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UN boss not doing enough for women

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8 March, 2006

THE ARTICLE

UN boss not doing enough for women

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan received a stern reminder yesterday that he is not doing enough to reduce the gender gap that prevails worldwide. A global coalition of women's groups wrote to the UN head castigating him for his lack of progress in moving towards equality. They voiced their disappointment and outrage, and accused Mr. Annan of paying little more than "lip service" to the promotion of women's rights. They aptly pointed out that despite the UN's lofty ideals and proclamations of parity and progress, "the position of women in high-level UN posts has stagnated." They added: "Although we've had a lot of rhetorical commitment to women's rights, it still hasn't made it on to the big agenda of UN reform."

Minimal progress has been made in the ten years since the 1995 Beijing conference on women's rights. Many groups expressed consternation that there was only "token representation" of women on critical committees and high-level expert panels within the UN. "What is being called the UN 'gender architecture' is more like a shack. Women need a bigger global house if equality is ever to become a reality," said Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Another pertinent point in the letter highlighted the need for change at the top: "We need new and innovative leadership and the way to get that is by ensuring we reach fifty-fifty women and men in all decision-making positions," said June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization. A sign that things are not moving in this direction is that a man replaced Ms. Louise Frechette last week as the UN deputy secretary general.

WARM-UPS

1. STRENGTHS: Write down the names of five women who are or have been important in your life. In pairs / groups, talk about the strengths of these women. What have you learned from them? What would you like to thank them for?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

United Nations / Kofi Annan / gender gap / women's groups / progress / women at the top / women's rights / architecture / experts / innovation / leadership

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. WORKING WOMEN: With your partner(s), talk about whether or not women can do these jobs better than men, the same as men, or not as well as men.

- Leader of a country
- Soldier
- Chef
- F1 racing car driver
- Teacher
- Comedian
- CEO
- Religious leader
- Nurse
- Clown

4. WORLD WOMEN: In pairs / groups, write a score of 1 (terrible) to 10 (wonderful) depending on what you think it is like to be a woman in these countries:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| _____ USA | _____ Saudi Arabia |
| _____ China | _____ Russia |
| _____ India | _____ Thailand |
| _____ Brazil | _____ Japan |

5. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES: Have these following fun debates with your partners. Students A agree with the first argument; students B, the second. Change partners and topics every two minutes.

- a. Women are smarter than men. Vs. Men are more intelligent.
- b. Women belong in the home. Vs. Women should work outside the home.
- c. Women have the more comfortable life. Vs. Men have the more comfortable life.
- d. It's better to be born a man. Vs. It's better to be born a woman.
- e. Women can do everything men can do. Vs. Men can do much more than women.
- f. Men should campaign for men's rights. Vs. Men already have too many rights.
- g. The world's best leaders are men. Vs. Rubbish.
- h. Women will never be happy. Vs. Women are happier than men.

6. EQUALITY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "equality". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. UN boss Kofi Annan has not done enough to reduce the gender gap. T / F
- b. A global coalition of women's groups castigated him over his inaction. T / F
- c. Women accused Mr. Annan of paying "ear service" to women's rights. T / F
- d. The rate of women taking high-level UN posts has accelerated. T / F
- e. Much progress has been made on women's rights in the past decade. T / F
- f. Kofi Annan said there needed to be more women in architecture. T / F
- g. A campaigner called for more innovative leadership at the UN. T / F
- h. Mr. Annan said another 50 women were needed for key UN positions. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. prevails | languished |
| b. castigating | relevant |
| c. lofty | disquiet |
| d. parity | noble |
| e. stagnated | negligible |
| f. minimal | exists |
| g. consternation | bodies |
| h. panels | seeing to it |
| i. pertinent | equality |
| j. ensuring | admonishing |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. Kofi Annan received | that there was only... |
| b. reduce the gender gap | service to the promotion of ... |
| c. castigating | representation of women |
| d. paying little more than lip | commitment to women's rights |
| e. we've had a lot of rhetorical | highlighted the need for change |
| f. Minimal | a stern reminder yesterday |
| g. Many groups expressed consternation | in all decision-making |
| h. only token | him for his lack of progress |
| i. Another pertinent point in the letter | progress has been made |
| j. reach fifty-fifty women and men | that prevails worldwide |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

UN boss not doing enough for women

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan received a _____ reminder yesterday that he is not doing enough to reduce the gender gap that prevails worldwide. A global _____ of women's groups wrote to the UN head castigating him for his _____ of progress in moving towards equality. They _____ their disappointment and outrage, and accused Mr. Annan of _____ little more than "lip service" to the promotion of women's rights. They aptly pointed out that despite the UN's lofty _____ and proclamations of parity and progress, "the position of women in high-level UN posts has stagnated." They added: "Although we've had a lot of _____ commitment to women's rights, it still hasn't made it on to the big _____ of UN reform."

