

New book honours UN women who made HERstory

Raising awareness of women's contributions is critical to correcting historical imbalances that have undervalued their presence, the United Nations Secretary-General said on Wednesday.

António Guterres was speaking at an event at UN Headquarters in New York to launch a book that pays tribute to women's participation in the development of the global organization.

HERstory: Celebrating Women Leaders in the United Nations is an initiative by Colombia and Qatar, and builds on an exhibition held two years ago.

The initiative shines a spotlight on pioneers and trailblazers such as Lucille M. Mair, the first woman to serve at the rank of Under-Secretary-General: the title given to officials who oversee UN Departments; and Margaret Anstee, who was the first woman to head a peacekeeping operation.

"The history we learn at school, that is celebrated in public monuments and events, tends to be a very partial history. It is the history of men," Mr. Guterres said.

"Raising awareness of women's contributions is an essential part of correcting the imbalance in our culture that has historically undervalued women's contributions and women's work."

Mr. Guterres reminded the audience of the "enormous progress" in women's rights achieved during more than seven decades since the founding of the UN.

But he also recalled that women comprised just six of the 278 delegates at the 1945 conference that established the Organization: a story told in a recent UN News podcast, which you can listen to [here](#).

And while such paltry participation could not happen today, the UN chief reported that practically every week he still encounters diplomatic delegations that do not include a single woman.

The issue is also a concern in-house, Mr. Guterres said, adding that the UN has had to work at ensuring its own events do not feature "manels"—that is, all-male panels.

The Secretary-General has made gender parity a top priority, pushing for greater women's representation at the UN, including at the senior management level.

"This is not simply about the fight for gender equality," he stated. "From peace and security to development to human rights, greater inclusion is the key to our success – bringing new perspectives, different leadership styles,

greater innovation and, ultimately, a more effective organization.”