10th International Helvi Sipilä Seminar
GENDER, POWER AND ECONOMY

PROGRAM
OPENING REMARKS

Jani Toivola
Member of Parliament, Finland

SPEAKERS

Dr. Päivi Mattila (Finland)
Secretary General, the Finnish League for Human Rights

“Budget Cuts in Europe – Do Women Pay the Price Again?”

Tricia Gideon (Belize)
Vice President to World YWCA Board

“Caribbean Women, Microfinance and Empowerment”

Dr. Gloria Ramirez (Mexico)
UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, the National Autonomous University of Mexico
Member of CSW delegation of IFUW

“Gender, Care and Sustainable Economy”

CHAIR OF THE SEMINAR

Dr. Elina Multanen (Finland)
Executive Director, Finland National Committee for UN Women
CONCEPT NOTE

THE INTERNATIONAL HELVI SIPILÄ SEMINAR series addresses challenging issues that affect women and their lives globally and locally in the 21st century. With the title Gender, Power and Economy the seminar focuses on the important role that women have in world economies. Do women have a chance to take part in planning economic structures in societies and making high-level financial decisions? How do current economic crises affect the lives of people? Helvi Sipilä seminar speakers view the important role of women in economy from different perspectives.

Dr. Päivi Mattila explores in her presentation Budget Cuts in Europe – Do Women Pay the Price Again? the negative impact of austerity measures, which are often carried out without proper analysis, on everyday lives of millions and how they increase women’s care responsibilities. Päivi Mattila points out that governments must be held accountable for their duty to ensure economic and social rights for all, and calls for leadership that recognizes and acknowledges old and new privileges and powers.

Tricia Gideon from Belize agrees that micro-finance is a development approach that offers financial and social improvement to low-income groups and offers health and educational services in areas where they operate. But has micro-economical approach encouraged women to rethink economic structures of societies and challenge them? Tricia Gideon presents challenges that micro-finance enterprises bring to women in Belize and in societies worldwide in her presentation Caribbean Women, Microfinance and Empowerment.

Throughout the world women still occupy a marginal place in the top levels of economic life. Dr. Gloria Ramirez from Mexico speaks about women’s economic autonomy and access to fundamental rights in her presentation Gender, Care and Sustainable Economy. As she examines non-paid work in Mexico, she points out that 20 years after Beijing the results in terms of equality for women continue to be insufficient. She studies how “good life” economy could change the life style of women in the Latin American region.

Celebrating the Centennial of the birth of Minister Helvi Sipilä (1915 - 2009)

Helvi Sipilä was a Finnish lawyer, diplomat and the first female Assistant Secretary-General of the UN. Sipilä received numerous national and international awards including twelve honorary doctorates, and she was granted the honorary title of Minister in 2001.

Helvi Sipilä also held leadership position in several associations, including the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Federation of Women Lawyers and the International Council of Women.

Helvi Sipilä’s profession in law was exceptional at the time. When she announced the opening of her own law firm in 1943, she became the second women in the Finnish history to practice as a lawyer. She ran her own firm for 30 years. Private entrepreneurship enabled her to engage in extensive social activities, including service as a member of governmental missions.

While Assistant Secretary-General, she was appointed Secretary-General of the UN World Conference on Women in Mexico 1975. She continued to work as a consultant for the UN until 1981, in order to promote the UN Voluntary Fund for the Advancement of Women later known as UNIFEM, set up during the UN Decade for Women 1976-1985.

Helvi Sipilä was a well-known and respected advocate for equality and women’s rights. Her important legacy will live on. The first International Helvi Sipilä Seminar was organized at the CSW-50 in 2006 by the Finnish Federation of University Women (FFUW) in collaboration with four other Finnish Women’s organizations to honor the work of Minister Helvi Sipilä.