: United Nations Secretariat, Conference Room 2

For more information: rsvp@iknowpolitics.org

