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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY

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**UNDER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL IN BURUNDI**

AT THE

7th ANNUAL UNIFEM CANADA AWARD CEREMONY

Do I feel like I am on an episode of *This Is Your Life*? Remember that show? It is wonderful and humbling to see so many good friends, old friends, new friends here. It's almost like seeing your life flash before your eyes. Or at least your Ottawa life!!

I left Ottawa in 1999 for a couple of years in the UN; that was more than six years ago, almost seven; it is great to be back. Of course, everyone is asking me how long am I back FOR? I have just spent the last few days in Wakefield moving into my closets, so I am not ready to come out of them again just yet.

I was here last year when Sally Armstrong received her award, and never would have dreamed I was going to be next. Lovely to see dear friend Flora McDonald

the first famous recipient here, and Margo Franssen, whom I met for the first time tonight.

Obviously my first task is to thank the UNIFEM Canada Committee for the honour they have given me by offering me their annual award. I was surprised and touched as I have not spent any single part of my career focusing exclusively on issues of women's justice, but when Charles Morrow asked me some questions, I realized how consistently in fact I had brought women's issues into everything I do.

There is a point at which you realize that there is something wrong with the world. For some of us it hits early on. For me I guess it hit around 1980, when I was in the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, but when you look back at your early days, you wonder why didn't I notice this or that.

UNIFEM Canada's theme for this event is Giving Women Voice, Women Empowering Women. We see more and more men who are fighting the good fight for women's empowerment and equality, (several of them in this room) but my experience is that too often things don't happen unless you have women in positions of power. I know that my fabulous Gender Adviser on my peacekeeping mission achieved extraordinary things. She had the ideas and the dynamism but I gave her the space and empowered her to do it in a way she had never had from a male boss.

My association with UNIFEM goes back a long way – 20 years, in fact, to 1985 and Canada's official preparations for participating in the Nairobi Conference. Also I remember when the Canadian Committee was set up at the instigation of our dear friend, Sharon Capeling Alekija. I was part of the efforts to give Canada a greater voice in UNIFEM, in time for the Nairobi conference. Canada's contribution was only a few thousand dollars, but I managed to get a million approved out of my UN funding budget. In CIDA, I was in charge of

Canada's input, policy and financial, to the UN funds and programmes. Actually you have Julie Loranger to thank, not me, as she was my Foreign Affairs counterpart and saw the value of UNIFEM and Canada being part of it. This put us up there with the Norwegians.

Now I see that UNIFEM's annual budget is up around \$60M. Sounds like a big jump, eh? Of course, but it is still a very small amount for women. My Burundi mission alone cost \$300M p.a. UNICEF's budget is over \$1B. Where's the real money going? Not on women, not yet.

Now I see that moves are afoot to persuade member states to enhance the women's machinery in the United Nations. UNIFEM and the rest of what is called women's machinery (sounds awful, we must find a better expression) needs to come up to a new level. I heartily applaud Stephen Lewis' efforts on this, and hope that member states are listening.

Equality and empowerment are just nice ideas unless you have the power and the resources to support and implement those ideas. I also believe that when it comes to the women's agenda, you have to have women in place to make it happen. This kind of institutional reform would be an important issue for Canada to take up, if our new government is prepared to get us back onto the international stage, in fact I know Alan Rock has already held consultations.

Some have worried if a larger and more central institution charged with women's equality would mean the end of UNIFEM, surely not, surely it is more a question of putting UNIFEM up to the right level and partnering with the right actors.

Let me mention a few of my experiences with **institutional reform**, and why you need it and how it is most often women who do it.

Many years ago I decided that I was not ashamed to define myself as a bureaucrat and tried to take back ownership of this word. To me “Bureaucrat” was you and me and the person in the next office working together to make things happen. I have never been a grass roots kind of person, even though I have great admiration for those who are.

I’m the one who wants to make the system work, to create the legislation or the framework that enables the work. So I believe that getting the right institutions in place, properly mandated, properly funded is crucial to getting ahead.

I have never been a radical either, but if you are a reformer you have to believe in radicalism. The radical helps to create the ideas and the dialogue in society, and creates the environment in which the reformer within the system can create change and move the system along. What is needed is to continue to seek partnerships between civil society and the public sector to create that change, between the visionary and the practical.

As a bureaucrat, I found my niche as a builder - I gradually migrated towards being a negotiator, but a negotiator for what? - a negotiator for building institutional capacity at the global level. I believed that if you had the right system and structure in place then you could make things happen across a wide spectrum, people would become used to ideas and would find ways to implement them if they were enshrined in structure.

On looking back over the events in my career related to advancing the cause of women, I realized that I started doing that in 1980 when as a senior officer in the Commonwealth Secretariat I was charged with putting together the beginnings of the Commonwealth structure to deal with women’s issues, i.e. the first Women and Development Division. I think I was probably asked because I was the only female at the Director level, also I was Canadian and CIDA already had a unit dealing with the issue, so Canadians were deemed capable by osmosis.

