

## 2014 Women Leaders Forum Summary of Discussions

The [Global Partnerships Forum](#) was honoured to co-host the 5<sup>th</sup> Women Leaders Forum with the [Advanced Development for Africa \(ADA\)](#) and the Permanent Mission of Romania on Monday, September 22, 2014 at the United Nations Headquarters.

This special event was developed in collaboration with [ITU](#), [UNAIDS](#), the [Zero Mothers Die Initiative](#) and the [Geena Davis Institute for Gender in Media](#), as an official side event of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

With a focus on concrete actions, connecting women's health and girl's education to produce scalable and sustainable development, this year's Women Leaders Forum provided a platform for inspiring and constructive discussion regarding new avenues for youth participation, social impact investing and entrepreneurship. In addition to the productive dialogue, the Forum launched the new campaign, [Zero Mothers Die](#) - a global multi-partner mission to eliminate maternal and child mortality.

In his welcoming remarks [Mr. Amir Dossal](#), Chairman of the Global Partnerships Forum, recognised the leadership role of [Mrs. Coumba Touré](#), Founder of the Advanced Development for Africa (ADA) organisation, who was unfortunately unable to join them at the event due to a cancelled flight. He further commended Mrs. Touré on her key role in creating this platform and her continued commitment to furthering women's empowerment, pointing out that she was ably represented by her daughter, **Ms. Fatima Touré**.

[Her Excellency Ambassador Simona Miculescu](#), Permanent Representative of Romania and Co-Host of the Women Leaders Forum, emphasised the importance of empowering women leaders through education, pointing to the unmet needs of the MDGs in order to achieve true sustainability. She referenced the philosophy of Queen Maria of Romania: *'if I was a man, I would like to have the rights of a man and the spirit of a woman'*. Ambassador Miculescu complimented the Forum organisers' efforts for putting together a results-based agenda, and expressed her personal commitment and support.

**Ms. Fatima Touré** welcomed participants to the 2014 Women leaders Forum, which was in its fifth year. She provided an overarching summary of the forum, referencing this year's focus on youth health, education and entrepreneurship; and the launch of the flagship programme: [Zero Mothers Die](#)

Special Opening Remarks were given by **Her Excellency Madame Ban Soon-taek**, Spouse of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, welcomed participants to the United Nations during the most important week of the year. She thanked the organisers for the putting together this important initiative. Madame Ban referenced the Secretary-General's programme, [Every Women Every Child](#), and highlighted the importance of this annual event: *"I am encouraged to see that the mission of the Women Leaders Forum is to share knowledge and form innovative alliances to address global challenges. I invite you to work together to create a better world."*

GPF Ambassador [Mrs. Cherie Blair](#), founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women stressed the need for concrete action and providing women with economic opportunities, and also reached to men in the audience to become more engaged: *"The value of giving women economic opportunities is not just something that benefits themselves, but investing in women will have positive benefits for their families,*

*for their communities and for their economies.*" She referenced a number of successful partnerships that her Foundation is involved in, including with Bank of America, Facebook, Google, GSMA, Qualcomm, through which it provides women much-needed skills, technology and networks in 55 countries.

[Mrs. Nareumon Sinhaseni](#), President of the Women's International Forum (WIF), briefly described WIF's objective to promote knowledge by inviting women and men to discuss the initiatives happening at the UN, along with the needs of women and girls throughout the world. She ended her remarks on a positive note, highlighting the fact that for the first time in UN history, 6 out of the 15 UN Secretary Council Members are women. She further commended His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's commitment to the equality and empowerment of women.

### *Launch of the Global Campaign for Zero Mothers Die*

[Zero Mothers Die](#) is a global partnerships initiative that has set out to address the unacceptably high maternal and child mortality rate that currently exists. Their mission is to equip vulnerable pregnant women, especially those living in low-resource settings, with mobile technologies that will connect them to healthy pregnancy and childbirth information in their native language, as well as provide free airtime to allow these mothers to call local health workers during emergencies.

The pink pocket-sized phone, called Mum's phone, will first be released in Ghana, but the initiative is excited to be planning phases in Mali and Zambia in the future. For more information about how you can help get a Mum's Phone to a mother in need, please follow the link here, [Mum's Phone](#).

