



In support of

HeForShe

UN Women Solidarity Movement
for Gender Equality

UN Women 'HeforShe' Launch, Wellington 27 Nov 2015

**Address by Dr. Jackie Blue, Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner,
New Zealand Human Rights Commission**

I was recently asked to sum up in 100 words, "Why should I care about equality?"

I came up with:

An equal society is happier, healthier, and more productive.

An equal society means that everyone's rights are respected and there is gender equality.

Gender equality is about accepting that at birth, half of us are intrinsically discriminated and treated differently based on sex.

To become world leaders in gender equality, we must challenge stereotypes and sexism, encourage equal opportunities for all and end our nation's tragic domestic violence tradition.

To achieve a more equal society, we must all stand together, shoulder to shoulder and leave no one behind.

For me the important phrases here are 'we must all stand together' and 'leave no one behind'

Emma Watson acknowledged in her UN speech at the HeforShe campaign that we have only seen small progress in gender equality.

She said that for too long, feminism has been a polarising word where fighting for women's rights has often become synonymous with man-hating and feminists have been seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating and, unattractive.

Involving men and boys is about truly standing shoulder to shoulder, side by side. Equality should not be a fight women have to lead on their own.

To address the current inequality, we must involve the other half of the equation – men and boys.

We need to aim to have a society where it is the norm for men to equally contribute to parental care, family responsibilities and unpaid work.

The White Ribbon campaign is a great example of the importance of men's participation. This campaign is about men making a stand against violence. Each year the White Ribbon campaign gets a greater profile.

Business leaders, particularly male business leaders also have an important role to play. With men dominating our publicly listed boards at 86% and senior management teams at 80% we need every one of them to back women in their business.

There are many business initiatives that work towards this – The Women's Empowerment Principles asks that CEOs pledge their support for gender equality in their business, the YWCA Equal Pay Awards focuses on business to reduce the pay gender gap, and just last week Global Women launched 'Champions for Change' where business leaders pledge support for gender equality and diversity.

New Zealand needs to be much more ambitious aiming to be the first country in the world where there is a zero gender pay gap, where women are worth 100%, where women have equal opportunities and violence in all its forms is rate is a minor occurrence.

We can't achieve this by ourselves. We need to engage the other half of the population. We need to stand together, united, shoulder to shoulder and ensure no body is left behind.

The HeforShe campaign assists us in doing exactly that.

It is a privilege to be part of this launch.

Thank you.