rhetorical

coalition

ideals

voiced

stern

agenda

paying

lack

Minimal _____ has been made in the ten years since the 1995 Beijing conference on women's rights. Many groups expressed consternation that there was only "token representation" of women on _____ committees and high-level _____ panels within the UN. "What is being called the UN 'gender architecture' is more like a _____. Women need a bigger _____ house if equality is ever to become a reality," said Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Another _____ point in the letter highlighted the need for change at the top: "We need new and _____ leadership and the way to get that is by ensuring we reach fifty-fifty women and men in all decision-making _____," said June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization. A sign that things are not moving in this direction is that a man replaced Ms. Louise Frechette last week as the UN deputy secretary general.

expert

pertinent

global

critical

positions

progress

innovative

shack

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

UN boss not doing enough for women

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan received a _____ reminder yesterday that he is not doing enough to reduce the gender gap that _____ worldwide. A global coalition of women's groups wrote to the UN head _____ him for his lack of progress in moving towards equality. They voiced their disappointment and outrage, and accused Mr. Annan of paying little more than "_____ " to the promotion of women's rights. They _____ pointed out that despite the UN's _____ ideals and proclamations of _____ and progress, "the position of women in high-level UN posts has stagnated." They added: "Although we've had a lot of _____ commitment to women's rights, it still hasn't made it on to the big agenda of UN reform."

_____ progress has been made in the ten years since the 1995 Beijing conference on women's rights. Many groups expressed _____ that there was only "token representation" of women on _____ committees and high-level expert panels within the UN. "What is being called the UN 'gender architecture' is more like a _____. Women need a bigger global house if equality is ever to become a reality," said Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Another _____ point in the letter highlighted the need for change at the top: "We need new and innovative leadership and the way to get that is by _____ we reach fifty-fifty women and men in all decision-making _____," said June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization. A sign that things are not moving in this direction is that a man replaced Ms. Louise Frechette last week as the UN deputy secretary general.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'gender' and 'gap'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "WOMEN'S RIGHTS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about women's rights around the world.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- reminder
- coalition
- outrage
- lip
- lofty
- rhetorical
- progress
- token
- shack
- reality
- point
- fifty-fifty

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you think Kofi Annan does enough for women?
- c. Do you get the impression the UN is a good place to work for women?
- d. What more do you think the United Nations should do to address women's issues?
- e. What do you know about International Women's Day?
- f. Do you think there should also be an International Men's Day?
- g. What do you think should happen on International Women's Day?
- h. What would you do for women's rights if you were head of the UN?
- i. Do you think the world is moving towards greater parity between the sexes?
- j. How do you think Kofi Annan will respond to the letter from the coalition of women's groups?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. How would the world be different if there was perfect equality between men and women?
- d. How would your life be different if there was perfect equality between men and women?
- e. What do you do or have you done to promote women's rights?
- f. What kind of responsibility does the UN have to serve as a working model of equality?
- g. What kinds of disparity exist in your country and what does your government do about them?
- h. Are you surprised the UN is accused of paying "lip service" to women and of having a "token representation" of female experts?
- i. What question would you like to ask Kofi Annan and what do you think his answer would be?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

EQUALITY: In pairs / groups, write down the things that need to change in your country for women to achieve true equality. Use the points in the left hand column to help you. In the right hand column, write down the barriers to these changes happening.

	Changes needed	Barriers to change
Stereotypes		
Education		
Language		
Workplace		
Children's upbringing		
Family roles		
Other _____		

Change partners and talk about what you wrote to your previous partner(s).

Discuss the likelihood of the barriers to change being overcome in your country and others.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about International Women's Day (March 8th). Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. HERO: Make a poster about a woman you particularly admire. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Which poster(s) did you like most and why?

4. ROLE REVERSAL: Yesterday you somehow changed roles and became a member of the opposite sex for the day. Write about your experience. What did you do? What differences did you enjoy or dislike? Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar experiences?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. F e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. prevails | exists |
| b. castigating | admonishing |
| c. lofty | noble |
| d. parity | equality |
| e. stagnated | languished |
| f. minimal | negligible |
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| h. panels | bodies |
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PHRASE MATCH:

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|--|---------------------------------|
| a. Kofi Annan received | a stern reminder yesterday |
| b. reduce the gender gap | that prevails worldwide |
| c. castigating | him for his lack of progress |
| d. paying little more than lip | service to the promotion of ... |
| e. we've had a lot of rhetorical | commitment to women's rights |
| f. Minimal | progress has been made |
| g. Many groups expressed consternation | that there was only... |
| h. only token | representation of women |
| i. Another pertinent point in the letter | highlighted the need for change |
| j. reach fifty-fifty women and men | in all decision-making |

GAP FILL:

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Minimal **progress** has been made in the ten years since the 1995 Beijing conference on women's rights. Many groups expressed consternation that there was only "token representation" of women on **critical** committees and high-level **expert** panels within the UN. "What is being called the UN 'gender architecture' is more like a **shack**. Women need a bigger **global** house if equality is ever to become a reality," said Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Another **pertinent** point in the letter highlighted the need for change at the top: "We need new and **innovative** leadership and the way to get that is by ensuring we reach fifty-fifty women and men in all decision-making **positions**," said June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization. A sign that things are not moving in this direction is that a man replaced Ms. Louise Frechette last week as the UN deputy secretary general.