The Global Partnerships Forum was privileged to host the launch of the global campaign for Zero Mothers Die (ZMD), which was introduced by the initiative's co-founders, [Dr. Jordi Serrano Pons](#), President of the UniversalDoctor Project, [Dr. Véronique Ines Thouvenot](#), co-founder of Millennia2025 Women and Innovation Foundation, and **Ms. Fatima Touré**, daughter of co-founder [Mrs. Coumba Touré](#).

Dr. Serrano Pons pointed out that the high maternal mortality rate, an unacceptable statistic, led to the creation of the ZMD Initiative, and explained that ZMD's success thus far in Ghana was achieved through partnerships. He cited the critical support of UNAIDS that helped in connecting ZMD with the Minister of Health and Ghana Health Services, both of which are assisting in the implementation and distribution of Mum's Phones; as well as the collaboration with Airtel, an innovative and affordable mobile service provider which has delivered 700,000 minutes of airtime for Mum's Phones.

Dr. Thouvenot mentioned the two pillars that constructed the ZMD initiative, research and advocacy. The initial research included detailed field stories of pregnant women and their experiences in low-resource areas, and mobile technology concepts, studies that measured and evaluated the impact of mobile technologies for maternal health. In regards to advocacy, Dr. Thouvenot recalled ZMD's informal origins when the co-founders gathered three years ago in Geneva, to where it is now, being launched at the Women Leaders Forum and supported by champions of women's health and empowerment.

[Dr. Kristie Holmes](#), Associate Adjunct Professor of Social Work at the University of Southern California and advisor to the ZMD initiative, remarked on her work with ZMD Youth. This area focuses on aiding young girls ages 15-19; a demographic in which the leading cause of death is from complications related to childbirth. Dr. Holmes believes we need to provide these young women the easiest way to connect to healthy pregnancy information and services in effort to reach the Zero mothers die goal.

Along with the ZMD team, a number of distinguished speakers celebrated the launch of this inspiring initiative and joined the panel to lend their support and insight regarding matters of health using new technologies.

**Her Excellency Dr. Christine Kaseba-Sata**, First Lady of Zambia pointed out that, while much needs to be done in the way of improving women's health globally, there is progress being made in Africa. She emphasised the importance, and indeed the need for, equal care and respect for pregnant women around the world, regardless of class, creed, or social status.

[Dr. Michel Sidibé](#), Executive Director of UNAIDS, emphasised the significance of respecting the rights of women, and ensuring that all women have the equal right to education. In launching the Zero Mothers Die campaign, Dr. Sidibé said that we have a concrete tool to fulfill our obligation to help prevent the death of the 289,000 women who die during birth yearly.

[Dr. Hamadoun Touré](#), Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Co-Founder of the United Nations Broadband Commission for Digital Development, reiterated ITU's commitment to maximise the use of new technologies, especially mobile technology, to provide mothers with access to information and healthcare data.

The Forum was honoured to host VIP guest, [Her Excellency Madame Sylvia Bongo Ondimba](#), First Lady of the Gabonese Republic, whose foundation supports a number of programmes for empowering women and young people across Gabon, as well as helping the under-privileged.

[Ms. Gabriela Isler](#), Miss Universe 2013, joined the Forum to express her support for women's issues, including young girls, and to give the message of hope and support, using the power of social media.

Both of the special guests lent their strong support to the Zero Mothers Die campaign. The Chair also recognised the presence of Miss Africa, who participated to the Forum's mission.

#### *GSDF Commitment for programs in Africa*

The Women Leaders Forum also hosted the launch of the [Global Sustainable Development Foundation](#) (GSDF), which was formed under the leadership of the 68<sup>th</sup> President of the UN General Assembly, the Honourable, Dr. John Ashe.

GSDF's mission is in line with the United Nations' Post-2015 Development Agenda, and will work with United Nations' organisations on all matters; they have also created six focus areas: Women & Children, Scientific Innovation, Finance & Resources, Culture, Media & Branding, and Partnerships. GSDF aims to establish a globally recognised source of funds and data to support a global sustainable development agenda, and to accelerate the global achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the coming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The panel included a number of distinguished members from the GSDF Board of Directors, who pledged their commitment to addressing the SDGs and added commentary on the need to provide women and young people the equal opportunity of success.

