



Under the banner, Time is Now, female leaders of UN agencies in Brussels marked International Women's Day at a networking event that brought together women from European institutions, civil society, the diplomatic corps, media and the UN in an effort to encourage solidarity and create the impetus needed to achieve further gender quality.

“We want to have women’s voices heard and not ignored,” Ms. Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, the UN Director in Brussels, said in remarks opening the first-ever women’s networking event hosted by women of the UN at the Representation of the State of North-Rhine Westphalia in Brussels. Ms. Pesce-Monteiro told the audience of some 150 women that it is “fundamental” to allow women to lead. In her speech, Ms. Pesce-Monteiro stressed the need to go beyond gender parity to achieve gender equality and highlighted the EU-UN Initiative, known as “Spotlight,” which focuses on combatting violence against women. “If you combat the violence, you can empower women,” Ms. Pesce-Monteiro said.

The event sought to strengthen ties between women working for the UN in Brussels and women in the European institutions. Speaking on behalf of the EU, Ms. Vera Jourova, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, emphasized that now was the moment to push ahead with equality for women and that “gender equality is the talk for the whole society.” Low self-confidence was an enemy of women, and she encouraged the women

present to speak when they had something to say. Issues of work-life balance and the fight to overcome violence against women all need to be addressed.