



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar at
the second GWL Voices Meeting
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*Distinguished President and Executive Director of the GWL Voices,
Dear Susana and Maria Fernanda,
Dear fellow women political leaders,*

What an honour and pleasure it is to stand here today and exchange ideas with all of you, fellow women leaders, on building a far more gender-equal system of international governance. It is also a privilege to be part of your inspiring Madam Secretary-General campaign during the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

As Nelson Mandela famously said, "It always seems impossible, until it is done." We are here to do just that – together – and to offer hope and inspiration to women and girls around the world that yes, it is possible!

On 17 December, a group of young women, primarily from Slovenia but supported by partners across Europe, achieved what many had considered impossible. They succeeded in securing the adoption by the European Parliament of a resolution in support of safe access to abortion across the European Union. As a result, even in countries where abortion is either not legal or not possible due to conscientious objection by doctors, women with unwanted pregnancies: will soon be able to obtain abortion services in other EU Member States where such services are available.

The European Commission is now expected to propose measures to translate this commitment into practice by March this year.

Now, regarding our aspiration that the next Secretary-General be a woman, I would like to say the following:

We have all heard this so-called 'argument' many times over: Yes, for women, but the best candidate must win. Right? Said with all seriousness and concern.

To this, in reality quite offensive 'argument' I say: But of course, that is precisely the point. We *all* want the best candidate to win, but the competition must finally be opened to the other half of humanity.

This societal overlooking of women must come to an end. And it is precisely for this reason we are raising our voices today, together, to help end this unreasonable practice.

The facts are well known. Since the UN's creation, the General Assembly has had 75 male presidents and only five female presidents. Unlike the UN Secretary-General – who serves a five-year term with the possibility of reappointment: The President of the General Assembly is elected annually to a one-year term of office. Together with the UN Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly is one of the most globally visible faces of the United Nations.

For this reason, Slovenia, together with like-minded countries, has been advocating for the introduction of a gender parity system for the Presidency of the General Assembly. I first raised this proposal at the General Debate two years ago. Some progress has been made, but it is far from sufficient.

And as we approach the election of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, I once again call on all of us to open our minds to the possibility that a woman may simply be the best candidate for the role.

I realise times are not opportune. Even our shared Sustainable Development Goals are increasingly being called into question. But the truth is this: there is never a “convenient” time for change.

We are living in a time of multiple crises, so let us give a real opportunity to the ‘other half of humanity’. A ‘she’ may surprise us all with resilience, innovative problem-solving and deeply human empathy.

And this – our world, and our United Nations – needs now more than ever.

Thank you.