



International Women's Day

8 March 2011

Today, the Delegation of the European Union (EU) joins hands with the citizens of Zimbabwe to commemorate International Women's day. This day is set aside annually to celebrate the achievements of women as well as to monitor progress made towards achieving gender equality. It is widely acknowledged that gender equality is a fundamental human right and a crucial question of social justice. Furthermore, gender equality is essential for growth and poverty reduction, and is key to reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Gender equality is first and foremost enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights, which is globally accepted as the world's 'Bill of Rights', specifying the universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent rights of individuals. Gender equality is not only a common value of the entire EU, but is a goal in its own right. It is one of the five principles of EU Development cooperation. It is also spelt out in the EU Treaty and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The EU is a signatory to many international agreements and declarations related to the promotion of gender

equality. The EU's strategy on gender equality is based on mainstreaming gender across programmes, on specific actions on enhancing women's rights and the inclusion of gender equality in political and social dialogue. To that end, the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development was adopted on 14 June 2010 in the context of the strategy towards supporting the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.


This Gender Action Plan seeks to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, particularly MDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, and MDG 5 on maternal health. It also seeks to contribute to the attainment of other international development goals related to gender equality. In Zimbabwe the EU's firm commitment to ensuring the attainment of the MDGs is seen in the following contributions:

- € 7.5 million to the support to Education in Zimbabwe project under the management of UNICEF.
- € 2 million to the supply of medical gases, blood and blood products specifically targeting pregnant women.

- € 1.5 million to the accelerated midwifery training programme.
- € 300,000 to specific women's rights and empowerment projects.
- € 6 million to the Child protection Fund.

The EU supports this year's International Women's Day theme: "**Equal access to education, training and science and technology: pathway to decent work for women**". Participation of women in science and technology can indeed contribute to increasing innovation, quality and competitiveness of scientific and industrial research. Progress made by women in these areas should be fully reflected in women's positions on the labour market.

The EU would like to commend all Zimbabwean gender activists, particularly women's rights and empowerment groups who are working tirelessly to achieve equal rights for women and men. The EU also encourages the Government of Zimbabwe to make education, training and science and technology accessible to Zimbabwean women from all walks of life.



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