



March 8, 2022

Dear Members, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Imagine a gender equal world, a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination (#BreakTheBias). Whether deliberate or unconscious, biases make it difficult for women to move ahead. Knowing these biases is not sufficient, action is needed. We are all looking for an inclusive world where difference is valued and celebrated.

At the turn of the last century, Clara Zetkin had the idea of an International Women's Day which was first celebrated in 1911. On March 8th 1917, women in Saint Petersburg went on strike for "Bread and Peace" demanding the end of World War I, the right to vote, an end to Russian food shortages, and the end of czarism. They were successful. International Women's Day is now a national holiday in many countries.

However, despite developments regarding abortion in several countries, a significant step back in the fight for women's rights has been observed over the past year. The resurgence of the Taliban changed the lives of millions of Afghan women and girls. The coronavirus pandemic also continues to have an impact on women's rights and health. A 2021 study conducted by UN Women based on 13 countries showed that almost one in two women reported that they or a woman they know experienced a form of violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The violence included non-physical abuse, with verbal abuse and the denial of basic resources being the most commonly reported. Moreover, the return of war in Europe is also a terrific threat, especially for women and children. In these difficult times, we stand alongside our colleagues for a prompt return to peace.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, the time needed to close the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years.

We look forward to seeing you soon in Maastricht at our next World Congress of Women's Mental Health on November 6-9, 2022 (www.iawmh2022.org)

I wish you all a happy Women's Day

With my best personal wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Thibaut', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Florence Thibaut
IAWMH President

"A girl should be two things: who and what she wants" - Coco Chanel