[Mrs. Sheri Yan](#), Vice Chairman and CEO of GSDF, delivered emotional and engaging remarks about her hopes for the initiative's prospective contributions in helping achieve the SDGs, and conveyed heart-felt thanks to supporters of the GSDF mission and a promise of results. International businesswoman and philanthropist, **Ms. Wan Yuhau**, Chairwoman of the Hong Kong Bawang Group, pledged her continued support for women's financial empowerment and her commitment to the mission of the GSDF.

[Mr. Phil Scanlan](#), Founder and Chairman of the New York Global Leadership Dialogue (NYGLD), gave enlightening remarks about the necessity of women's empowerment globally in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pointing out that his own initiative NYGLD is committed to providing a level playing field for women in the international arena. [Mr. Ellis Rubinstein](#), President of the New York Academy of Sciences, commented about the necessity of mentorship in the sciences, and the key role it will play in keeping young girls and women in the science fields. He further highlighted the launch of the Global STEM Alliance (which took place the same afternoon), stating that one of the primary goals was to ensure that girls have the ability to benefit from STEM education.

### *Using the Power of Youth to Create Transformational Impact*

This panel gathered experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines and professions, all of whom were able to connect on one vital topic – the key role of youth. Guided by the dynamic and elegant moderation of [Ms. Ann De La Roche](#), Officer-in-Charge and Chief of Operations at UN Office for Partnerships, each panelist provided insight on how they are incorporating the youth voice in their specific field, and the essential role it plays in shaping a better and more sustainable future.

The opening keynote address was delivered by [Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi](#), the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, who touched upon all of the wonderful initiatives happening at the UN, specifically referencing the recent launch of the He4She campaign. Also contributing from the UN family was [Ms. Susan Myers](#), Vice President UN Relations at the United Nations Foundation, who mentioned some truly inspiring youth-focused and girl-led initiatives happening at the UN, including the Girl-Up Campaign and the Girl Declaration.

[Ms. Jainey Bavishi](#), Executive Director of R3ADY Asia-Pacific, emphasised the unmatched ability of youth to change social behaviors and attitudes, which R3ADY Asia-Pacific is looking to tap into in hopes of better preparing coastal communities that are at high risk for natural disasters.

[Ms. Mindy Silverstein](#), Managing Director at the Milken Institute, also joined the discussion and provided insight through a financial scope of how the Milken Institute assists global investors not only make a profit, but also create sustainable social impact.

[Ms. Deborah Taylor Tate](#), ITU Special Envoy for Child On-line Protection and former FCC Commissioner, provided a thorough and enthusiastic description of ITU's Child On-line protection efforts, which are empowering youth, by providing a safe environment and promoting healthy digital participation.

The Women Leaders Forum also benefited from the remarks of [Her Excellency Madame Toyin Ojora Saraki](#), Founder and President of The Wellbeing Foundation Africa, who reported on Wellbeing's efforts to end child marriages and encourage young girls to return to society with the respect they deserve and the opportunity to create a better and more prosperous life for themselves.

### Investing for Impact

The aim of this panel was to highlight examples of socially conscious business models, which are improving society, and the lives of women and girls everywhere. The panel was expertly and efficiently introduced by [Mr. Howard Buffett](#), Lecturer in International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, and with utmost alacrity.

The panel showcased four truly inspiring women who are leaders in the social impact-investing sector. and was elegantly moderated by [Ms. Maryalice Mazzara](#), Director of Educational Programs at the State University of New York's (SUNY) Office of Global Affairs.

[Ms. Jennifer Field](#), Director of Social Impact at GLG, remarked about the work happening through the teaching and learning platform that GLG provides its clients. Their objective is to connect social sector leaders with GLG's extensive membership of subject-matter and functional experts, who provide acumen into strategic and effective business decisions, ultimately resulting in real social impact and change.