Coming back to Canada soon after, CIDA started to get serious in the early '80s. I still remember Elizabeth McAllister's (the first WID director) arrival in CIDA and her exchange with Doug Lindores, who was my boss at the time. In response to Doug's question, of why the need for a gender perspective, she replied swiftly, "I'm not here to justify my hiring, you're part of management, you have already justified it by hiring me, I am here to show you how to do it." (By the way, Doug was known as one of the most aware bosses in CIDA when it came to empowering and advancing women managers. We knew where the safe places were.) (mention Doug's girls)

Elizabeth gave us courage and clarity. I became an active member of her Agency network and as the manager responsible for UN funds and programmes I took my responsibilities seriously, and Doug gave us lots of room. In our membership of the managing bodies of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and other UN bodies, myself and other delegates, most of them women, negotiated to ensure that all of these institutions created Women and Development Units, (we were not yet into Gender and Development) in their institutions. It was not easy, and I remember some of them asking for extra funding for this.

I also remember a feisty Danish delegate (now her country's ambassador on the Security Council) saying, "The combined Nordic contribution to this agency makes us number one funder, we are not giving you more money, we are telling you how we want you to spend the money we are already giving you." (another Elizabeth McAllister moment).

Three years later I came back from Sri Lanka, and Doug put me in charge of the international financial institutions (IFIs) one of my best jobs ever. You were negotiating the big stuff. In negotiating the replenishments of the Regional Development funds, you had an opportunity to turn them around by negotiating major policy shifts in return for contributions of millions of dollars.

So I set out to look at their gender capability. It was so obvious that four years earlier, when I was busy fulfilling what I saw as my Canadian obligations to put women's issues in the UN, my male counterparts in CIDA were **not** doing exactly the same things in the international financial institutions, so yes, it didn't get done unless a woman was doing it. We learnt right away that helping women was not something very many men understood, let alone felt obligated to do!!

Next came Nairobi and the UN Women's conference. Maureen O'Neill was our fearless leader, and as Canada was leader of the Western Group of countries for negotiating purposes, she had an enormous task, which she performed with distinction.

I still remember a defining moment when we met with Canada's Ambassador in Nairobi who had been involved with the preparations. He announced to Maureen that he and the boys on the delegation would carve up the work. Maureen had several women on her delegation, with extraordinary negotiating experience and this fellow had automatically assumed we were nothing. A little war council ensued, and it was straightened out. But we were flabbergasted, there we were to negotiate women's advancement and the women on the delegation were being sidelined.

Nairobi and the other women's conferences were wonderful events. People question the value of UN talk shops, but I have always valued them for a very critical reason. Whatever happens at the meeting, or not as the case might be, no government will show up without having something to say, so enormous work goes into preparing for attendance at these conferences.

Nairobi was valuable for three things: the outcome document itself which while flawed as all human endeavours are, had an enormous influence over time; the fact that many governments who otherwise would never have done it, put in place women's ministries and other machinery of government just so that they

could report progress at the conference; and the amazing networking through the conference and the NGO forum which opened the eyes of so many women around the world.

The eighties were about awareness and about reforming governments and processes to deal with women's issues, but by the nineties, we realized that we were still scratching the surface. Change didn't come as fast as we thought, and women went home from the networking and the conferences to find that not a lot had changed, and we lost confidence in the institutional approach. **We realized that putting the right institutions in place was not enough; we had to confront issues of empowerment and women's fundamental rights.** Women had to have the tools to get ahead, girls had to have access to education as a right, women had to have a place at the table as a right.

Turning women's rights into a human rights issue was the ultimate expression of this, an achievement with which UNIFEM was closely associated. It came out of the Center for Women's Leadership, Charlotte Bunch, who had developed from being one of the pioneers of the American Women's Movement, to an influential player in international women's issues (and still is).

She gave the Women's Rights are Human Rights legitimacy, and her co-founder of the Centre, Roxanna Carrillo, working with Sharon, gave UNIFEM the justification to deal with violence against women as a development issue. This gave it enormous impetus.

It was around the same time that UNICEF was turning itself into what was to be called a "rights based" organization, emphasizing support to children in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. So it was natural that women's equality and empowerment issues should be seen in the context of Human Rights.

This had enormous implications for the campaign against Violence.

Violence against women manifests itself in many ways. In the western world we think of it in terms of domestic violence and campaigns to take back the night. We are making progress, in that it is acknowledged, even though no solution seems to emerge, and won't emerge till men take responsibility for dealing with other men's violence. This is why the white ribbon campaign was so important and why Michael Kaufman was a worthy male recipient of the UNIFEM Canada Award. In the third world in general, and in conflict situations in particular it is a very different thing.

One of the most important moments for women was the ruling of the International Tribunal that rape was a weapon of war in Bosnia. I was not involved at that time, but the groundbreaking ruling was something we could make use of in Central Africa. I visited the Eastern Congo in 2003, when one of the rebel groups was on a campaign to take over an area. They embarked on the most horrific attacks against women, you couldn't even call it rape, it was mutilation and I was able to testify before the UN Security Council. The Council has developed greater awareness on this issue.

