

Press release: Elected women from around the world tackle gender equality

Minister for Women and Equalities and International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, will co-host the International Women MPs of the World conference on Thursday 8 November, which will see women parliamentarians come together to fight for women's rights.

120 women from 86 countries around the world – including Peru, Ghana and New Zealand – will sit in the House of Commons. The conference has cross-party support and is backed by former Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Harriet Harman MP, and Leader of the House, Andrea Leadsom MP.

This evening [7 November] the Prime Minister will host a reception for elected women from around the world. She will speak to them about the progress that's been made over the years in ensuring women's voices around the world are being heard. The Prime Minister will call on women from every part of public life to work together, learn from each other and build the networks that will allow them to succeed.

Globally, 800 girls and women die every day through pregnancy and childbirth complications. Girls and women who experience violence are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, are at increased risk of maternal mortality, and are less likely to complete their education. Violence against women and girls is estimated to cost economies between 1.2% and 3.7% of GDP.

When girls receive an extra year of primary schooling they can increase their wages by 10-20% when they get a job, most of which is likely to be reinvested in her family and community. When women are meaningfully involved in conflict resolution, peace accords are 35% more likely to last for 15 years or more.

Currently there are the highest number of women in history sitting in the House of Commons, but still only 32% of UK MPs are women, and worldwide just 24% of people elected into international Parliaments are women. One hundred years ago women were not only denied seats in the Chamber, they were also denied seats in the public gallery, in case they distracted the men from the serious business of politics.

In her opening speech, Ms Mordaunt will also set out some of the obstacles female parliamentarians working to provide support, empowerment and services for women are facing, as well as the heroism in overcoming those obstacles.

Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt said:

Every woman and girl deserves the right to a safe childhood, to a quality education, to reproductive healthcare and to a life without fear.

But the shocking reality is that for many girls and women across the world this is not the case – women’s rights have dropped off the global agenda.

The women attending today’s historic sitting in our House of Commons have all overcome challenges in their own countries to become MPs and have their voices heard. Together we will commit to redoubling our fight for women’s rights and pledge that we won’t be deterred by political barriers.

Our message is simple – women’s rights are human rights.

Getting more women into politics gives a voice to women and girls around the world to enable them to fight for their rights, creates female role models and leads to legislation and work which tackles gender inequalities and discrimination.

The conference will also include discussion on the support elected women need to deal with harassment and abuse, balance family and political responsibilities, and help more women to be active in politics.