[Ms. Melissa Kushner](#), Founder and Executive Director of Goods for Good, commented on the orphan crisis that consists of 150 million children, and the necessity to support and care for this next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. In an effort to combat this problem, Goods for Good partners with grassroots orphan care centers in Malawi, providing resources and helping start small sustainable businesses that simultaneously create jobs in the communities and an income to support these orphans. With the success Goods for Good has had in Malawi, Ms. Kushner believes this model could serve other African nations.

[Ms. Francine LeFrak](#), Founder of Same Sky, passionately detailed her initiative's effort to create a sustainable business model for Rwandan women by enlisting these talented women to create jewelry. A testament to the beauty of their jewelry products, Ms. LeFrak proudly adorned bracelets and necklaces made by these women. Ms. LeFrak was adamant that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not; Same Sky is doing its part to change that.

[Mrs. Yana Watson Kakar](#), Global Managing Partner at Dalberg, commented on her company's impressive work helping to raise global living standards, which she believes can be replicated by others through partnerships that cut across sectors. She supported her claim by detailing the launch of the Women Entrepreneurs Opportunity Facility, created by Goldman Sachs and IFC, the first of its kind, and mission to finance women-owned businesses in developing countries.

### Moving the Needle from Talk to Action

Introducing our final panel was Dr. Kristie Holmes, who referenced earlier comments from Mrs. Blair, affirming that the time for talk had past; this strong statement set the tone for a productive panel focusing on concrete action and highlighting the power partnerships in the youth education and health sectors. Following Dr. Holmes was an enthusiastic [Ms. Wendy Diamond](#), Founder of Women's Entrepreneurship Day (which will be taking place at the UN on November 19<sup>th</sup>) who moderated the panel.

[Mrs. Doreen Bogdan-Martin](#), Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership at the International Telecommunication Union, remarked on ITU's efforts to convince world leaders, decision-makers,

educators and health-care providers of the transformational power of technology which can be utilized to empower, educate and enable women to have better lives. The ITU recently launched Girls in ITC Day, which brings together 100,000 girls in 140 countries with the goal of getting girls interested in the technology sector.

[Mr. Yamandou Alexander](#), Director of the Georges Malaika Foundation, commented on the partnerships that have helped create a strong-standing infrastructure at Georges Malaika Foundation's school located in the Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mr. Alexander referenced partnerships with local big businesses that help provide breakfast and lunch for the girls and continually improve the remote e-learning telecommunications methods used in the classrooms; all of which has contributed to the creation of a sustainable school that serves as a safe space for young girls to be educated and empowered.

Highlighting health partnerships, we first heard from [Dr. Abid Sheikh](#), CEO at North Shore Medical Labs, who described the partnership between North Shore Medical Labs and Nortec Software. This collaborative effort provides digital healthcare services to underserved areas in the southern states of the United States. The initiative has help reduce the digital divide between rural and urban areas, and Dr. Sheikh presented an open offer to the audience members interested in creating similar partnerships.

Also commenting on health partnerships was [Mr. John W. Hadden II](#), President & CEO of IRX Therapeutics, an immuno-oncology company that develops innovative cancer treatments. His comments recounted IRX's small origins and how the help of powerful opinion leaders and global experts led to the company's success and he encouraged attendees to do the same.

[Mrs. Lisa Darsch](#), Co-Founder of the CEO Collaborative Forum, focused on moving from talk to action, specifically through financing entrepreneurs. The CEO Collaborative Forum, whose work has previously focused their efforts in Europe, is a peer-coaching forum that works to educate entrepreneurs about their options around financing and running their operations. Mrs. Darsch expressed her excitement and support of Mrs. Touré and the Zero Mothers Die initiative, and looked forward to aiding their mission by helping tailor business plans, investor approaches and seed funding.

[Mrs. Tas Dossal](#) of the GPF concluded the Forum and thanked speakers and attendees, on behalf of [Mrs. Coumba Touré](#), Founder of the Advanced Development for Africa and the Global Partnerships Forum, for their continued commitment and support of the Women Leaders Forum and looked forward to welcoming them to next year's event.

**Ms. Fatima Touré** thanked all participants for their support and engagement on the important issue of women's empowerment, youth health and education, and entrepreneurship, and referenced the valuable role of UNICEF in addressing the challenges faced by young people, especially girls. She gave a strong message of hope to all.