

## High-Level Panel Discussion on “Inspiring Female Leadership for the Global Goals”

17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at the Austrian Cultural Forum New York

"You cannot be what you cannot see" – this powerful quote and life and life motto shared by moderator Monika Froehler (CEO BKMC) and panelist Karen Choi (Portfolio Manager at Capital Group US) set the stage for an inspiring and thought-provoking high-level panel discussion on held on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in New York City. Co-organized by the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, the Ban Ki-moon Foundation, and the Austrian Cultural Forum New York, the event titled "Inspiring Female Leadership for the Global Goals," brought together prominent speakers to shed light on the importance of female leadership in driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Following opening remarks by Susanne Keppler-Schlesinger (Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York) the panelists emphasized the importance of women taking charge and finding solutions for a better future.

Guest of honor, Karoline Edtstadler (Austrian Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution), who is a dedicated advocate for the SDGs and women's empowerment, delivered a keynote address that resonated deeply with the audience. Sharing insights into her experience taking part at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, she emphasized the need for women to take their place in powerful positions: "The last 2000 years the world was ruled by men, the next 2000 years will be ruled by women – it can only get better." Minister Edtstadler also referred to a Forbes article on women in leadership<sup>1</sup>, highlighting its findings: female bosses generally outperform their male counterparts; overall employees prefer a female leader if given the choice; having more women in powerful positions has a positive impact for a more inclusive and effective society.

Throughout the panel discussion, speakers shared their perspectives on the role of female leadership in achieving the SDGs. Lisa Gugenheim, representing the American Museum of Natural History, highlighted the pivotal role of education (SDG 4) in creating an informed citizenry and addressing critical environmental issues through scientific research and education.

Karen Choi, representing the Capital Group NY office, stressed the importance of sustainable investment and the inclusion of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. She posed a compelling question: "Why would we leave 50% of our brainpower behind?" and shared data showcasing the positive impact of female leadership in various sectors.

Cecilia Garza (Wellspring Philanthropic Fund) provided valuable insights from the realm of philanthropy, emphasizing the common goal shared by philanthropies and the SDGs: to

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<sup>1</sup> [What People Really Think About Females In Leadership \[Infographics\] \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/infographic/what-people-really-think-about-females-in-leadership/) [retrieved on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023]

improve the lives of people globally. She emphasized the particular leadership style of women, fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and elevating the voices of marginalized communities in decision-making.

On a personal level, sharing an anecdote and personal insight, Cecilia Garza recalled a powerful quote from Mexico: "Calladita Te Miras Mas Bonita," which translates to "You Look Prettier When You're Quiet." Breaking away from societal expectations and shining the light on others has been a transformative journey for her as a woman in leadership.

The SDGs have a deadline! Highlighting the urgency of action in achieving the SDGs, moderator Monika Froehler shared compelling insights from a special edition of the SDG report: nearly 50% of women globally reported experiencing gender-based violence; the report projected that at the current pace, it would take a staggering 300 years to end child marriage and 286 years to eliminate all discriminatory laws that still persist.

Underlining the need for a united effort to achieve tangible change, Minister Edtstadler and CEO Froehler presented the English version of a novel publication by the BKMC, created also in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Chancellor, showcasing Austria's strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Titled "Austria's Commitment to the 2030 Agenda," this comprehensive report covers Austria's efforts from 2019 to 2023, highlighting actions taken at the local, national, regional, EU, and global levels. Read more here: <https://bankimooncentre.org/austria4sdgs>

In the Q&A session, the panelists engaged with the audience, addressing critical questions about language change for inclusivity, women's role in influencing AI for greater gender equality, and ways to empower women leaders at the local level in diverse political landscapes.

In conclusion, "Inspiring Female Leadership for the Global Goals" served as a platform to ignite a sense of determination and unity among attendees. Reinforcing the vital importance of visible female leaders as catalysts for change, the discussions underscored the significance of collaboration, empathy, and empowering women in decision-making roles to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all. The event left a lasting impression, inspiring attendees to support women and girls, take up the mantle of leadership and drive transformative progress towards the SDGs.