

**Launch of the WHO report*****"Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda"*****9 November 2009, Geneva, Switzerland****Statement by Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
United Nations**

Women are the foundation upon which societies are built. They are care-givers, food-providers, educators, peace-makers. Over the span of human history they have been the linchpin keeping families, communities and nations together. Today they are also emerging as the largest growing economic force in the world.

The evidence in WHO's new report on women is compelling: take action to have healthy women, and you will be taking action to have a healthy world. Damage that foundation through neglect or abuse of women, and societies will crumble, nations will fragment, and the entire international community will suffer.

This report is a call to action. The global scorecard is not good. Through inaction we have become complicit in neglect and violence.

We must make take action to prevent women from dying from complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

We must give all women access to safe and effective contraception.

We must join together and once and for all end discrimination and horrific violence against women.

WHO's new report points the way forward. It tells us how we can protect and empower women through their entire lifespan. It tells us how to address maternal and child mortality and how to address the growing needs of ageing societies where women and those who care for them are in the majority.

The road before us is clear. By securing the health and welfare of our women and girls, we secure the future of generations to come.