An important advance has been Security Council Resolution 1325, aimed at improving the participation of women in peace negotiations. It has been a slow process to implement it, but one effect is that all Peacekeeping missions now have gender advisors. I was lucky in Burundi, I had someone who knew the field well and was very dynamic and practical. With Fernanda Tavares, my great gender adviser from Guinea-Bissau, we were able to continue the work done to include women in the Peace process and in political life.

Burundi is an excellent example of how a few committed groups of women, with the right kind of international support can turn things around 180 degrees. I have never heard such blatantly expressed discrimination as I heard from male delegates in Arusha in 1999. The women didn't give up and UNIFEM

played an important role in helping them make their case. Mandela helped when he came in to oversee the negotiations in 2000.

Now, six years later, Burundi is number 18 in the world in terms of numbers of women in parliament. Canada is number 44 and the U.S. is number 69; this out of 191 member countries of the United Nations.

More importantly, the women of Burundi are not just saying OK we made it. They are using their new-found power to organize to advance the women's agenda in the country.

Our mission was very active in helping identify women candidates and training them on the basics of running for office. We were also active in getting out the women's vote. Our Public Information office ran information campaigns to show women that voting was their right, not to let the men in the family tell them to stay home. We hired and scripted local theatre groups to tour the country and do skits and small plays on women's issues around voting.

It's important to remember that we didn't impose; the women in most of these countries are very aware and are anxious to improve their situation. We were in a position, because of 1325, of having the resources to do it. Did having a woman Head of Mission make a difference? I'm afraid so. You don't get the same activism in missions with men in the lead. Fernanda was everywhere, not just elections, but showing our team in charge of disarmament and demobilization of the combatants how to deal with female combatants, for example.

Too often the women are put aside as non-combatants, because few of them can bring a gun into the disarmament camps. So they lose out on the programmes to become soldiers or police officers, or in getting help to re-integrate into society.

But in fact the UN has a concept of “women associated with armed movements” under which women who have been with the rebel groups get the same consideration as the male combatants, but it took a woman on my team to show the male disarmament experts that it existed.

The Burundian women are organizing themselves now, pushing through legislation on land rights, dealing with issues of inheritance, employment, education, HIV-AIDS. And what is also encouraging is that ensuring women a place has become a major part of the new government’s platform. Women, real professional women, not tokens, have been appointed to real Cabinet positions, Foreign Affairs, Justice, AIDS, Human Rights.

There is no doubt in my mind that my being a woman made a difference in the country. I was obviously a woman of power and that meant a great deal to the female population.

A head of a PKO (peacekeeping operation) is one of the top political personalities in a country, especially a small country like Burundi, where the UN was very visible, and could easily have been resented. Many did resent us, but on the whole we were well received.

A major part of that was our stance on discipline, especially of the soldiers, but with 5500 military and 1000 civilians, discipline is a civilian issue as well as a military issue for a PKO. I was appointed at the time the scandal in the DRC broke in 2004, and I saw that as an opportunity to prevent the same happening in Burundi. There were already three battalions of troops there as part of the African Union Peacekeeping force, which we would be taking over, and there were already stories of complaints from the population on their behaviour.

I appointed a colleague from UNIFEM, who was an expert on gender violence and human rights, Roxanna Carrillo, the same person who had helped launch

UNIFEM's approach to violence issues some years back. Together, and with the support of HQ we launched what is now seen as one of what the UN calls "Best Practices".

We developed Codes of Conduct for military and civilian personnel on relations with the local population, on sexual harassment, on dealings with staff. We spoke to all the military contingents, held the commanders accountable, put up posters, the contingents introduced curfew hours in some places.

A big issue is keeping soldiers busy, they are a long way from home, and it is important to have a good welfare programme with games and projects. Many of them became involved in local projects, upgrading roads, and building orphanages. We had a great success, we were not without incident, but it was mainly lapses in behaviour, car accidents, and visiting prostitutes, but NO cases of sexual abuse, which with 6,000 people over two years, was quite something.

Thinking about this award has made me look back at what I have done over the last twenty or thirty years. People ask me if I plan on writing my memoirs. I don't think I can, because I haven't documented enough. I recently read Joan Anstee's book, *Never Learn to Type*, what a great title, but it was filled with so much detail spanning decades I knew immediately I couldn't do that.

Maybe I could write a series of anecdotal reminiscences? Certainly, I owe UNIFEM and Charles thanks for making me look back over my life as a stealth Feminist! Maybe there's an essay there. Once you start speaking out for women, however, you no longer need to be a stealth feminist, but you gain courage.

We silence ourselves so easily. How many women here have kept quiet, because you cannot always be the only one at the table speaking up? We are still living these moments, and we will continue to do so, until society accepts that

gender is a fundamental element of society that has to work, in the same way that we have to get it right on issues of race, on ethnicity, on economic imbalances. Hopefully our daughters will continue the work.

In conclusion, let me throw you all a challenge. There are a lot of influential people in this room, many of you have put a great deal into making the world a better and safer place for women. Let us all take up the challenge however to move to another level in support of women's equality.

Let's agree to move away from discussing whether a little bit more here or a little bit more there can be accomplished and agree that before the decade is out, we will have in place the international commitments, the international machinery and the international funding to put an end to discrimination against half the world's population.

Thank you.